

THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE
BELFAST CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Adopted by the Special General Meeting

held on

3rd November, 1996

And

Amended at General Meetings held on

28th February, 1999

2nd November, 2008

4th December, 2011

28th August, 2016

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Where appropriate, words in the singular shall include the plural and the masculine shall include the feminine and vice versa.

ARTICLE 1 – THE NAME

- 1.1 The name of the Church shall be the "Belfast Chinese Christian Church", hereafter referred to as the "BCCC".
- 1.2 The Chinese name of the BCCC shall be:- 貝爾法斯特華人基督教會

ARTICLE 2 – OBJECTIVES

The objects of the Church are to advance the Christian Religion and such other charitable purposes as the Church shall determine and in furtherance of these objects the Church shall exist:-

- 2.1 To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, primarily, but not exclusively, to the Chinese in Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 To provide a spiritual home for Christians and to care for their spiritual welfare.
- 2.3 To equip for Christian service, including those who will be returning to their home country.
- 2.4 To cooperate with Chinese churches and fellowships, other churches and societies whose doctrinal position agrees with ours.
- 2.5 To relieve those persons who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress.

ARTICLE 3 – THE HISTORY OF THE BCCC

- 3.1 The BCCC is an interdenominational church which originally started as the Belfast Chinese Christian Fellowship at Easter 1975 by Reverend Ronnie McCracken and Mr. Nai Bob Cham.
- 3.2 On the 26th August, 1987, the Belfast Chinese Christian Fellowship became officially linked with the registered charity Chinese Overseas Christian Mission, (COCM, present address: 4 Earlsfield Road, London SW18 3DW), and since then has continued to work in close cooperation with the COCM, giving and receiving such help as will further each other's objectives.

ARTICLE 4 – DOCTRINAL BASIS

The doctrinal basis of the BCCC is:

- 4.1 The Divine inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- 4.2 The Unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- 4.3 The Sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgement.
- 4.4 The dignity of man created in the image of God, and the universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the Fall, rendering man subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- 4.5 The full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; His virgin birth and His real and sinless humanity; His death on the cross, His bodily resurrection and His present reign in heaven.
- 4.6 Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, only through the sacrificial death of our representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man.
- 4.7 Justification as God's act of undeserved mercy, in which the sinner is pardoned of all his sins, and accepted as righteous in God's sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, this justification being received not by works but by faith alone.
- 4.8 The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, making the death of Jesus Christ effective to the individual sinner and granting repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ.
- 4.9 The indwelling work of the Holy Spirit in believers, producing in them an increasing likeness to Christ in character and behaviour, and equipping them for witness in the world.
- 4.10 The one holy universal church which is the body of Christ, and to which all believers belong.
- 4.11 The expectation of the future visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ in person.
- 4.12 The bodily resurrection and eternal security of all true believers.
- 4.13 All unrepentant sinners will be resurrected and subjected to eternal punishment in hell.

ARTICLE 5 – MEMBERS

5.1 *Application for Membership*

- 5.1.1 Membership shall be open to all who:
 - 5.1.1.1 have made a credible profession of the new birth through repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 5.1.1.2 have been baptised. Consideration will be given to exceptional cases.
 - 5.1.1.3 have attended the BCCC meetings regularly for at least three months immediately prior to the application for membership.
- 5.1.2 Applicants must sign and agree to the doctrinal basis and objectives of the BCCC.
- 5.1.3 Applicants already holding membership in a church elsewhere are not required to relinquish it in order to join the BCCC.
- 5.1.4 An application form must be completed by all applicants for membership.
- 5.1.5 Membership will be granted following interview by the Board of Elders.

5.2 *Responsibilities of Members*

- 5.2.1 To seek personal growth through prayer and the study of God's Word.
- 5.2.2 To meet together regularly for worship, prayer and the Holy Communion.
- 5.2.3 To promote one another's well being through mutual care, love and concern.
- 5.2.4 To exercise prayerful stewardship of time, talents and money in the life and ministry of the Church.
- 5.2.5 To make careful study of the constitution.
- 5.2.6 To attend General Meetings. If a member is unable to attend, he should inform the Secretary and give a valid reason for his absence.

