



Constitutional Guidelines for Churches

**The Christian & Missionary Alliance
of New Zealand**

OCTOBER 2011

Approved at Council 2011

INTRODUCTION

This document contains information previously included within the Manual of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New Zealand (hereinafter referred to as “the Alliance”) under the heading “Suggested Constitution for Churches”. During the review of the Manual, and the subsequent adoption of the revised Trust Deed, Constitution and By Laws of the Alliance (hereinafter referred to as “the Constitution”), the following document was established to retain this information for the guidance and supervision of Alliance churches.

Where appropriate, the name of the church can be added and wording left unchanged. In other places the wording serves as a guide as to what should be placed under a particular heading.

Items marked with ^(CC) were added to satisfy the requirement of the Charities Commission and must be retained (without the notation).

This Document as a Guideline

This document serves as a guideline for churches who should ensure their own constitutional documents are consistent with it. The Rules Committee will periodically review church constitutions and working with leadership teams to encourage consistency.

Definitions

An *Organised Church* is defined by the National Leadership Team as a church with 20 or more adult members, who are financially self supporting, and have suitably qualified leaders that operates autonomously under it’s own constitution. This constitution shall be consistent with, and subject to the Alliance Constitution and the Alliance Constitutional Guidelines for Churches.

A *Developing Church* is defined by the National Leadership Team as a church with any one of the following characteristics:

1. Less than 20 adult members,
2. The absence of suitably qualified leaders
3. Experiencing serious financial hardship
4. Receiving financial assistance from the Alliance
5. Experiencing serious internal problems

Each developing church will operate under the supervision of an Advisory Board and the Developing Church guidelines, and should be working towards full organisation, until such time as they become recognised by the NLT as an Organised Church, or are granted special exemption by the NLT.

Churches are classified at the discretion of the NLT, and may be reclassified with notification of this change to be given in writing stating the reasons for the reclassification. The classifications of all churches should be reviewed annually.

Amendments

Amendments to this document require a 67% majority at any meeting of the General Council and are applicable immediately upon approval. Changes can be proposed by the National Leadership Team (NLT) or the members of individual Alliance churches. Notification of changes must be presented in writing to the Alliance constituency at least two weeks before the meeting of General Council.

CONSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISED CHURCHES

PREAMBLE

The _____ church is an integral part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New Zealand Group (the Alliance). It shall consist of members duly organised in accordance with the Alliance Constitution and the Alliance Constitutional Guidelines for Churches. It is united in governance, fellowship and service in order to promote unity of faith in the fullness of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King; and to facilitate the spread of the gospel at home and abroad under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Any income, benefit, or advantage must be to advance the charitable purposes of the organisation. ^(CC)

ARTICLE 1 - NAME

This church shall be known as of The Christian and Missionary Alliance of New Zealand Group. ^(CC)

ARTICLE 2 – OBJECTS

Some churches may choose to state the main reasons (Objects) for their existence, essentially a fuller and more specific explanation of what is included in the later part of the Preamble. This could also be a place to list the churches Vision and/or Mission statement.

The following example is from West Harbour Alliance Church

The West Harbour Alliance Church, through its membership, exists to:

- 1. Maintain and promote the public worship of God.*
- 2. Promote brotherly love and encourage each other in faith as set forth in the Old and New Testaments.*
- 3. Live a life of personal witness, that others may come to know Christ as their own personal Saviour and Lord.*
- 4. Provide a Christian Education ministry that will assist the members and adherents in the training of families in godly conduct.*
- 5. Work as part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of NZ for the speedy evangelization of the world.*
- 6. Provide opportunities that will seek to enrich the lives of those in our community.*
- 7. Any income, benefit, or advantage must be to advance the charitable purposes of the organisation.*

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP & DOCTRINE

Qualifications for people to become members shall consist of:

1. Satisfactory evidence of regeneration
2. Acceptance of The Doctrinal Statement Of The Alliance (ARTICLE III. The Constitution)
3. Acceptance of the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King.
4. Full sympathy with the principles and objects of the Alliance and co-operation by contributing to its work.
5. Such other qualifications that may be stated in the local church by-laws.

No member of the organisation, or anyone associated with a member, is allowed to take part in, or influence any decision made by the organisation in respect of payments to, or on behalf of, the member or associated person of any income, benefit, or advantage. ^(CC)

Any payments made to a member of the organisation, or person associated with a member, must be for goods or services that advance the charitable purpose and must be reasonable and relative to payments that would be made between unrelated parties. ^(CC)

ARTICLE 4 - ORDINANCES

Baptism is by immersion and is recognised as a Scriptural ordinance. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated regularly.

