fiec the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

Constitution of
The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

As amended by the members in accordance with the provisions of the constitution on 7th November 2023 and 10th November 2026.

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales with charity number 1168037 and in Scotland with charity number SC047080.

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Background

1.1. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation established by this constitution ("the CIO") is intended:

1.1.1. to act as the corporate successor to the Trust; and

1.1.2. to receive a transfer of the undertaking and the assets (subject to the liabilities) of the Trust.

2. Interpretation

2.1. In this constitution, unless the context otherwise requires:

2.1.1. "affiliated church" means a church that is admitted to membership of the CIO in accordance with clause 20, and "affiliated churches" shall be interpreted accordingly;

2.1.2. "board" means the charity trustees acting collectively;

2.1.3. "Charities Acts" means the Charities Acts 1993 and 2011;

2.1.4. "charity trustee" means a charity trustee of the CIO;

2.1.5. "Commission" means the Charity Commission of England and Wales;

2.1.6. "Communications Provisions" means the Communications Provisions in Part 10, Chapter 4 of the General Regulations;

2.1.7. "connected person" means:

2.1.7.1 a child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother or sister of a charity trustee;

2.1.7.2 the spouse or civil partner of a charity trustee or of any person falling within sub-clause 2.1.7.1 above;

2.1.7.3 a person carrying on business in partnership with a charity trustee or with any person falling within sub-clause 2.1.7.1 or 2.1.7.2 above;

2.1.7.4 an institution which is controlled:

i) by a charity trustee or any connected person falling within sub-clauses 2.1.7.1, 2.1.7.2, 2.1.7.3; or

ii) by two or more persons falling within sub-clause 2.1.7.4i)when taken together;

2.1.7.5 a body corporate in which:

i) a charity trustee or any connected person falling within sub-clauses 2.1.7.1 to 2.1.7.3 has a substantial interest; or

ii) two or more persons falling within sub-clause 2.1.7.5i) who, when taken together, have a substantial interest,

and section 118 of the Charities Act 2011 applies for the purposes of interpreting the terms used in this constitution;

2.1.8. "Dissolution Regulations" means the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (Insolvency and Dissolution) Regulations 2012;

2.1.9. "doctrinal basis" means the statement set out at Appendix 1, and any amendment to Appendix 1 may only be made by resolution of the affiliated churches passed in accordance with clause 32.1.1;

2.1.10. "ethos statements" means such statements of doctrine or ethos reflecting the historic evangelical Christian faith set out in Holy Scripture as have already been adopted by the Trust and are listed at Appendix 2, or as shall be determined by a resolution of the affiliated churches passed in accordance with clause 32.1.1, provided any such further or supplemental statements shall be consistent with the matters set out at Appendix 1, and any amendment to Appendix 2 or to those other statements may only be made by resolution of the affiliated churches passed in accordance with clause 32.1.1;

2.1.11. "General Regulations" means the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012;

2.1.12. "objects" means the objects of the CIO as set out in clause 5;

2.1.13. "Trust" means the unincorporated charity of The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, registered under charity number 263354 in England, and SC040111 in Scotland;

2.1.14. "written" or "in writing" refers to a legible document on paper or a document sent by electronic means which is capable of being printed out on paper;

2.1.15. Expressions not otherwise defined which are defined in the Charities Acts shall have the same meaning; and

2.1.16. References to an Act of Parliament are to that Act as amended or re-enacted from time to time and to any subordinate legislation made under it.

3. Name

3.1. The name of the CIO is "The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches".

4. National location of principal office

4.1. The CIO must have a principal office in England or Wales. The principal office of the CIO is in England.

5. Objects

5.1. The objects of the CIO are to advance throughout the world the evangelical Christian faith which shall mean the faith based upon the doctrinal basis of the CIO, and in particular, to:

5.1.1. Promote the unity and welfare of churches of Christian believers which are undenominational in constitution or which have come to occupy a position of detachment from the denominational bodies with which they have been associated but without necessarily altering their constitutions, all such churches finding their unity on the basis of the common adherence to the fundamental doctrines of Protestant evangelical Christianity as set forth in the doctrinal basis and the ethos statements;

5.1.2. Foster and encourage a recognition of the essential oneness of the Church of Christ and at the same time a recognition of the liberty of each individual church to conduct its work and worship in accordance with its own interpretation of the teaching of the Holy Scripture in relation thereto; and

5.1.3. To promote united testimony to and defend the beliefs set forth in the doctrinal basis.

5.2. Nothing in this constitution shall authorise an application of the property of the CIO for the purposes which are not charitable in accordance with section 7 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and section 2 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

6. Powers

6.1. The CIO has power to do anything which is calculated to further its objects or is conducive or incidental to doing so. In particular, the CIO has power to:

6.1.1. buy, take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire any property and to maintain and equip it for use;

6.1.2. sell, lease or otherwise dispose of all or any part of the property belonging to the CIO. In exercising this power, the CIO must comply as appropriate with sections 117 and 119-123 of the Charities Act 2011;

6.1.3. borrow money and to charge the whole or any part of its property as security for the repayment of the money borrowed. The CIO must comply as appropriate with sections 124 and 125 of the Charities Act 2011, if it wishes to mortgage land;

6.1.4. employ and remunerate such staff as are necessary for carrying out the work of the CIO (provided that, in relation to staff who have responsibilities for any theological or spiritual oversight of the CIO's activities, the charity trustees must ensure that such a staff member is committed to the CIO's objects and

doctrinal basis and ethos statements in belief and conduct). The CIO may employ or remunerate a charity trustee only to the extent that it is permitted to do so by clause 8 (Benefits and payments to charity trustees and connected persons) and provided it complies with the conditions of that clause;

6.1.5. make grants, gifts or donations to any other person or organisation;

6.1.6. deposit or invest funds, employ a professional fund-manager, and arrange for the investments or other property of the CIO to be held in the name of a nominee, in the same manner and subject to the same conditions as the trustees of a trust are permitted to do by the Trustee Act 2000; and

6.1.7. do anything else within the law which promotes or helps to promote the objects.