5.3 *Suspension or Termination of Membership*

- 5.3.1 A member may withdraw his membership by giving written notice to the Board of Elders.
- 5.3.2 When a member does not fulfill his responsibilities (as stated in Article 5.2) for more than one year, his voting rights will be suspended until such time as he resumes active participation in the life of the Church.
- 5.3.3 If a member should be found living or teaching contrary to the doctrinal basis of the BCCC, or is guilty of serious misconduct, and shows no repentance after being admonished in love by the Board of Elders, the termination of his membership shall be recommended by the Board of Elders and confirmed by a General Meeting.
- 5.3.4 Membership shall be considered to have ceased when the member leaves Northern Ireland permanently.

5.4 *Associate Membership*

- 5.4.1 On leaving Northern Ireland permanently, a member will be asked by the Secretary if he wishes to become an Associate. Associate Members shall have no voting rights nor shall they hold office in the BCCC, but shall be provided with news of the BCCC from time to time, and be encouraged to continue supporting the work by prayer and regular giving.

ARTICLE 6 – COMMITTEE MEMBERS

6.1 *Qualification of Committee Members*

- 6.1.1 Candidates shall have attained 18 years of age at the time of nomination.
- 6.1.2 Candidates shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- 6.1.3 Candidates shall be members of BCCC and have demonstrated over a sufficient length of time, that they are faithful and mature members of the body of Christ and faithfully devote themselves to personal prayer and study of the Word.
- 6.1.4 Candidates shall attend public worship, prayer meetings and Bible studies of the Church regularly unless prevented from doing so for valid reasons.
- 6.1.5 Candidates must be willing to participate wholeheartedly in the ministry of the Church.

6.2 *Election of Committee Members*

- 6.2.1 The Chairman of the Committee will be an elder appointed by the Board of Elders.
- 6.2.2 The Committee shall consist of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and any other offices as shall be deemed necessary by the Board of Elders.
- 6.2.3 A Committee Member shall hold office for a term of 1 year and may be re-nominated. After 6 consecutive years, the Committee Member shall take sabbatical leave for at least one year.
- 6.2.4 A Committee Member may be elected in absentia, with his written consent.
- 6.2.5 A candidate for election to the office of Committee Member shall be duly nominated and seconded by members of 16 years of age and above and elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the BCCC voting members present at General Meetings.
- 6.2.6 In the case where the number of candidates who obtain at least two-thirds of the votes exceeds the required number of Committee Members, those candidates with the highest votes shall be selected.
- 6.2.7 In a tie situation, decisions shall be made by the casting vote of the Chairman of the General Meeting.
- 6.2.8 The allocation of Committee posts shall be agreed upon by the newly-formed Committee.

6.3 *Responsibilities of Committee Members*

- 6.3.1 To meet regularly and to take action in all matters concerning the administration of the BCCC including ushering, collection of the offering, making refreshments and caretaking of the church building.
- 6.3.2 To provide Associate Members with news of the BCCC from time to time and to encourage them to support the work by prayer and regular giving.
- 6.3.3 To administer the finance of the BCCC.
- 6.3.4 To form and dissolve subcommittees, when necessary, and to supervise their work.
- 6.3.5 To convene the Committee Meetings of the BCCC.
- 6.3.6 To prepare and keep the agendas and minutes of all Committee Meetings.
- 6.3.7 To keep the Board of Elders informed of all BCCC matters and to seek advice from them whenever necessary.
- 6.3.8 To communicate with COCM and keep it informed of the BCCC situation.
- 6.3.9 To present the annual reports of the Church and its finances at the Annual General Meetings.
- 6.3.10 To maintain all Church property and equipment.

