

RYEDALE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Constitution.

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1] The Nature of the Church.

The Church is the company of all those redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Members are elected by God, purchased with Christ's blood, adopted as children of God, made kings and priests to God, and are inheritors of glory and eternal blessedness.

Jesus Christ is the sole head of the Church. He poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church, and members, individually and corporately are His temple.

The local Church is the gathering of some members of the universal church in one location, giving visible expression to the body of Christ.

2] The Government of the Church,

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole governor of the Church, through the infallible Word of God, the Bible. He has ordained that oversight and administration of the Church is to be by elders and deacons.

Elders.

i) Responsibility.

The main responsibility is threefold:

- **a}** to govern the local Church.
- **b}** to shepherd the flock.
- **c}** to teach the Word of God.

ii) Numbers.

We recognize a plurality of elders as Scriptural and the Church would look for such men to emerge from within the Church. In normal Church life one elder would be full-time in the Ministry of the Word and Prayer and be recognized as the presiding elder. Such a Pastor may be called from outside the existing membership of the Church.

iii) Qualifications.

The qualifications for eldership are clearly laid down in the following Scriptures: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

From these it will be clearly seen that women are excluded from the office.

iv) Appointment.

Nomination for eldership will come directly from the existing elders or by a member making a nomination to the elders. Nominees must have had at least one year's full membership of the Church.

Nominations which find agreement with the elders, and the consent of the nominee having been obtained, shall be put to the Church members meeting.

After due time to allow members to seek through prayer the mind of the Lord, and also to allow Scriptural objections to be heard, the nominee's name shall be brought to a members meeting for approval.

Elders shall normally serve for life unless their removal is required for any serious reason.

v) Removal.

Reasons for which an elder will be removed from office are:

- Persistent neglect of duties.

Behaviour likely to bring the Name and cause of Christ into disrepute.

Failure to maintain a wholehearted agreement with the Church's doctrinal basis.

Evidence of infirmity may require that the other elders ask an elder to retire from office.

Notice to a full-time pastor shall be at least three months and similar notice of his resignation would be required.

Deacons.

i) Responsibility.

The responsibility of the deacons is to attend to the material and financial affairs of the Church.

Areas of responsibility include:

- **a}** Administration and secretarial work.

- **b}** Collection and distribution of finances.
- **c}** Practical care and help for the poor and needy.
- **d}** Care and maintenance of Church property and materials.

ii) Numbers.

The number of deacons shall be determined by the church's need and the availability of suitable men.

iii) Qualifications.

The qualifications for deacons are clearly laid down in the following Scriptures: 1 Timothy 3:8-13; compared with Acts 6:1-7.

iv) Appointment.

The appointment of deacons will be dealt with in the same way as for elders.

v) Removal.

The removal of Deacons from office will be dealt with in the same way as for elders.

Meetings of Church Officers.

Elders and deacons should meet together as often as is practically possible for prayer, fellowship and the study of God's Word. An elder would normally be present at any deacon's meeting.

Meetings of Church Members.

Members meetings are to be held as the eldership deems necessary, but at least twice a year, allowing fourteen days notice of the meeting, with an agenda supplied to all the members at least seven days prior to the meeting.

A quorum shall consist of at least 66% of the membership.

Meetings would normally be chaired by the presiding elder.

3] Membership.

i) Purpose.

Membership is a covenanting together of those in a locality who seek to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel and the pure worship of God.

ii) Qualifications.

Membership is open to those who:

- **a}** Can testify to repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- **b}** Show in their lives evidence of a genuine work of God's Grace.
- **c}** Accept the Basis of Faith.

iii) Privileges.

- **a}** The special Pastoral care of the elders.
- **b}** The love, concern and encouragement of all members.
 - Members may rely on the fellowship for spiritual and practical assistance whenever necessary and possible.
- **c}** For the right to attend and participate in members' meetings.

iv) Responsibilities.

- **a}** Regular attendance at Sunday Services, Midweek Meetings for Bible study and prayer.
- **b}** To conduct their lives in such a manner that they will promote the well-being of the fellowship, seeking to obey at all times the command to love one another, and to refrain from any conduct that would bring the Name of Christ and His Church into disrepute.
- **c}** To accept the discipline of the church in accordance with God's Word.
- **d}** To serve the Lord in the local Church according to ability, and to responsibly and prayerfully give financially to the work of the Church

v) Applications.

Applications for membership shall be made to the elders who, after interview, shall propose suitable applicants for the approval of a members' meeting.

4] Church Discipline .

Christ has charged the Church with the responsibility to pronounce His forgiveness and judgements. Matthew 16:19; 18:18; Jn 20:23

i} Purpose.

The purpose of Church discipline is:

- **a}** To glorify God by obeying His Word in proper Church government.
- **b}** To restore offenders into full fellowship if God should grant them true repentance.
- **c}** To maintain purity in the Church, in worship and in the Lord's supper. Though the Church is never perfect on earth it is our duty to strive after holiness.
- **d}** To deter others from sin.

ii) Manner.

All discipline must be clearly and soundly Scriptural. Elders in carrying out discipline must not lord it over others but stand alongside as brethren. 1Peter 5:3.

The first step in discipline is private admonishment, followed if necessary by admonishment before witnesses. Matthew 18:15,16.

Subsequently, *elders are to rebuke or chasten, by which is meant the application of truth such as to bring to conviction of sin, if not always to repentance.* 1 Timothy 5:20; Ephesians 5:11.

Finally, the unrepentant are to be removed from attendance at the Lord's Supper and all privileges of membership, Matthew 18:17.

Never-the-less, none is to be excluded from hearing the Word preached, and the Church is to continue to pray for the person concerned.

If there is genuine repentance the person is to be welcomed back into fellowship. 2Corinthians 2:7,8.

iii} Occasions.

Occasions when discipline is necessary include:

- **a}** Private offences between members, which violate Christian love.
- **b}** The formation of parties or factions, which disturb Christian unity and must not be permitted.
- **c}** Scandalous living offends God's Law and is not tolerable in the high moral standards of the Church. Persistent offenders who do not repent must be removed from membership.
- **d}** Wilful rejection of Christian doctrine, which violates Christian truth. It is not mere failure to understand, but deliberate and knowing rejection which is the cause for discipline.

The standard for elders is higher, for their responsibility is to teach all the council of God by precept and example.

5] Church Ordinances .

1} Baptism.

We recognise that there is a divergence of views sincerely held by evangelicals and desire to exercise charity in this matter.

We believe the sacrament of Baptism is to be administered once only in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The ordinance is normally administered to those professing faith in Christ and repentance towards God, by total immersion in water symbolising our union with Christ in His burial and resurrection.

The elders shall strongly exhort prospective members to be baptised, although this is not a condition of admission to the Lord's Supper.

Loving pastoral care and consideration will be given to those who hold the different evangelical view of Baptism.

ii) Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is to be held frequently as a sign of the unity and common salvation of the membership. It is in no

sense a sacrifice and at no time does any change take place in the nature of the elements.

Only true believers in Christ should present themselves at the Lord's table and a warning against improper approach will be given.

6] Amendments.

i) This constitution may be amended with the agreement of at least 66% of the membership, but only in a way consistent with the Scriptures, as outlined in the Basis of Faith.

ii) No change may be made which would cause the Church to cease to be a charitable body.

7] Dissolution.

In the event of the dissolution of the church any surplus assets shall be devoted to a church with a similar Basis of Faith.