7. Application of income and property

7.1. The income and property of the CIO must be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects.

7.1.1. A charity trustee is entitled to be reimbursed from the property of the CIO or may pay out of such property reasonable expenses properly incurred by him when acting on behalf of the CIO.

7.1.2. A charity trustee may benefit from trustee indemnity insurance cover purchased at the CIO's expense in accordance with, and subject to the conditions in, section 189 of the Charities Act 2011.

7.2. None of the income or property of the CIO may be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit to any member of the CIO.

7.3. Nothing in this clause shall prevent a charity trustee or connected person receiving any benefit or payment which is authorised by Clause 8.

8. Benefits and payments to charity trustees and connected persons

General Provisions

8.1. No charity trustee or connected person may:

8.1.1. buy or receive any goods or services from the CIO on terms preferential to those applicable to members of the public;

8.1.2. sell goods, services, or any interest in land to the CIO;

8.1.3. be employed by, or receive any remuneration from, the CIO;

unless the payment or benefit is permitted by sub-clauses 8.2 to 8.7 of this clause or authorised by the court or the Commission. In this clause, a "financial benefit" means a benefit, direct or indirect, which is either money or has a monetary value.

Scope and powers permitting trustees' or connected persons' benefits

8.2. A charity trustee or connected person may enter into a contract for the supply of services, or of goods that are supplied in connection with the provision of services, to the CIO where that is permitted in accordance with, and subject to the conditions in, sections 185 to 188 of the Charities Act 2011.

8.3. Subject to sub-clause 8.6 of this clause a charity trustee or connected person may provide the CIO with goods that are not supplied in connection with services provided to the CIO by the charity trustee or connected person.

8.4. A charity trustee or connected person may receive interest on money lent to the CIO at a reasonable and proper rate which must be not more than the Bank of England bank rate (also known as the base rate).

8.5. A charity trustee or connected person may receive rent for premises let by the trustee or connected person to the CIO. The amount of the rent and the other terms of the lease must be reasonable and proper. The charity trustee concerned must withdraw from any meeting at which such a proposal or the rent or other terms of the lease are under discussion.

Payment for supply of goods only – controls

8.6. The CIO and its charity trustees may only rely upon the authority provided by sub-clause 8.3 of this clause if each of the following conditions is satisfied:

8.6.1. The amount or maximum amount of the payment for the goods is set out in a written agreement between the CIO and the charity trustee or connected person supplying the goods ("the supplier").

8.6.2. The amount or maximum amount of the payment for the goods does not exceed what is reasonable in the circumstances for the supply of the goods in question.

8.6.3. The other charity trustees are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the CIO to contract with the supplier rather than with someone who is not a charity trustee or connected person. In reaching that decision the charity trustees must balance the advantage of contracting with a charity trustee or connected person against the disadvantages of doing so.

8.6.4. The supplier is absent from the part of any meeting at which there is discussion of the proposal to enter into a contract or arrangement with him or her or it with regard to the supply of goods to the CIO.

8.6.5. The supplier does not vote on any such matter and is not to be counted when calculating whether a quorum of charity trustees is present at the meeting.

8.6.6. The reason for their decision is recorded by the charity trustees in the minute book.

8.6.7. A majority of the charity trustees then in office are not in receipt of remuneration or payments authorised by clause 8.

8.7. In this clause 8:

8.7.1. "the CIO" includes any company in which the CIO:

i) holds more than 50% of the shares; or

ii) controls more than 50% of the voting rights attached to the shares; or

iii) has the right to appoint one or more directors to the board of the company;

8.7.2. "connected person" includes any person within the definition set out in clause 2 (Interpretation).

9. Conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalty

9.1. A charity trustee must:

9.1.1. declare the nature and extent of any interest, direct or indirect, which he has in a proposed transaction or arrangement with the CIO or in any transaction or arrangement entered into by the CIO which has not previously been declared; and

9.1.2. absent himself from any discussions of the charity trustees in which it is possible that a conflict of interest will arise between his duty to act solely in the interests of the CIO and any personal interest (including but not limited to any financial interest).

9.2. Any charity trustee absenting himself from any discussions in accordance with this clause must not vote or be counted as part of the quorum in any decision of the charity trustees on the matter.

10. Liability of members to contribute to the assets of the CIO if it is wound up

10.1. If the CIO is wound up, each affiliated church, as a member of the CIO, is liable to contribute to the assets of the CIO, such amount (but not more than £1) as may be required for payment of the debts and liabilities of the CIO contracted before that affiliated church ceases to be a member, for payment of the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for adjustment of the rights of the contributing members among themselves.

10.2. In sub-clause 10.1 of this clause "member" includes any corporate or unincorporated body that was an affiliated church within 12 months before the commencement of the winding up.

10.3. Subject to clause 10.2, the affiliated churches have no liability to contribute to its assets if it is wound up, and accordingly have no personal responsibility for the settlement of its debts and liabilities beyond the amount that they are liable to contribute.

11. Charity trustees

Functions and duties of charity trustees.