- 6.3.11 To ensure that the Committee minutes of the BCCC are available to members of 16 years of age and above who request to see them.
- 6.3.12 To inform members on a regular basis of BCCC's financial situation.
- 6.4 There shall be not less than half of the Committee Members present at all Committee Meetings.
- 6.5 Decisions shall be made with a simple majority in a Committee Meeting.
- 6.6 Committee Members shall be subject to the discipline of the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE 7 – ELDERS

7.1 *Qualification of Elders*

- 7.1.1 A candidate shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. Additionally, he shall fulfill the conditions as stated in Articles 6.1.3 to 6.1.5.

7.2 *Election of Elders*

- 7.2.1 A candidate shall be nominated by the Board of Elders and elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the BCCC members present at General Meetings.
- 7.2.2 An Elder shall hold office for a term of 3 years and may be renominated by the Board of Elders. After 2 consecutive terms, the Elder shall take sabbatical leave for at least one year.
- 7.2.3 Elders may be elected in absentia, with their written consent.
- 7.2.4 The number of Elders in the Church shall be determined by the Board of Elders prior to General Meetings.

7.3 *Responsibilities of Elders*

- 7.3.1 The responsibilities of the Elders shall be as stated in Article 9.2.
- 7.4 If an Elder should be found living or teaching contrary to the doctrinal basis of the BCCC, or is guilty of serious misconduct, and shows no repentance after being admonished in love by the Board of Elders, the termination of his eldership shall be recommended by the Board of Elders and confirmed by a General Meeting.

ARTICLE 8 – PASTORS

8.1 *The Appointment of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker*

- 8.1.1 The recommendation to engage, retain or terminate the service of a Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be made collectively by the Board of Elders and the Committee. This recommendation shall be put to the membership in writing for their prayerful consideration at least four weeks before a General Meeting is called to vote on it. The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be appointed by a two-thirds majority vote of the BCCC members present at the General Meeting. If the Pastor is to be engaged in a remunerated position he shall withdraw from any meeting at which his remuneration and/or terms of employment are to be discussed.
- 8.1.2 The Pastor or the Pastoral Worker must sign and agree to the doctrinal basis and objectives of the BCCC.
- 8.1.3 The Pastor or the Pastoral Worker shall be a person equipped by theological training and experience of pastoral work, who is deemed by the BCCC to be suitably gifted and capable of spiritual leadership and ministry in the BCCC.

- 8.1.4 The Pastor or the Pastoral Worker shall go through a reasonable probationary period; thereafter the length of each term of office shall be agreed by the Board of Elders and the Committee collectively.
- 8.1.5 In the case of a Pastoral Worker, the Board of Elders and the Committee shall collectively make plans for his ordination after he has demonstrated commendable service over a period of time.

8.2 *The Responsibilities and Rights of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker*

- 8.2.1 The responsibilities of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be as stated in Article 9.2 and, in addition, the following:
 - 8.2.1.1 To preach and teach God's Word, to look for and train potential leaders, to administer baptism, and to give pastoral care to all members of the BCCC.
 - 8.2.1.2 To provide spiritual oversight for the Board of Elders.
- 8.2.2 The right to ask the Board of Elders, Committee and BCCC to reconsider any decision which is felt to be inconsistent with the doctrinal basis, objectives, and constitutional issues of the BCCC.
- 8.2.3 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be deemed to be a member of the BCCC.

ARTICLE 9 – THE BOARD OF ELDERS

9.1 *The Board of Elders*

- 9.1.1 The Board of Elders shall have a minimum of 3 members.
- 9.1.2 The Board of Elders shall consist of the Pastor, Pastoral Worker and Elders.
- 9.1.3 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be the Chairman of the Board of Elders. In his absence or when deemed prudent, one of the Elders shall act as Chairman.
- 9.1.4 The Board of Elders may invite Committee Members to take part, without voting rights, in any meeting of the Board of Elders.
- 9.1.5 The Board of Elders shall meet regularly.
- 9.1.6 There shall be not less than two-thirds of the Board of Elders present at all meetings.
- 9.1.7 In any meeting of the Board of Elders, decisions shall be made with a simple majority.
- 9.1.8 In the absence of the Board of Elders, the Committee and Elders, if any, shall take up the responsibilities of the Board of Elders as stated in Article 9.2.