ARTICLE 5 - ELDERS BOARD

A. FORMATION

The Elders Board shall consist of at least four members including the Pastor who shall be seen to satisfy the scriptural requirements for church leadership as set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It shall meet at least monthly for prayer and business. All Officers, Committees, and Ministries except the Nominating Committee are amenable to the Elders Board. The Senior Pastor is the Chairman of the Elders Board and the leading Elder of the church. He may, however choose to delegate the Chairmanship responsibility to a fellow Elder. In the absence of a Senior Pastor the Elders Board shall elect one of its members to fill the position of chairman. If an Elder is considered by his fellow Elders to be living contrary to the scriptural standards of Eldership, the Elders Board may, by a 67% majority vote, call for the resignation of that Elder. The Elders Board is amenable to the local church membership and the National Leadership Team (NLT) of the Alliance.

B. FUNCTION

The spiritual work and leadership of the church shall be in the care of the Elders Board who shall be responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the church. They shall constitute the committee on membership and discipline. The Elders shall be ex-officio members of the Executive Committee and be represented at all Executive meetings.

1. To oversee preaching and teaching
2. To make decisions on matters of doctrine and practice affecting the church.
3. For the provision of pastoral care, including visitation, counselling, anointing and prayer for the sick.
4. For examining candidates for membership, disciplining members and keeping the membership rolls up to date.
5. To oversee the church's programmes to ensure their harmony and contribution to the purposes of the church.
6. For appointing people to non-elected positions and for filling positions becoming vacant between annual meetings.
7. To issue calls to pastoral candidates with the approval of the Church Membership and the National Director.
8. To appoint a secretary who shall keep the minutes of all Elders Board meetings.

ARTICLE 6 - THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. FORMATION

The Executive committee shall consist of members which include the Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Members at large. It shall meet at least monthly for prayer and business. The chairman of the Executive Committee shall be elected from amongst it's members at its first meeting following the Annual General Meeting.

In the absence of an Elders Board:

1. All Elders elected shall be ex officio members of the Executive Committee, and be represented at all Executive Committee meetings.
2. All officers, committees and ministries, except the Nominating Committee, are amenable to the Executive Committee.
3. The Executive Committee Shall be responsible for filling the unexpired term of positions becoming vacant between Annual General Meetings and to appoint people to non-elected positions.
4. The Executive Committee is amenable to the local church membership and the NLT.
5. The Executive Committee, with the attendance of the Elders, shall be empowered to carry out the functions of the Elders Board.

B. FUNCTION

The financial and property matters of the church shall be in the care of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be under the authority of the Board of Elders.

No offerings shall be solicited from the congregation except by order of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee is not authorised to commit finances for non-budgetted expenditure of more than \$5,000 without the approval of the church membership.

The Executive Committee is also responsible for:

1. Recording the minutes of all Executive Committee meetings and Church members meetings, and conduct all correspondence as necessary.
2. Administering all other relevant matters.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive all monies of the church. He shall pay all bills on the order of the Executive Committee, keeping proper records of all transactions and filing receipts for payments made. The Executive Committee shall determine where funds of the church shall be kept. The Treasurer shall submit an audited report to the Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 7 - OFFICERS

The Officers shall be seen to satisfy the scriptural requirements of church leadership and be members of the local church. They shall consist of the Senior Pastor, together with those appointed by the Executive Committee from amongst the following: Pastor(s), Elders, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and any other auxiliary officers, i.e., Deacons and Deaconesses, the church deems necessary.

A. SENIOR PASTOR

As chairman of the Elders Board, the Senior Pastor will be the leading Elder of the church. He is a member ex-officio of all committees. He shall be called by the Elders Board upon approval by the church membership and the National Director. The Elders Board shall not negotiate with any candidate without the approval of the National Director. The Senior Pastor may resign from the church by giving due notice of his intention to both the National Director and the Elders Board. The Elders Board may, in conjunction with the National Director ask for the resignation of the Pastor.

F. DEACONS & DEACONESSES

The Deacons & Deaconesses shall be appointed by the Elders Board and be responsible for carrying out the charities and practical affairs of the life of the church. They shall be included as members on the Executive Committee.

H. TRUSTEES

Where required, Trustees shall be appointed by the Executive Committee. Their duties and ministries shall be stated in the By-Laws of the local church.

ARTICLE 8 – MINISTRIES

Churches are encouraged to consider what is required to build healthy churches in their own context and work to establish these ministries. These ministries can be listed in this section with any specific guidelines and rules which apply to their operation.

ARTICLE 9 - RELATIONSHIP

The parent body of this church is the Alliance. The church is subordinate to the constitution of that body. The church shall contribute financially towards the funds of the Alliance as prescribed by the General Council.

