

# Constitution of Holywood Baptist Church

June 1, 2018

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## 1. The name of the Church

The name of the Church is Holywood Baptist Church (“the Church”).

## 2. Purpose

The Church acknowledges the headship of Jesus Christ over his Church and exists to glorify the triune God by maintaining and promoting his worship both individually and corporately.

Its members devote themselves to the teachings of Scripture, to fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer and evangelism. They commit, with the help of God, to witness to the saving and sustaining power of the Lord Jesus Christ and to work for the extension of His Kingdom.

The principal charitable object of the church is the advancement of the Christian faith according to the teachings of Scripture, the Doctrinal Statement and Baptist principles.

## 3. Doctrinal Statement

The Doctrinal Statement of the Church, which is regarded as a summary of those doctrines commonly held by the Church and is subordinate to Scripture, reads:

### 3.1 The Scriptures

The verbal inspiration and total inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given by God; their sole-sufficiency and final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

### 3.2 God

One God in three persons, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-equal, co-eternal, sovereign and active in creation, providence and redemption.

### 3.3 The Lord Jesus Christ

The essential deity and perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator

between God and men; His virgin birth, sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross as the only substitute for sinners; His burial, bodily resurrection and ascension to heaven; His high priestly ministry and personal return.

#### **3.4 The Holy Spirit**

The work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the sinner and indwelling, sanctifying and empowering the believer.

#### **3.5 The Devil**

The personality of the devil; his evil activity and final doom.

#### **3.6 Humanity**

The creation of humanity, male and female, in the image of God, equal in value and complementary in role; the creation ordinance of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman; the entrance of sin through Adam's disobedience; the fallen and totally depraved state of all humanity; their subjection to God's wrath and condemnation; their responsibility to repent and believe the gospel.

#### **3.7 Justification**

The justification of the sinner by God's grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone; the eternal security of the believer.

#### **3.8 The Church**

The church, the body of Christ, made up of those drawn from every tribe, language, people and nation throughout history who are added to it by the work of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the scriptural expression of the church in the world as the local company of baptised believers gathered under the headship of Christ for worship, fellowship, instruction and evangelism, in separation from all systems of belief that do not adhere to the Scriptures and are unfaithful to the gospel of salvation by grace alone; the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: baptism being the immersion of believers on profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a symbol of their identification with Him in His death, burial and resurrection; the Lord's supper being a remembrance of Christ until He comes and a renewal of commitment to Him; the

offices of elder and deacon; the gifts of evangelist and pastor-teacher; the priesthood of all believers and their unity in the Body of Christ; the separation of church and state.

### **3.9 The Future State**

The unconditional immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the body; the eternal joy in heaven of the believer; the conscious eternal punishment in hell of those who die impenitent.

### **3.10 Christian Behaviour**

The responsibility of all believers to obey and serve the Lord and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives; the duty of each church to exercise godly discipline in a loving and caring fashion.

## **4. Membership**

### **4.1 The Church membership shall be composed of those who:**

- i. profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;
- ii. are baptised by immersion upon the profession of their faith;
- iii. show evidence of a life transformed by the power of Christ;
- iv. assent to the Doctrinal Statement as the teaching standard of the Church;
- v. assent to all other matters contained in the Constitution and agree to be bound by them; and
- vi. have been approved for membership at the Church Members' Meeting.

### **4.2 Responsibilities of Membership**

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

- i. attend as frequently as reasonably possible the Sunday services, the Lord's supper, the midweek meetings and all meetings of the Church;
- ii. support the work of the Lord by cheerful, systematic and proportionate giving made through the Church;
- iii. be faithful in prayer for the Church; its Pastor, members and ministries;
- iv. actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may

better be able to pray for, 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;

- v. keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the Church and not discuss them with persons outside of the Church;
- vi. 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;
- vii. grant to one another liberty of conscience in those practices which God has not expressly forbidden in His Word;
- viii. recognise and submit to the scriptural authority deposited in the Elders of the Church; and
- ix. live sober, godly and righteous lives in this present evil world.

### **4.3 Membership Application Procedure**

- 4.3.1 Any person who desires to become a member of the Church should contact one of the Elders. They shall be interviewed by two church members (at least one being an Office Bearer) who will be appointed by the Office-bearers. A report of the interview shall be made to the Office-bearers who shall bring a recommendation to a Special Meeting of the Church as set out in 6.3. The Church will be informed of all such applications a minimum of two Sundays prior to the meeting at which they will be considered.
- 4.3.2 To be approved the application shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the meeting.
- 4.3.3 The applicant shall be informed of the decision of the meeting at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3.4 The applicant shall be received into membership at a public meeting of the Church.