9.2 *Responsibilities of the Board of Elders*

- 9.2.1 The spiritual oversight of the Church in matters of doctrine, governing principles, financial policy and pastoral care.
- 9.2.2 To organise public worship, preaching services, General Meetings, baptismal services and the Holy Communion.
- 9.2.3 To preach and teach God's Word according to gifts.
- 9.2.4 The admission and discipline of members.
- 9.2.5 To organise regular meetings for Bible study and prayer.
- 9.2.6 To nominate members for eldership.
- 9.2.7 To decide which matters can be voted on by proxy at General Meetings.
- 9.2.8 The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees of the BCCC.

ARTICLE 10 – ADVISORS

10.1 Qualification of Advisors

- 10.1.1 An Advisor must subscribe fully in writing to the doctrinal basis and objectives of the BCCC.
- 10.1.2 An Advisor must be spiritually mature, of good character and reputation, and have a close walk with God.
- 10.1.3 An Advisor should preferably have some form of leadership experience in the christian church.
- 10.1.4 An Advisor must have a concern for, and an understanding of the Chinese people and their culture.

10.2 Appointment of Advisors

- 10.2.1 Appointment of the Advisor, if any, shall be made/renewed annually by the Board of Elders in consultation with the newly formed Committee. This should be completed within one month after the Annual General Meeting.
- 10.2.2 The term of an Advisor shall be one year from the date of appointment.

10.3 Responsibilities of Advisors

- 10.3.1 An Advisor must be able to make mature and balanced judgements, stimulating initiative and encouraging leadership without being authoritarian or paternalistic.
- 10.3.2 The Advisor shall have the right to ask the Board of Elders, Committee and BCCC to reconsider any decision which is felt to be inconsistent with the doctrinal basis, objectives, and constitutional issues of the BCCC.
- 10.3.3 An Advisor may attend meetings of the Board of Elders or Committee by invitation.

10.4 Termination of Advisorship

- 10.4.1 In the event of serious misconduct on the part of an Advisor which is likely to hinder the witness of the Church, the Board of Elders shall have the power to terminate his advisorship.

ARTICLE 11 – TRUSTEES

- 11.1 There shall be at least 3 but not more than 5 Trustees who are spiritually mature persons appointed, or re-appointed, for a term of up to 5 years by the Board of Elders, and collectively the trustees shall be called the Board of Trustees.
- 11.2 Property owned by the Church shall be vested in the Trustees for all legal purposes. Such property shall be held by the Trustees for the benefit of the BCCC. The Trustees' function shall be confined to the said property and any proceeds of sale arising, and shall not extend to the spiritual affairs of the BCCC.
- 11.3 Trustees must agree, in writing, to the doctrinal basis and objectives of the BCCC.
- 11.4 In the event of a Trustee ceasing to agree with the statement of doctrinal basis or becoming morally delinquent, mentally incapacitated, financially bankrupt, or ceasing to be a permanent resident of the United Kingdom, his Trusteeship shall be terminated by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE 12 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