11.1. The charity trustees shall manage the affairs of the CIO and may for that purpose exercise all the powers of the CIO. It is the duty of each charity trustee:

11.1.1. to exercise his powers and to perform his functions in his capacity as a trustee of the CIO in the way he decides in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the CIO; and

11.1.2. to exercise, in the performance of those functions, such care and skill as is reasonable in the circumstances having regard in particular to:

i) any special knowledge or experience that he has or holds himself out as having; and

ii) if he acts as a charity trustee of the CIO in the course of a business or profession, to any special knowledge or experience that it is reasonable to expect of a person acting in the course of that kind of business or profession.

11.2. In exercising their responsibilities, the board must ensure that it:

11.2.1. Takes account of the policy resolutions, views and values expressed by the affiliated churches at a general meeting;

11.2.2. Does not adopt any new policy on a matter which the charity trustees shall judge to be of importance to the CIO as a whole without reference first to the affiliated churches for their consideration; and

11.2.3. Does not vary any past policy decisions made by a general meeting without the approval of the affiliated churches by a simple majority at a general meeting.

Eligibility for trusteeship

11.3. Every charity trustee must be a natural person. The charity trustees have overall responsibility for the leadership, doctrinal standards, and membership criteria of the CIO. Therefore, a charity trustee must be qualified to serve as an elder in their affiliated church. This is consistent with the principles in the ethos statements.

11.4. No individual may be appointed, co-opted or re-appointed as a charity trustee of the CIO:

11.4.1. if he is under the age of 18 years; or

11.4.2. if he would automatically cease to hold office under the provisions of clause 14.1.5; or

11.4.3. unless, at the time of his appointment, he is a member of a church which is an affiliated church.

11.5. No one is entitled to act as a charity trustee whether on appointment, co-option or on any re-appointment until he has expressly acknowledged, in whatever way the charity trustees decide, his acceptance of and agreement with:

11.5.1. the office of charity trustee; and

11.5.2. the doctrinal basis and ethos statements; and

11.5.3. any other conditions or requirements that the trustees of the CIO may reasonably impose in order to ensure that the candidate is an appropriate person to be appointed as a trustee.

11.6. Each charity trustee shall be required to confirm annually in writing their assent to the doctrinal basis and ethos statements.

Number of charity trustees

11.7. There must be at least seven charity trustees. If the number falls below this minimum, the remaining trustees may act only to call a meeting of the affiliated churches, or co-opt a new charity trustee.

11.8. The maximum number of charity trustees is twelve. The affiliated churches may not elect, and the charity trustees may not co-opt, any charity trustee if as a result the number of charity trustees would exceed the maximum.

First charity trustees

11.9. The first charity trustees are those individuals who are trustees of the Trust as at the date on which the CIO is registered as a charity, and their period of office as a trustee of the CIO shall be coterminous with their period of office as a trustee of the Trust. Their names are as follows:

Peter Barham
Julian Hardyman
Bill James
Mike Kendall
Mark Lawrence
Steve Levy
Paul Mallard
Alan McKnight
Spencer Shaw

Greg Strain
Michael Teutsch
Peter Walkingshaw

11.10. Any individual who is appointed as a trustee of the Trust after the date on which the CIO is registered, but before the CIO has admitted any affiliated churches as members, shall also automatically become a trustee of the CIO, and their period of office shall be a maximum of three years from the date on which they were appointed.

12. Appointment of charity trustees

12.1. Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a maximum of three years in accordance with the remainder of this clause 12.

12.2. The process for appointment shall be as follows:

12.2.1. An invitation to submit nominations for appointment shall be issued to all affiliated churches no later than four months prior to the date of the annual general meeting. The invitation shall indicate the mixture of skills and experience that the board regards as necessary for the fulfilment of its responsibilities;

12.2.2. Any affiliated church may nominate one or more candidates for appointment as trustees;

12.2.3. Nominations must be returned to the CIO no later than two months prior to the date of the annual general meeting;

12.2.4. Only candidates who have been nominated by an affiliated church in accordance with clause 12.2.3 shall be entitled to stand for appointment at an annual general meeting;

12.2.5. The board shall review the nominations, and shall be entitled to veto the nomination of any candidate who the board regards as not meeting the relevant criteria for the appointment of a trustee, in accordance with the constitution;

12.2.6. If the number of approved nominees equates to, or is less than, the number of vacancies on the board, the approved nominees shall automatically be appointed. If the number of approved nominees is greater than the number of vacancies on the board, the affiliated churches shall elect such charity trustees as they see fit by secret ballot conducted in accordance with clause 22.21 and held at an annual general meeting.

12.3. Subject to clause 14, a charity trustee whose term of office has expired (whether under clause 11.9, 11.10 or 12.1) shall be eligible for reappointment for a maximum further three year term by election in accordance with this clause (including, for the avoidance of doubt, the requirement to be nominated for re-election by an affiliated church), and there shall be no limit on the number of terms for which a trustee may be reappointed.

12.4. In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the affiliated churches must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

12.5. Subject to clause 11, in the event that a vacancy arises on the board, the charity trustees may co-opt a charity trustee to serve until the following annual general meeting. Any person so co-opted will be entitled to be appointed as a charity trustee in accordance with the process set out above, save that the date of their term of office shall then be treated as being the date on which they were originally co-opted to serve as a charity trustee.

13. Information for new charity trustees

13.1. The charity trustees will make available to each new charity trustee, on or before his first appointment:

13.1.1. a copy of the current version of this constitution (including the doctrinal basis and ethos statements);

13.1.2. a copy of the CIO's latest Trustees' Annual Report and statement of accounts;

13.1.3. such other documents as the charity trustees think appropriate.