### **4.4 Removal of Membership**

Membership of the Church may be terminated as follows:

- i. When a member of the Church is removed by death, their name will automatically be removed from the membership roll.
- ii. 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 and will be removed

from the roll.

- iii. A member may resign their membership by letter to the Church Secretary. This letter should state the reason for the resignation. The resignation will be reported to the next meeting of the members.
- iv. 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 the Elders. If a satisfactory reason cannot be given, the facts shall be communicated to the Church. Membership will be terminated by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church.
- v. Any member who falls into grievous sin shall be offered appropriate pastoral care and given opportunity to repent. If no evidence of repentance is shown they may on the recommendation of the Elders and after appropriate pastoral care, be subject to the disciplinary removal of their name from the membership roll by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church.

#### **4.5 Membership Roll**

The Office Bearers shall ensure a list of the members of the Church is drawn up and kept under regular review.

### **5. Church Officers**

The Church recognises two spiritual offices within the Church: Elders and Deacons.

#### **5.1 Elders**

##### **5.1.1 Function of Elders**

Elders shall be responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Church, with particular responsibility for spiritual matters, by being servant leaders and shepherds of the flock of God; teaching, caring for and protecting the Church from error.

##### **5.1.2 Qualifications for Elders**

Those eligible to serve as Elders shall:

- i. be chosen from the male membership of the Church;
- ii. be in membership for at least two years;
- iii. be in good standing with the Church;
- iv. display the necessary qualifications as laid down in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1; and
- v. affirm and hold unreservedly the Doctrinal Statement of the Church.

### 5.1.3 **Term of Office**

With the exception of a Pastor, Elders shall retire from office after serving a period of five years, but they shall be eligible for reappointment in accordance with the procedure set out in 5.1.4.

### 5.1.4 **Recognition of Elders**

Candidates for the office of Elder shall be nominated by the existing eldership at least four weeks prior to a Church Meeting at which the appointment of Elders is to take place. The names of those nominated will be circulated to members two Sundays prior to the Meeting at which the appointment of Elders is to take place. The appointment of an Elder shall be by ballot vote and require the approval of three-quarters of the members present and voting.

### 5.1.5 **Removal of Elders**

An Elder will be removed from office by a resolution of the Church members at a Special Church Members' Meeting called for that purpose. This will require the approval of three-quarters of the membership present by a ballot vote.

## 5.2 **Deacons**

### 5.2.1 **Function of Deacons**

The duties of Deacons, while spiritual in nature, include the administration of the affairs of the Church to ensure the smooth, ordered and efficient running of church life and the practical care of the members.

### 5.2.2 **Qualifications for Deacons**

The office of deacon is open to both male and female church members. Members to be considered for appointment as Deacons shall:

- i. display the necessary qualifications as laid out in 1 Timothy 3;
- ii. have been in membership of the Church for a period of at least two years;
- iii. be in good standing with the Church; and
- iv. affirm and hold unreservedly the Doctrinal Statement of the Church.

### 5.2.3 **Term of Office**

Deacons shall stand down from office after serving a period of two years, but they shall be eligible for reappointment in accordance with the procedure set out in 5.2.4.

### 5.2.4 **Appointment of Deacons**

Candidates for the office of Deacon shall be nominated in writing on the prescribed

form by two members at least two weeks prior to a Church Meeting at which the appointment of Deacons is to take place. Persons nominating candidates must first obtain their consent. The names of those nominated will be circulated to members two Sundays prior to the meeting at which the appointment of Deacons is to take place. The appointment of a Deacon shall be by ballot vote and require a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

#### **5.2.5 Removal of Deacons**

A Deacon will be removed from office by a resolution of the Church members at a Special Meeting of the Church called for that purpose. This will require the approval of two-thirds of the members present by a ballot vote

### **5.3 Pastors**

The Church recognises the gift of Pastor to prepare God's people for service that the Church might be built up. The man appointed by the Church as Pastor shall also serve as an Elder and as such take up the position of an officer in the Church of God which involves the execution of duties of a fundamentally spiritual nature as determined by Holy Scripture.

#### **5.3.1 Qualifications for a Pastor**

A Pastor shall:

- i. be chosen from the membership of a church of like faith and order;
- ii. display the gift and qualifications of Elder as set out in schedule 5.1.2 above; and
- iii. affirm and hold unreservedly the Doctrinal Statement of the Church.

