

The Constitution of the

Fellowship of Reformed Baptist Churches in New Zealand

1. NAME

The name of this fellowship is the Fellowship of Reformed Baptist Churches in New Zealand (FRBCNZ - henceforth 'the Fellowship').

2. ARTICLES OF FAITH

- I. The Fellowship acknowledges the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, and The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (henceforth 'the Confession') as its summary of biblical teaching.
- II. All Fellowship activities shall be conducted in full harmony with the Confession, except for paragraphs 10:3 (elect infants) and 26:4 (a papal antichrist), where the Fellowship retains the liberty to articulate other positions.

3. PURPOSES OF FELLOWSHIP

To realise in practice paragraphs 26:14 and 26:15 of the Confession, namely:

- I. Mutual fellowship, encouragement, prayer support and the sharing of news and information.
- II. Joint ventures and cooperation between churches within the Fellowship to promote such things as: missions, church planting, evangelism, edification of Christians, worship and ministries of compassion and relief.
- III. Consultation, support and advice according to the procedures in paragraph 26:15 of the Confession.

4. THE PRACTICE OF FELLOWSHIP

- I. Relationships between churches of the Fellowship should be marked by mutual and genuine love, respect, trust, loyalty, sincerity, concern and support. Each church should endeavour to act with integrity in its commitment to the others, respecting the freedom of the others to serve the Lord according to their consciences, seeking harmony, unity, and the good of all.
- II. No meeting of the Fellowship exercises authority over any of the churches, except in the matter of termination of membership from the Fellowship. Furthermore, the Fellowship may not act independently of the churches, nor does it have any existence apart from the churches.

- III. Whenever a particular project of the Fellowship is decided upon, a specific church (or churches) may be asked to organise or oversee it. The other churches are encouraged to support it as they are able.
- IV. While the Fellowship may not appoint permanent officers or committees, it may for practical reasons, with a majority agreement at a business meeting of the Fellowship, request certain tasks of specific churches, committees, organisations or individuals sharing its Articles of Faith and committed to the same purposes. If such tasks do not have an expiry date, the matter will be reviewed at the next business meeting of the Fellowship.
- V. The appointed Chairman (see Article 6.II) will hold and maintain the records of the Fellowship and be the point of contact for correspondence with the Fellowship.
- VI. In the event of the Fellowship being dissolved, any funds or assets held by the Fellowship shall be distributed equally to the member churches. Any existing records should be deposited at the decision of the Fellowship with a group or individual that shares its Articles of Faith.

5. MEMBERSHIP

- I. Every member church commits itself in writing to this Constitution. Churches applying for membership should include evidence of their harmony with and commitment to the Articles of Faith, sent to the current Chairman for distribution to member churches. Official notice of a request for membership should also be given at a prior business meeting of the Fellowship.
- II. Admission to the Fellowship is conditional upon the unanimous approval of member churches represented at a business meeting of the Fellowship.
- III. Membership of the Fellowship does not exclude membership of another fellowship or association of churches.
- IV. The Fellowship is the sole interpreter of this Constitution, and may alone determine whether a member church is abiding by or in breach of it. Should any church not keep to this Constitution, its membership may be terminated by a vote of consensus (refer Article 6.III.e) of the members at a business meeting of the Fellowship.
- V. Any church may withdraw from the Fellowship at any time and for any reason. The Fellowship would welcome and prayerfully consider any explanation offered by a departing church.

6. BUSINESS MEETINGS

- I. All member churches are encouraged to send up to three representatives to the business meetings of the fellowship to be held at least once a year.
- II. Hosting of the business meetings of the Fellowship will be rotated around the member churches, with the host church arranging the Chairman and Secretary. The host church for the next meeting should be announced or chosen at the current meeting.
- III. As a guiding principle, business meetings should proceed prayerfully with every endeavour of achieving unanimity. Discussions should work towards this wherever possible. However, constitutional decisions and other cases will arise where a vote is required. Hence any voting should be run according to the following:
 - (a) each member church has one vote
 - (b) votes may be by voice, hand or ballot in response to a motion from the chair
 - (c) proxy votes may be accepted where a church is unable to attend
 - (d) as any voting is non-binding on member churches, it assumes prior or subsequent ratification by member churches
 - (e) a 'majority' consists of 51% or more, 'consensus' 75% or more, and 'unanimity' requires 100% of votes
- IV. By the unanimous agreement of members present, representatives of any group, or an individual, may be accorded temporary or ongoing observer status at business meetings of the Fellowship. Observers may participate in the discussion at business meetings only with the unanimous agreement of members present, and may not vote on any issue.

7. CHANGES TO THIS CONSTITUTION

This constitution may be amended when:

- I. Notice of amendment has been given at a properly constituted business meeting of the Fellowship.
- II. At the next properly constituted business meeting of the Fellowship there is unanimous agreement of members present at the meeting.