Proposals for the establishment and operation of ministries which require the purchase, building or renovation of property, or capital investment of more than \$30,000 shall first be referred to the NLT for their approval, together with relevant building plans and loan documents.

Annual Reports must be submitted to the NLT prior to the churches Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 10 - GOVERNMENT

A. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There shall be an Annual General Meeting of all members held at _____ where reports from the Elders and Executive Committee, including a Financial Report from the Treasurer shall be received. It shall elect Elders and members of the Executive Committee.

B. VOTING

On General Church matters in which no legal questions are involved, it is understood that all members in good and regular standing, who have reached the age of 16 years are entitled to vote. In matters involving title to property or legal procedures, the law of New Zealand shall determine the age at which members are eligible to vote.

For the election of Elders and Executive Board members the following majority votes are recommended: Elder's: 67% majority vote; Executive Members and all other Officers: 50% majority vote.

C. ELECTIONS

Elections shall be by secret ballot.

ARTICLE 11 - NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Pastor, one church member elected by the Elders Board, and three church members elected by the membership at least two months prior to the Annual General Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall place in nomination one name for each Office to be elected at the Annual General Meeting and submit a written report to the church that shall be publicly displayed at least two Sundays prior to the Annual General Meeting. Other nominations may be made from the floor, except for the position of Elder. Nominations for Elders may be submitted in writing to the Nominating Committee for their approval at least three weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 12 - MISSIONARY CONVENTION

A missionary convention shall be held annually as scheduled by the NLT.

ARTICLE 13 - PROPERTY

A. REAL PROPERTY

The title to all property shall be held by the Alliance. The NLT shall provide a declaration of trust indicating that the property is held in trust for the church. The church may acquire, sell, convey, exchange or encumber real property by order of the church membership through the Executive Committee. Where trustees are required, the order of membership shall proceed through them.

B. PERSONAL PROPERTY

The church may acquire, sell, improve, encumber and convey personal property for church purposes.

C. DISSOLUTION

Should the Church cease to exist or cease to be subject to the constitution of the Alliance, then all of its property appurtenances and effects then owned or held by it shall enure to the benefit of, and become the property of the Alliance.

ARTICLE 14 - RECORDS

The official records of all officers of the church and all of its departments are the property of the church. All financial records shall be audited annually or at any time on order of the executive committee. In the event of the death or resignation of the incumbent, or upon the election of his successor, the current records necessary for fulfilling the obligations of the office shall be passed on to the newly elected officer. All records, other than current records, shall be kept in a safe repository selected by the executive committee.

ARTICLE 15 - AMENDMENTS

This document may be amended by a 67% majority vote at any church members meeting. Notification of changes shall be advised to church member at least two weeks prior the members meeting. Changes will then be referred to the Rules Committee for ratification to ensure this document remains consistent with the Alliance Constitution.

ARTICLE 16 - BY-LAWS

Church by-laws not in conflict with the provisions of the Alliance Constitution may be adopted by a 67% majority vote at an official members meeting of the Church. A copy of such by-laws shall be filed with the NLT. The Alliance Committee on Rules shall determine if any local bylaw is in conflict with the Alliance Constitution and if so, they will become null and void.

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING CHURCHES

PREAMBLE

The _____ church is an integral part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New Zealand Group (the Alliance). It is united in governance, fellowship and service in order to promote unity of faith in the fullness of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King; and to facilitate the spread of the gospel at home and abroad under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Any income, benefit, or advantage must be to advance the charitable purposes of the organisation. ^(CC)

These Administrative Guidelines have three objects:

1. To provide an outline for the administration of a developing Alliance church and encourage it's development to fully organised church status.
2. To provide direction for the NLT in relation to new church plants until they become organised churches.
3. To provide direction for the NLT, when it is necessary to bring a seriously declining or divided organised church under the immediate supervision of the NLT.

These Administrative Guidelines come into effect in the following circumstances:

1. When the membership declines below twenty adult members.
2. When there is an absence of suitably qualified leaders
3. When the Elders Board or Executive Committee of the church requests the supervision of the NLT because of internal problems in the church.
4. When the church is experiencing serious financial hardship
5. When the church is receiving financial assistance from the Alliance

In these circumstances the church's constitution shall be suspended and the church shall function under these administrative guidelines until such time as the church has regained sufficient stability to function again under it's own constitution.

ARTICLE 1 - NAME

This church shall be known as of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New Zealand Group.
^(cc)

ARTICLE 2 – OBJECTS

Some churches may choose to state the main reasons (Objects) for their existence, essentially a fuller and more specific explanation of what is included in the later part of the Preamble. This could also be a place to list the churches Vision and/or Mission statement.