- 12.1 There shall be an Annual General Meeting before 31st December each year.
- 12.2 Notice of the AGM shall be served at least 4 weeks prior to the meeting.
- 12.3 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be the Chairman of the General Meetings. In his absence or when deemed prudent, one of the Elders shall act as Chairman.
- 12.4 An annual report and financial statement shall be presented at the AGM.
- 12.5 Elections for Committee Members and/or Elders shall be carried out at this meeting. The procedures are as follows:-
 - 12.5.1 Only BCCC members who have attained the age of 16 are eligible to participate in the election procedures.
 - 12.5.2 The election of Committee Members and Elders shall be as stated in 6.2 and 7.2 respectively.
 - 12.5.3 The opening date for nomination shall be four weeks before the AGM.
 - 12.5.4 All such nominations shall be submitted to the Secretary not later than two weeks before the advertised time of the AGM.
 - 12.5.5 The Board of Elders shall approach the nominees who must confirm their acceptance of the nomination one week before the AGM.
 - 12.5.6 All voting shall be by secret ballot.
 - 12.5.7 Two-thirds of all BCCC voting members must be present at an AGM otherwise all decisions will be void. Members voting by proxy shall be considered as being present at the AGM. A member who wishes to vote by proxy should notify the secretary 1 week prior to the AGM. The maximum number of proxy votes an attending member can cast is limited to 1 vote.

ARTICLE 13 – SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING (SGM)

- 13.1 SGMs may be called by the Board of Elders, or by at least 10 BCCC members of 16 years of age and above, who submit, in writing, to the Board of Elders, their reasons for calling such a meeting and affirm their acceptance of the objectives and doctrinal basis of the BCCC.
- 13.2 Notice of the SGM shall be served at least 2 weeks prior to the Meeting.
- 13.3 Decisions shall be taken with a two-thirds majority.
- 13.4 All voting shall be by secret ballot and by BCCC members who have attained the age of 16.
- 13.5 Two-thirds of all BCCC voting members must be present at an SGM otherwise all decisions will be void. Members voting by proxy shall be considered as being present at the SGM. A member who wishes to vote by proxy should notify the secretary 1 week prior to the SGM. The maximum number of proxy votes an attending member can cast is limited to 1 vote.
- 13.6 In the case of election to office, and other matters which can be voted on by proxy as agreed by the Board of Elders, members voting by proxy shall be considered as being present at the SGM.

ARTICLE 14 – AMENDMENTS

- 14.1 Amendments to the constitution can be proposed by the Board of Elders. BCCC Members may also submit proposals for amendments to the constitution, in writing, to the Board of Elders provided such proposals are supported by at least one third of BCCC members of 16 years of age and above, who state their reasons for such proposals and affirm their acceptance of the objectives and doctrinal basis of the BCCC.
- 14.2 Amendments shall be considered at the AGM or SGM.
- 14.3 Such amendments shall be accepted if they are approved with a two-thirds majority of BCCC members in General Meetings and provided that no amendment may be made which would cause the Church to cease to be a charity at law.
- 14.4 No part of Article 4, Article 5.1.2, Article 8.1.2, Article 10.1.1, Article 11.3 and Article 14.4 shall be amended.

ARTICLE 15 – FINANCE AND AUDIT

- 15.1 The Church financial year shall end on 30th September in any given year.
- 15.2 (Article removed)
- 15.3 The annual financial statements shall be presented by the Treasurer to the Annual General Meetings.
- 15.4 There must be 2 signatories to all cheques issued by the BCCC. Those authorised to sign must include the Committee Chairperson and the Treasurer and 2 other BCCC members appointed by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE 16 – ORDINANCES OF THE BCCC

- 16.1 Baptism: The mode of baptism will be by full immersion on personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In exceptional circumstances, other modes of baptism will be acceptable.
- 16.2 Holy Communion: The remembrance of the Lord's death through the Holy Communion shall be observed regularly, and normally all believers whose conduct is consistent with their confession of their faith shall be received at the Lord's table.

ARTICLE 17 – CESSATION OF THE BCCC

- 17.1 In the event of the termination of the BCCC, all monies remaining after the discharge of debts and other liabilities and properties of the BCCC shall be handed over to the COCM, to be held for such charitable purposes as COCM may determine.

Constitution adopted by the SGM held on 3rd November, 1996 as witnessed by:-

The Chairman of the Meeting

The Secretary of the Committee