#### **5.3.2 Appointment of a Pastor**

The Elders shall propose a name to the Church at a Special Meeting where the call of a Pastor is to be considered. The appointment of a Pastor shall be by ballot vote and require a three-quarters majority of the members present and voting. The terms of the Pastor's appointment shall be negotiated by the Elders and Deacons according to guidelines approved by the Church. Any salary and expenses received are to be viewed as a method of providing the material support without which the Pastor could not serve God and are not to be viewed as consideration for service.

#### **5.3.3 Term of office**

In considering the call of God to move on to service in some other setting, a Pastor should not lightly consider leaving the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him overseer. He should consult with the Elders and be willing to give due weight to the counsel given.

However, appointment will be terminable by agreement of the Church with a minimum of three months' notice or earlier by agreement.

#### **5.3.4 Removal of a Pastor**

A Pastor will be removed from office by a resolution of the members at a Special Church Meeting called for that purpose. This will require the approval of three quarters of the members present by a ballot vote.

### **5.4 Secretary and Treasurer**

The Elders and Deacons shall commend two of the Office Bearers for appointment by the Church as its Secretary and Treasurer.

Appointment shall:

- i. normally take place at the Annual Meeting of the Church. In exceptional circumstances a Special Meeting may be called for the purpose.
- ii. be by ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of the members present and voting.

In the event of no duly appointed Office Bearers being able to accept either of these responsibilities, the Elders and Deacons shall nominate for either appointment a person from the membership who, in their opinion meets the qualification of 1 Timothy 3 for such appointment. In these circumstances appointment to such a post shall also confer the office of Deacon, therefore persons appointed must fulfil the qualifications for deacons stated in 5.2.2.

### **5.5 Charity Trustees**

The Church will appoint Charity Trustees to satisfy the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

### **5.6 Appointment and Removal of Charity Trustees**

- 5.6.1 Given the nature of their responsibilities the duly appointed Elders and Deacons (collectively referred to as the "Office Bearers") shall serve as the Charity Trustees in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- 5.6.2 Appointment to the role of Charity Trustee will terminate on cessation of holding the office of Elder or Deacon.
- 5.6.3 The Church Members' Meeting, acting in accordance with the procedures set out in 5.1, 5.2, 6.2 and 6.3 shall appoint, remove and accept the resignation of Charity Trustees.

- 5.6.4 No person may serve as a Charity Trustee who is disqualified by law from acting as a Charity Trustee. Any duly elected Office-bearer who is disqualified by law from acting as a Charity Trustee shall retain the office of Elder or Deacon and discharge the duties of that post.
- 5.6.5 There must be a minimum of three Charity Trustees at all times.

## **5.7 Responsibilities of the Charity Trustees**

- 5.7.1 The Charity Trustees shall be responsible for the governance of the Church and the fulfilment of the purpose as stated in clause 2, acting according to the will of God as discerned by the Church Members' Meeting and in accordance with the specific and general directions of that Meeting.
- 5.7.2 The Charity Trustees shall ensure, in accordance with the instruction of the Church Meeting, that:
- i. the appropriate level of insurance for building, public and employer's liability is held; and
  - ii. all properties including those held on separate property trusts, (except those buildings that are required to be kept in repair and insured by a tenant) are kept in the appropriate state of repair.

## **5.8 Powers of the Charity Trustees**

- 5.8.1 The Charity Trustees, under the direction and authority of the Church Members' Meeting, shall manage the business of the Church and have the following powers in order to further the purpose:
- i. power to make rules and regulations for the governance of the Church provided they are not in conflict with this constitution and gain the approval of the Church membership;
  - ii. power to make grants that further the charitable purpose stated in clause 2. For the avoidance of doubt any disbursement of funds by the Church as part of the "Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland" or to the "Northern Baptist Corporation Limited" shall be considered as furthering the charitable purpose of the Church.
  - iii. power to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the purpose as stated in clause 2.

## **5.9 Remuneration of Charity Trustees**

- 5.9.1 Subject to the provisions of clauses 5.9.2, 5.9.3 and 5.9.4, none of the income of the

Church may be paid to any Charity Trustee of the Church.