14. Retirement and removal of charity trustees

14.1. Subject to clause 14.2 a charity trustee ceases to hold office if he:

14.1.1. retires by notifying the CIO in writing (but only if enough charity trustees will remain in office when the notice of resignation takes effect to form a quorum for meetings);

14.1.2. is absent without permission of the charity trustees from three consecutive meetings of the board held no more frequently than once per month and the trustees resolve (acting by a majority of at least 75%) that his office be vacated;

14.1.3. dies;

14.1.4. in the written opinion, given to the CIO, of a registered medical practitioner treating that person, has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as a charity trustee and may remain so for more than three months;

14.1.5. is disqualified from acting as a charity trustee by virtue of sections 178-180 of the Charities Act 2011 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision); or

14.1.6. is removed by the other trustees or by a general meeting of the affiliated churches on the grounds that he:

14.1.6.1 No longer subscribes to or supports the objects, the doctrinal basis or the ethos statements; or

14.1.6.2 Is unwilling or unable to affirm the doctrinal basis or ethos statements in accordance with clause 11.6; or

14.1.6.3 Is guilty of conduct that is prejudicial to the CIO or inconsistent with the objects, doctrinal basis, or ethos statements; or

14.1.6.4 Acts in any way which jeopardises the CIO's ability to promote the objects or which seriously risks undermining the CIO's reputation or goodwill; or

14.1.6.5 Acts in any other way that is not in the best interests of the CIO and/or the furtherance of its objects, including (but not limited to) failing to meet the commitments expected of Trustees as described at clause 11; or

14.1.7. is removed by a vote of no confidence held in accordance with clause 22.17.

14.2. In relation to a resolution to remove a charity trustee under clause 14.1.2 or 14.1.6; the charity trustee in question shall be given reasonable opportunity to make representations in his defence.

15. Taking of decisions by charity trustees

15.1. Any decision may be taken either:

15.1.1. at a meeting of the charity trustees; or

15.1.2. by resolution in writing or electronic form agreed by a majority of the charity trustees, which may comprise either a single document or several documents containing the text of the resolution in like form to each of which one or more charity trustees has signified their agreement, provided that the number of charity trustees voting in favour of the resolution would constitute a quorum at a board meeting.

16. Delegation by charity trustees

16.1. The board may delegate the day to day management of the CIO to any other person, as it sees fit (subject to any conditions the board may impose), and, if it does, the board shall determine the terms and conditions on which the delegation is made. The board may at any time alter those terms and conditions, or revoke the delegation. The board shall from time to time review the arrangements which it has made for the delegation of its powers.

16.2. In addition to the charity trustees' statutory powers, the board may delegate any of its powers or functions to:

16.2.1. Any person who is employed or engaged by the CIO in connection with the operations and management of the CIO, on such terms as the board sees fit and subject to proper oversight by the board (and subject to clause 6.1.4 in relation to staff who have spiritual or theological responsibilities); or

16.2.2. Any committee of two or more charity trustees, subject to the provisions of clause 16.3 below.

16.3. The board shall have power to delegate any of its functions to committees, provided that:

16.3.1. At least one charity trustee is the chair of any such committee, and a meeting of the committee will not be quorate unless that charity trustee (or another trustee deputised to take his place) is present;

16.3.2. All proceedings and decisions of such committees must be reported promptly to the board;

16.3.3. No expenditure may be incurred or committed by such a committee on behalf of the CIO except in accordance with a budget or expenditure limits previously agreed by the board;

16.3.4. Such committee may co-opt additional members to the committee, provided that the names of any co-opted members are authorised by the charity trustees at their next meeting; and

16.3.5. The members of any such committee may be delegated such powers as the charity trustees see fit in order to carry out their duties, whether by contract, power of attorney or otherwise.

16.4. Subject to any such conditions, the proceedings of a committee shall be governed by this constitution regulating the proceedings of charity trustees (including in relation to conflicts of interest), in so far as they are capable of applying, save that a charity trustee appointed to any committee may exercise a right of veto over any decision made by the committee of which he is not in favour, in which case the committee shall refer the matter to the board for resolution.

16.5. The board shall have power to establish, organise and bring to an end any advisory group or committee to inform and assist the board in its decision-making, save that no such group or committee shall carry out any delegated business of the board or incur any expenditure on behalf of the CIO unless constituted in accordance with clause 16.3 above.

16.6. Any person appointed to serve on a board committee constituted under clause 16.3 shall be required to affirm their agreement with the doctrinal basis and ethos statements.

17. Meetings of charity trustees

Calling meetings

17.1. Any two charity trustees may call a meeting of the charity trustees.

17.2. The trustees shall hold at least three meetings in each calendar year.

17.3. The charity trustees shall decide how their meetings are to be called, and what notice is required.

Chairing of meetings

17.4. The charity trustees may annually appoint one of their number as chair of the board. If no-one has been so appointed, or if the person appointed is unwilling to preside or is not present within 15 minutes after the time of the meeting, the charity trustees present may appoint one of their number to chair that meeting.

Procedure at meetings

17.5. No decision shall be taken at a meeting unless a quorum is present at the time when the decision is taken. The quorum is seven charity trustees. A charity trustee shall not be counted in the quorum present when any decision is made about a matter upon which he is not entitled to vote.

17.6. Questions arising at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of those eligible to vote. In the event of a tied vote, the person chairing the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

Participation in meetings by electronic means

17.7. A meeting may be held by suitable electronic means agreed by the charity trustees in which each participant may communicate with all the other participants.

17.8. Any charity trustee participating at a meeting by suitable electronic means agreed by the charity trustees in which a participant or participants may communicate with all the other participants shall qualify as being present at the meeting.

17.9. Meetings held by electronic means must comply with this constitution and any additional rules established by the board, including chairing and the taking of minutes.