The following example is from West Harbour Alliance Church

The West Harbour Alliance Church, through its membership, exists to:

1. Maintain and promote the public worship of God.

2. Promote brotherly love and encourage each other in faith as set forth in the Old and New Testaments.
3. Live a life of personal witness, that others may come to know Christ as their own personal Saviour and Lord.
4. Provide a Christian Education ministry that will assist the members and adherents in the training of families in godly conduct.
5. Work as part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of NZ for the speedy evangelization of the world.
6. Provide opportunities that will seek to enrich the lives of those in our community.
7. Any income, benefit, or advantage must be to advance the charitable purposes of the organisation.

ARTICLE 3 - MEMBERSHIP AND DOCTRINE

Qualifications for people to become members shall consist of:

1. Satisfactory evidence of regeneration.
2. Acceptance of The Doctrinal Statement Of The Alliance (ARTICLE III. The Constitution)
3. Acceptance of the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King.
4. Full sympathy with the principles and objects of the Alliance and co-operation by contributing to its work.
5. Such other qualifications that may be stated in the local church by-laws.

Procedures for membership shall be:

1. People may apply for church membership through the local Pastor who will review the application in consultation with the National Director. Successful applicants will receive a membership certificate and be welcomed into membership at a public service of the church.
2. Upon the formal organisation of the church, the members of the church under the administrative guidelines shall be the charter members of the organised church.
3. No member of the organisation, or anyone associated with a member, is allowed to take part in, or influence any decision made by the organisation in respect of payments to, or on behalf of, the member or associated person of any income, benefit, or advantage. ^(CC)
4. Any payments made to a member of the organisation, or person associated with a member, must be for goods or services that advance the charitable purpose and must be reasonable and relative to payments that would be made between unrelated parties. ^(CC)

ARTICLE 4 - ORDINANCES

Baptism is by immersion and is recognised as a scriptural ordinance. The Lord's supper shall be celebrated regularly.

ARTICLE 5 - ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The National Director, in consultation with the Pastor and the church, shall appoint an Advisory Committee consisting of the Pastor, and other people deemed necessary to the operation of the church. The committee shall meet monthly for prayer and to conduct the business of the church. The committee is amenable to the NLT and a copy of the minutes of the committee meetings shall be submitted to the NLT. All other auxiliaries of the church shall be amenable to the Advisory Committee.

ARTICLE 6 - OFFICERS

The National Director, in consultation with the Pastor and the church, shall appoint officers as needed for the ministries of the church.

ARTICLE 7 - PASTOR

The Pastor shall be appointed by the National Director and the L&O Committee after agreement with the church.

The Pastor may resign from the church by giving at least one month's notice of his intentions to the NLT in writing; with a three month's notice being preferable. The Advisory Committee, excluding the Pastor, in conjunction with the NLT, may ask for the resignation of the Pastor, after the agreement of a membership meeting they called for that purpose, giving at least one month's notice if such action is taken.

ARTICLE 8 - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

The Pastor shall have general oversight of the work of the church. He may serve as Chairman of the Advisory Committee and is a member ex officio of all committees. Other officers shall serve as set forth for officers in the CONSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISED CHURCHES, ARTICLES 5-7.

ARTICLE 9 – MINISTRIES

Churches are encouraged to consider what is required to build healthy churches in their own context and work to establish these ministries.

ARTICLE 10 - RELATIONSHIP

The Alliance is the parent body of developing churches working toward formal organisation. The church is subordinate to the constitution of that body. The church shall contribute financially towards the ministries of the Alliance at a rate determined by the General Council.

Annual Reports must be submitted to the NLT prior to the churches Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 11 - MISSIONARY CONVENTION

A missionary convention shall be held annually as scheduled by the NLT.

ARTICLE 12 - PROPERTY

All real and personal property shall be managed according to the Alliance Constitution (ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP, B. Church Property.)

ARTICLE 13 - RECORDS

The official records of all officers of the church and all of its departments are the property of the church. All financial records shall be audited annually or at any time on order of the executive committee. In the event of the death or resignation of the incumbent, or upon the election of his successor, the current records necessary for fulfilling the obligations of the office shall be passed on to the newly elected officer. All records, other than current records, shall be kept in a safe repository selected by the executive committee.

ARTICLE 14 - AMENDMENTS

These administrative guidelines for developing churches may be amended by a 67% majority vote at any regular business meeting of the NLT, notice having been given in a previous meeting. Changes will be referred to the Rules Committee for ratification to ensure this document remains consistent with the Alliance Constitution.

ARTICLE 15 - BY-LAWS

Local by-laws not in conflict with these administrative guidelines may be established by the National Director, at the request of the Pastor and the Advisory Committee, subject to the approval of the Alliance Rules Committee.