- 5.9.2 Charity Trustees shall be reimbursed reasonable and proper expenses and other payments permitted by statute or specifically authorised by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.
- 5.9.3 Notwithstanding the fact that any Pastor or Pastors appointed by the Church are Charity Trustees, they will be entitled to be paid an agreed and reasonable stipend and expenses out of the funds of the Church. Any Trustee appointed by the Church as a member of the Missionary Family will be entitled to financial support of the church according to the church's Mission Policy.
- 5.9.4 Where it is proposed that a Charity Trustee (or person, firm or company, connected with the Charity Trustee) is to be employed or receive remuneration or sell goods or services or any interest in land to the Church this shall be permitted only if:
- i. the Charity Trustee or any person connected with the Trustee who may benefit directly or indirectly from the proposed remuneration declares an interest in the proposal before discussion on the matter begins;
  - ii. the Charity Trustee and any connected persons absent themselves from any part of any meeting at which the proposal is discussed and take no part in any discussion of it and are not counted in determining whether any such meeting is quorate;
  - iii. the Charity Trustee does not vote on the proposal;
  - iv. the remaining Charity Trustees who do not stand to receive the proposed benefit are satisfied that it is in the interest of the Church to contract with or employ that Charity Trustee (or connected person) rather than another independent person and must record the reason for their decision in the minutes;
  - v. in reaching that decision the Charity Trustees undertake to balance the advantage of contracting with or employing a Charity Trustee against the disadvantage of doing so  
(especially the loss of the Charity Trustee's services as a result of dealing with the Charity Trustee's conflict of interest);
  - vi. the Charity Trustees authorising the proposed transaction comprise a majority of the Charity Trustees and have not themselves received any such benefit.
  - vii. any such arrangement is subject to the conditions in Section 88 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

## **5.10 Indemnity of Charity Trustees**

- 5.10.1 When exercising any power (whether given to them by this constitution, or by statute, or by any rule of law) in administering or managing the charity, each of the trustees must use the level of care and skill that is reasonable in the circumstances, taking into account any special knowledge or experience that he or she has or claims to have ('the duty of care').
- 5.10.2 No trustee, and no one exercising powers or responsibilities that have been delegated by the trustees, is liable for any act or failure to act unless, in acting or in failing to act, he or she has failed to discharge the duty of care.
- 5.10.3 A Charity Trustee may benefit from trustee indemnity insurance cover purchased at the charity's expense in accordance with, and subject to the conditions in, section 93 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

## **6. Church Meetings**

- 6.1 The Church gathered in prayerful dependence upon God is the Biblical means by which the will of Christ is to be established by the church and as such, under the Lordship of Christ, is the seat of authority in the Church.
- Business of the Church shall be transacted at the Annual General Meeting, Special Meetings, Ordinary Meetings and at the meetings of the Office-bearers and Charity Trustees.

### **6.2 Annual General Meeting**

- 6.2.1 This meeting shall normally be convened before the end of March.
- 6.2.2 It shall:
- i. receive and approve as accurate, written reports of the work of the Church carried out in the previous year;
  - ii. appoint Church Officers as necessary;
  - iii. consider any necessary revision of the church membership roll,
  - iv. set the financial limit for expenditure delegated to the Church Officers.
- 6.2.3 Notice convening the Annual General Meeting shall be given by announcement at the Services on the two Sundays preceding the Meeting.

- 6.2.4 The Church Reports and Agenda shall be circulated to members in advance of the meeting.
- 6.2.5 Motions of a routine nature shall normally be put to the meeting for a show of hands and require a two thirds majority of those present and voting. In cases of doubt the chairman shall direct the scrutineers to make a count and report the result.
- 6.2.6 Where a motion is of more than ordinary importance it shall be decided on a ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

### **6.3 Special Meetings**

- 6.3.1 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 and removal of Church Officers and Charity Trustees in exceptional circumstances between Annual Meetings of the Church;
  - iv. the appointment of leaders of Church organisations between Annual General Meetings of the Church.
  - v. all decisions relating to property including the erection, purchase, lease, sale or repair or alteration of church property (beyond the financial limit set by the Church);
  - vi. the amendment of the Church Constitution and Standing Orders;
  - vii. the dissolution of the Church in accordance with clause 11;
  - viii. the transaction of urgent business, other than that laid out in items (i)-(vii).
- 6.3.2 Special Meetings may be called by:
- i. the Church Officer bearers;
  - ii. any twelve members of the Church provided a signed requisition is given to the Secretary stating the precise matter to be discussed.
- 6.3.3 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 provided to each member no later than the Sunday prior to such Meeting.
- 6.3.4 Motions of a routine nature (e.g. admission of members) shall normally be put to the meeting for a show of hands and require a two thirds majority of those present and voting. In cases of doubt the chairman shall direct the scrutineers to make a count and report the result.
- 6.3.5 Where a motion is of more than ordinary importance it shall be decided on a ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

## **6.4 Ordinary meetings**

6.4.1 An ordinary meeting of the Church will normally be held in the autumn and be called by the church Office-bearers. It will be convened for:

- i. receiving reports of the work of the Church;
- ii. receiving reports of ongoing and future projects;
- iii. receiving an update financial position of the Church; and
- iv. deciding any matters not requiring a Special Church Meeting.