18. Officers

18.1. The CIO shall have a National Director and a Treasurer ("Officers").

18.2. Subject to clauses 6.1.4, 18.3 and 18.4, the Officers shall be appointed by the board, and the decision to make any such appointment shall be declared ratified or not ratified at the next general meeting of the affiliated churches. No person shall be entitled to take up an Office until a ratification of the members has been made.

18.3. Each of the Officers must be a member of an affiliated church.

18.4. Neither of the Officers shall be, or (while they hold office) shall become, a charity trustee of the CIO.

18.5. Each of the National Director and the Treasurer may be suspended or dismissed from their office by the board with immediate effect in any circumstances which the board judges to require this action.

18.6. The National Director:

18.6.1. Shall be a minister of religion at the date of his appointment, and, in accordance with the ethos statements, therefore shall also be required to be male;

18.6.2. Shall be invited by the board to attend its meetings, and shall normally be entitled to do so, save that he shall not participate in any discussion on matters connected with his appointment and remuneration as a paid servant of the CIO;

18.6.3. Shall be responsible for the day to day management and conduct of the CIO in accordance with the powers delegated to him by the board under clause 16.1, and within the parameters of any such delegation shall be entitled to establish teams, employ staff, appoint agents or enlist volunteers, subject to clause 16.6.

18.7. The Treasurer:

18.7.1. Shall be responsible to the board, and may be invited to meetings of the board at the board's invitation.

18.8. The Officers shall be required to affirm in writing, before they are appointed and annually thereafter, that they are in agreement with the doctrinal basis and ethos statements.

19. Membership Advisory committee

19.1. The board, with the assistance of the National Director, shall establish an advisory committee to advise it on applications for membership of the CIO in accordance with clause 20.3 below. The function of the committee shall be purely advisory, as described in clause 16.5, and the board shall not be entitled to delegate any of its functions to this committee. All members of the committee shall be required to affirm their agreement with the doctrinal basis and ethos statements.

20. Membership of the CIO

20.1. Membership of the CIO is open to any church falling within the description at clause 5.1.1 above which, in applying for membership in accordance with this clause 20, has confirmed its acceptance of the doctrinal basis, the ethos statements and of the responsibilities of members as described at clause 20.8.

20.2. A church that wishes to apply for membership must do so in the form prescribed by the board from time to time, provided that any such application shall include an expression of agreement with the doctrinal basis and ethos statements, and shall be signed by not fewer than two persons duly authorised by the applicant church.

20.3. The board shall invite and consider representations from the advisory committee established in accordance with clause 19 in relation to applications for membership.

20.4. The board:

20.4.1. Shall, if it approves an application for membership, notify the applicant church within 21 days of its decision;

20.4.2. May refuse an application for membership if it believes that it is in the best interests of the CIO for it to do so;

20.4.3. Shall, if it decides to refuse an application for membership, give the applicant its reasons for doing so, within 21 days of the decision being made, and shall give the applicant the opportunity to appeal against the refusal; and

20.4.4. Shall give fair consideration to any such appeal, and shall inform the applicant of its decision, but any decision to confirm refusal of the application for membership shall be final.

20.5. Each affiliated church shall be required to re-affirm its agreement with the doctrinal basis and ethos statements within each financial year of the CIO, in accordance with such process as is determined by the board.

20.6. A church that is unincorporated shall notify the CIO of the names of its pastors or charity trustees from time to time and at least annually, and the CIO shall be entitled to treat any one of those pastors or trustees as an individual representative of the church for the purposes of membership under this constitution.

20.7. Membership of the CIO cannot be transferred to anyone else, except in the case of an unincorporated body as described at clause 20.6, whose membership may be transferred to an incorporated body which is the intended successor of the unincorporated body or which substantially accedes to its functions. Such a transfer of membership does not take effect until the CIO has received written notification of the transfer.

20.8. It is the duty of each affiliated church to exercise its powers as a member of the CIO in the way it decides in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the CIO.

20.9. No subscription shall be payable by the affiliated churches, but the board may invite donations, suggest the level of donations and give any other guidance as it shall think fit.

20.10. Membership of the CIO shall automatically be terminated if:

20.10.1. The affiliated church resigns by notice in writing, signed by at least two authorised representatives of the church;

20.10.2. The church fails to re-affirm the doctrinal basis or ethos statements in accordance with clause 20.5, after such written requests to do so as the board may see fit;

20.10.3. The board votes (acting by a 75% majority) to remove a church from membership, save that before any such resolution is proposed to the board, at least 21 days' notice in writing shall be given to the board and to any duly authorised representative of the church concerned, and the church, acting by

its authorised representatives, shall be given reasonable opportunity to make representations to the board regarding the resolution.

21. Decisions which must be made by the affiliated churches

21.1. Any decision to:

21.1.1. amend the constitution of the CIO (including the doctrinal basis and ethos statements);

21.1.2. amalgamate the CIO with, or transfer its undertaking to, one or more other CIOs, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011; or

21.1.3. wind up or dissolve the CIO (including transferring its business to any other charity)

must be made by a formal resolution of the affiliated churches (rather than a resolution of the charity trustees), passed in accordance with clause 21.3.

21.2. Decisions of the affiliated churches as members of the CIO may only be made by resolution at a general meeting.

21.3. Any decision specified in sub-clause 21.1 of this clause must be made in accordance with the provisions of clause 21.4, clause 32 (amendment of constitution), clause 33 (Voluntary winding up or dissolution), or the provisions of the Charities Act 2011, the General Regulations or the Dissolution Regulations as applicable. Those provisions require the resolution to be agreed by a 75% majority of the members voting at a general meeting, or agreed by all members in writing.

21.4. The board shall call an extraordinary general meeting if any decision as is described in clause 21.1 is to be made by the affiliated churches, and in relation to such a meeting:

21.4.1. The board shall give at least three months' notice of the general meeting;

21.4.2. If a proposal to alter the constitution of the CIO (including the doctrinal basis or the ethos statements) is to be considered at the meeting, the text of the proposed alteration shall be included with the notice of the meeting;

21.4.3. A quorum at such a meeting shall be 20% of the number of affiliated churches at that time;

21.4.4. An affiliated church (whether incorporated or unincorporated) may, in accordance with its usual decision-making process, authorise one person to act as its representative at any such general meeting of the CIO, and shall notify the CIO of who is so authorised prior to the commencement of the general meeting;

21.4.5. At such a meeting, the representative of an affiliated church is entitled to exercise all rights and powers of the affiliated church as a member of the CIO; and

21.4.6. The decision shall otherwise be made in accordance with clause 21.3.

22. General meetings

Calling of general meetings

22.1. The CIO shall hold a general meeting of the affiliated churches at least once in each calendar year, and not more than fifteen months shall elapse between each general meeting, unless a previous general meeting resolves to make an exception in respect of a particular year. The time and place of the general meeting shall be decided by the board.

22.2. The board may convene an extraordinary general meeting at any time, and shall be required to convene such a general meeting if requested to do so in writing by no fewer than twenty affiliated churches. Any extraordinary general meeting so requested shall be held within thirty-five days of the receipt of any such request.

22.3. Ordinarily a general meeting or extraordinary general meeting will be held with people meeting in person. The board may decide, when it considers there to be exceptional circumstances requiring this, to hold the general members' meeting under clause 22.1 or an extraordinary general meeting under clauses 21.4 or 22.2 by suitable electronic means, in which each participant may communicate with all the other participants. The following rules apply to meetings held by suitable electronic means:

22.3.1. any member participating in a meeting by suitable electronic means agreed by the board, in which a participant or participants may communicate with all the other participants, shall qualify as being present at the meeting;

22.3.2. meetings held by electronic means must comply with all the rules for general meetings set out in clauses 21.4 and 22.12-22.26, including quorum, chairing and the taking of minutes;

22.3.3. voting at an electronic meeting shall be conducted in a way agreed by the board and communicated to the members with the notice of the meeting provided pursuant to clause 21.4 or 22.6;

22.3.4. when the board decides to hold a members' meeting by suitable electronic means, the last sentence of clause 22.1 shall be replaced with the words "The time and means by which the meeting will be held shall be decided by the board";

22.3.5. when the board decides to hold a members' meeting by suitable electronic means, clause 22.6.2 shall be read as "give the means by which the meeting will be held and information on how to access and vote at the meeting";

22.3.6. when the board decides to hold a members' meeting by suitable electronic means, clause 22.21.1 shall be read as "A resolution of the general meeting shall be decided by simple majority, on a show of hands or indicated by electronic means decided by the board, each delegate having one vote, unless

a secret ballot be demanded by the chairman or by at least five delegates present and entitled to vote".

Notice of general meetings of members

22.4. At least four months prior to the date of an annual general meeting called in accordance with clause 22.1 the board shall invite all affiliated churches to submit resolutions in writing for consideration at the general meeting. Any resolution submitted by at least fifteen affiliated churches shall be included on the agenda for the general meeting. The board shall notify the general meeting of any resolution submitted by fewer than fifteen affiliated churches.

22.5. The minimum period of notice required to hold a general meeting of the affiliated churches is 21 days.

22.6. The notice of a general meeting shall set out:

22.6.1. The time and date of the meeting;

22.6.2. The address at which the meeting is to be held;

22.6.3. The general nature of the business to be transacted at the meeting; and

22.6.4. Include, with the notice for any annual general meeting called in accordance with clause 22.1, the annual statement of accounts and trustees' annual report, details of any individuals who have been accepted for nomination and election as charity trustees and, where allowed under clause 25, details of where the information may be found on the CIO's website.

22.7. Notice of a general meeting shall be sent to all affiliated churches.

22.8. Notice of general meetings shall also be sent to any individuals who the board determines are associated with the CIO in a manner and subject to any conditions determined by the board from time to time. Receipt of such notice shall not entitle an individual to vote at the general meeting unless they would otherwise be authorised to do so in accordance with this constitution.

22.9. Except where a specified period of notice is strictly required by another clause in this constitution, by the Charities Act 2011 or by the General Regulations, a general meeting may be called by shorter notice if it is so agreed by a majority of the affiliated churches.

22.10. Proof that an envelope containing a notice was properly addressed, prepaid and posted; or that an electronic form of notice was properly addressed and sent, shall be conclusive evidence that the notice was given. Notice shall be deemed to be given 48 hours after it was posted or sent.

22.11. The proceedings of a meeting shall not be invalidated because an affiliated church that was entitled to receive notice of the meeting did not receive it due to an accidental omission by the CIO.

Procedure at general meetings of members

22.12. Clauses 22.13 to 22.16 have effect subject to the provisions of clause 21 in relation to the conduct of an extraordinary general meeting called for the purpose of taking any such decision as is described at 21.1.

22.13. Each affiliated church shall be entitled to appoint delegates to a general meeting, as follows:

22.13.1. Churches with 100 members or fewer shall be entitled to appoint two delegates;

22.13.2. Churches with 101-200 members shall be entitled to appoint three delegates;

22.13.3. Churches with 201-500 members shall be entitled to appoint four delegates;

22.13.4. Churches with 501 members or more shall be entitled to appoint five delegates.

22.14. Affiliated churches may appoint any person they see fit as a delegate to the general meeting, whether or not the person so appointed is a member of the affiliated church, save that no delegate may represent more than one affiliated church. It shall normally be the case that an affiliated church shall include its senior pastor amongst its delegates, unless he is unable to attend.