## **6.5 General requirements for Church Members' Meetings**

6.5.1 All meetings of the Church shall be conducted under normally accepted rules of procedure.

6.5.2 An attendance of one third of members at Church Meetings shall be required to form a quorum otherwise no decision shall be taken at the meeting.

6.5.3 All business conducted at meetings of the church will be regarded by members as strictly private.

## **6.6 Elders' and Deacons' Meetings**

6.6.1 Elders and Deacons shall normally meet each month, with the exception of July and August. The date of each meeting shall be set at the previous meeting at the latest.

6.6.2 Elders and Deacons may meet separately but shall hold joint meetings at least four times each year to consider those matters which affect the life of the Church and which are of interest to both groups. The quorum for Elders' and Deacons' Meetings shall not be fewer than two persons, or half of their number, whichever is the greater number.

6.6.3 Meetings of Elders or Deacons may be convened to consider matters of urgency arising between the monthly Meetings.

6.6.4 All such Meetings shall be conducted in confidence.

6.6.5 The Church Secretary shall service the monthly Meetings with minutes being circulated in a timely fashion.

6.6.6 The Church Treasurer shall report to the Office-bearers each month on the current financial position of the Church

## **6.7 Charity Trustees' Meetings**

6.7.1 Subject to there being a minimum of two meetings a year, the Charity Trustees shall determine when and how frequently they shall meet.

- 6.7.2 The Charity Trustees shall determine a quorum for their full meetings that shall not be fewer than two persons, or half of their number, whichever is the greater number.
- 6.7.3 In addition to the meetings of the whole group, the Charity Trustees may meet in such sub-groups as are necessary and convenient. Reports of such subgroup meetings must be made to the next full Charity Trustees Meeting.
- 6.7.4 Charity Trustees shall, so far as possible, seek consensus on all matters considered at their meetings.
- 6.7.5 For matters requiring a decision a vote shall be taken and the outcome of the vote recorded as the resolution of the Charity Trustees.
- 6.7.6 Each Charity Trustee shall have one vote to be exercised at the meeting.
- 6.7.7 Every issue may be determined by a simple majority of votes cast at a meeting of the Charity Trustees but if there is an equality of votes on any matter the resolution will be considered rejected and the matter shall be referred back to the submitter for review and if appropriate resubmission to a subsequent meeting for consideration. Charity Trustees shall respect the confidentiality of their meeting.
- 6.7.8 Minutes shall be prepared of the proceedings at the meetings of the Charity Trustees containing the names of those present, the decisions taken and, if appropriate, the reasons for the decisions.
- 6.7.9 The Charity Trustees shall always act in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.

## **7. Application of Capital and Income**

- 7.1 The income and capital of the Church shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the purpose as stated in clause 2 with the provision that the Charity Trustees may adopt an appropriate Reserves Policy.

## **8. Record keeping and accounting**

- 8.1 The Church's annual financial year will run from 1 January to 31 December.
- 8.2 An Annual Report of the activities of the Church shall be prepared each year.
- 8.3 A statement of the Church accounts incorporating financial statements of all Church organisations (audited or independently examined as required by law) shall be presented to the Annual Church Members' Meeting for approval.
- 8.4 Financial records, annual reports and statement of accounts relating to the Church for

the previous six years must be available for inspection by any Charity Trustee.

- 8.5** The Charity Trustees shall make the required annual report and accounts (approved by the Church Members' Meeting) available to any member who requests them.

## **9. Amendments to the Church Constitution**

- 9.1 Subject to clause 9.2 this Constitution may be amended, but only by a Special Resolution passed at a Members' Meeting according to the requirements set out in 9.4.
- 9.2 No amendment may be made to this Constitution that would have the effect of making the charity cease to be a charity at law. No amendment may be made to clauses 2, 5.9, 7 and 11 without the prior written permission of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.
- 9.3 A copy of any resolution amending this Constitution shall be sent to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland within twenty-one days of its being passed.
- 9.4 Amendments to the Constitution shall require notice of motion at a Special 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 members at least four weeks before the proposed Special Meeting at which the proposed change is to be considered.

## **10 Closure**

- 10.1 The Church may dissolve by decision of a Special Meeting convened as set out in 6.3.
- 10.2 On dissolution, where property assets of the Church are held by separate trusts, those trusts will govern the distribution of the property assets.
- 10.3 On dissolution, the assets of the Church (other than the property assets), after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, shall be applied for charitable purposes that further the purpose of the Church as stated in clause 2.
- 10.4 The Charity Trustees shall notify the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland of any closure or dissolution.