22.15. Each affiliated church shall notify the CIO prior to the commencement of the general meeting of the names of its appointed delegates.

22.16. The quorum for general meetings shall be 100 delegates.

22.17. The general meeting shall have the power, without prior notice, to dismiss the board in its entirety by means of a vote of no confidence. Such a resolution, if passed by a simple majority of delegates present at the meeting, shall automatically require all the charity trustees to resign. If such a resolution is passed, delegates at the same meeting must appoint at least three charity trustees who shall hold office until the next general meeting, and must also determine the procedure for appointment of additional charity trustees at the next general meeting.

22.18. Any individual who is a member of an affiliated church shall be entitled to attend a general meeting as an observer, but shall not form part of the quorum or be entitled to vote. Observers may also include any individuals who the board determines are associated with the CIO in a manner and subject to any conditions determined by the board from time to time.

22.19. The chairman of the board shall chair general meetings or, in his absence, the charity trustees shall appoint another one of their number to chair.

22.20. Rules governing the conduct of general meetings may be approved by the general meeting and published as standing orders and may be amended by the general meeting at any time.

22.21. Subject to clause 21:

22.21.1. A resolution of the general meeting shall be decided by simple majority on a show of hands, each delegate having one vote, unless a secret ballot be demanded by the chairman or by at least five delegates present and entitled to vote; and

22.21.2. If a secret ballot is held, it shall be held at the meeting at which it was demanded and each delegate present shall have one vote.

22.22. An affiliated church that is unable to be represented at a general meeting at which trustees are to be elected shall be entitled to vote on the election of trustees by postal vote or by electronic mail in advance of a general meeting only if the affiliated church has submitted a request to the board to do so no later than twenty-one days in advance of the general meeting, and provided the postal vote or electronic mail is received by the CIO no later than seven days prior to the scheduled start of the general meeting, as set out on the notice of the meeting.

22.23. Subject to clause 22.17, no decision shall be taken at a general meeting on any matter, the general nature of which has not been set out in the notice of the meeting.

22.24. The affiliated churches in a general meeting shall be entitled full opportunity to discuss the direction and policy of the CIO, and to express their will, by means of formally-adopted resolutions, for consideration by the trustees.

22.25. On the request of 25% of the delegates present and entitled to vote at a general meeting, a decision on any matter may be deferred until the matter has been referred to the affiliated churches and their wishes have been ascertained in such a manner as the chairman shall determine.

22.26. The chairman may, with the consent of any general meeting at which a quorum is present, and shall if so directed by the meeting, or if no quorum is present with half an hour of the time specified for the meeting, adjourn the meeting from time to time and place to place, but no business shall be transacted at the adjourned meeting which was not included on the notice of the original meeting. Unless a meeting is adjourned for more than thirty days, no additional notice of the meeting need be given.

23. Saving provisions

23.1. Subject to sub-clause 23.2 of this clause, all decisions of the charity trustees, or of a committee of charity trustees, shall be valid notwithstanding the participation in any vote of a charity trustee:

23.1.1. who was disqualified from holding office;

23.1.2. who had previously retired or who had been obliged by the constitution to vacate office;

23.1.3. who was not entitled to vote on the matter, whether by reason of a conflict of interest or otherwise;

if, without the vote of that charity trustee and that charity trustee being counted in the quorum, the decision has been made by a majority of the charity trustees at a quorate meeting.

23.2. Sub-clause 23.1 of this clause does not permit a charity trustee to keep any benefit that may be conferred upon him by a resolution of the charity trustees or of a committee of charity trustees if, but for sub-clause 23.1, the resolution would have been void, or if the charity trustee has not complied with clause 9 (Conflicts of interest).

24. Execution of documents

24.1. The CIO shall execute documents either by signature or by affixing its seal (if it has one)

24.2. A document is validly executed by signature if it is signed by at least two of the charity trustees.

24.3. If the CIO has a seal:

24.3.1. it must comply with the provisions of the General Regulations; and

24.3.2. the seal must only be used by the authority of the charity trustees or of a committee of charity trustees duly authorised by the charity trustees. The charity trustees may determine who shall sign any document to which the seal is affixed and unless otherwise so determined it shall be signed by two charity trustees.

25. Use of electronic communications – general

25.1. The CIO will comply with the requirements of the Communications Provisions in the General Regulations and in particular:

25.1.1. the requirement to provide within 21 days to any affiliated church, as a member of the CIO, on request a hard copy of any document or information sent to the affiliated church otherwise than in hard copy form;

25.1.2. any requirements to provide information to the Commission in a particular form or manner.

26. Use of electronic communications – to and by the CIO

26.1. Any affiliated church or charity trustee of the CIO may communicate electronically with the CIO to an address specified by the CIO for the purpose, so long as the communication is authenticated in a manner which is satisfactory to the CIO.

26.2. Any affiliated church or charity trustee of the CIO, by providing the CIO with an approved email address or similar, is taken to have agreed to receive communications from the CIO

in electronic form at that address, unless the affiliated church has indicated to the CIO its unwillingness to receive such communications in that form.

26.3. The charity trustees may, subject to compliance with any legal requirements, by means of publication on its website:

26.3.1. provide the affiliated churches with the notice referred to in clauses 21.4.1 or 22.6 (Notice of general meetings); or

26.3.2. give charity trustees notice of their meetings in accordance with clause 17 (Calling meetings).

26.4. The charity trustees must:

26.4.1. take reasonable steps to ensure that affiliated churches and charity trustees are promptly notified of the publication of any such notice; and

26.4.2. send any such notice in hard copy form to any affiliated church or charity trustee who has not consented to receive communications in electronic form.

27. Keeping of Registers

27.1. The CIO must comply with its obligations under the General Regulations in relation to the keeping of, and provision of access to, a register of its members and charity trustees.

28. Minutes

28.1. The charity trustees must keep minutes of all:

28.1.1. appointments of officers made by the charity trustees;

28.1.2. proceedings at general meetings of the CIO;

28.1.3. meetings of the charity trustees and committees of charity trustees including:

28.1.3.1 the names of the trustees present at the meeting;

28.1.3.2 the decisions made at the meetings; and

28.1.3.3 where appropriate the reasons for the decisions;

28.1.4. decisions made by the charity trustees otherwise than in meetings.

29. Accounting records, accounts, annual reports and returns, register maintenance

29.1. The charity trustees must comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 with regard to the keeping of accounting records, to the preparation and scrutiny of statements of account, and to the preparation of annual reports and returns. The

statements of account, reports and returns must be sent to the Commission, regardless of the income of the CIO, within 10 months of the financial year end.

29.2. The charity trustees must comply with their obligation to inform the Commission within 28 days of any change in the particulars of the CIO entered on the Central Register of Charities.

30. Rules

30.1. The charity trustees may from time to time make such reasonable and proper rules or bye laws as they may deem necessary or expedient for the proper conduct and management of the CIO, but such rules or bye laws must not be inconsistent with any provision of this constitution. Copies of any such rules or bye laws currently in force must be made available to any affiliated church on request.

31. Disputes

31.1. If a dispute arises between affiliated churches about the validity or propriety of anything done by the affiliated churches under this constitution, and the dispute cannot be resolved by agreement, the parties to the dispute must first try in good faith to settle the dispute by mediation before resorting to litigation.

32. Amendment of constitution

32.1. As provided by Sections 224-227 of the Charities Act 2011:

32.1.1. this constitution (including the doctrinal basis and ethos statements) can only be amended:

32.1.1.1 by resolution agreed in writing by all affiliated churches; or

32.1.1.2 by a resolution passed by a 75% majority of those voting at an extraordinary general meeting of the affiliated churches called in accordance with clause 21.

32.1.2. Any alteration of clause 5 (Objects), clause 33 (Voluntary winding up or dissolution), this clause, or of any provision where the alteration would provide authorisation for any benefit to be obtained by charity trustees or affiliated churches or persons connected with them, requires the prior written consent of the Commission.

32.1.3. No amendment that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Charities Act 2011 or the General Regulations shall be valid.

32.1.4. A copy of every resolution amending the constitution, together with a copy of the CIO's constitution as amended must be sent to the Commission by the end of the period of 15 days beginning with the date of passing of the resolution.

33. Voluntary winding up or dissolution

33.1. As provided by the Dissolution Regulations, the CIO may be dissolved by resolution of its members. Any decision by the members to wind up or dissolve the CIO can only be made:

33.1.1. at an extraordinary general meeting of the affiliated churches called in accordance with clause 21.4, of which not less than 14 days' notice has been given to those eligible to attend and vote, by a resolution passed by a 75% majority of those voting, or

33.1.2. by a resolution agreed in writing by all affiliated churches.

33.2. Subject to the payment of all the CIO's debts:

33.2.1. Any resolution for the winding up of the CIO, or for the dissolution of the CIO without winding up, may contain a provision directing how any remaining assets of the CIO shall be applied.

33.2.2. If the resolution does not contain such a provision, the charity trustees must decide how any remaining assets of the CIO shall be applied.

33.2.3. In either case the remaining assets must be applied for the advancement of the Christian faith in accordance with the CIO's doctrinal basis and ethos statements, or a similar doctrinal basis as decided by the affiliated churches, and if and insofar as effect cannot be given to this provision, then to charitable purposes the same as or similar to those of the CIO.

33.3. The CIO must observe the requirements of the Dissolution Regulations in applying to the Commission for the CIO to be removed from the Register of Charities, and in particular:

33.3.1. the charity trustees must send with their application to the Commission:

33.3.1.1 a copy of the resolution passed by the affiliated churches;

33.3.1.2 a declaration by the charity trustees that any debts and other liabilities of the CIO have been settled or otherwise provided for in full; and

33.3.1.3 a statement by the charity trustees setting out the way in which any property of the CIO has been or is to be applied prior to its dissolution in accordance with this constitution;

33.3.2. the charity trustees must ensure that a copy of the application is sent within seven days to every affiliated church and employee of the CIO, and to any charity trustee of the CIO who was not privy to the application.

33.4. If the CIO is to be wound up or dissolved in any other circumstances, the provisions of the Dissolution Regulations must be followed.

Appendix 1: Doctrinal Basis

The churches of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches are committed to these truths of historic, biblical Christianity:

1. GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

2. THE BIBLE

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. HUMANITY

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. God created us male and female, which is identified by our biological sex. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman and is a picture of the relationship between Christ and his bride the church. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God to be enjoyed only within the context of marriage.

4. THE FALL

As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

5. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

6. SALVATION

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

7. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

8. THE CHURCH

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

9. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

10. THE FUTURE

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

Appendix 2: Ethos statements

Statement on Gospel Unity as adopted by the Trust in November 2011.

fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/gospel-unity

Statement on Women in Ministry as adopted by the Trust in November 2011 and updated in November 2023 and November 2026.

fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/women-in-ministry

Statement on Same-Sex Marriage as adopted by the Trust in November 2013 and November 2026.

fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage