

**Whiteabbey
Congregational
Church
(Reformed)**

‘Constitution’,
‘Code of Doctrine’

&

‘Responsibilities of a
Church Member’

This document contains the ‘Constitution’, ‘Code of Doctrine’ and ‘Responsibilities of a Church Member’ for Whiteabbey Congregational Church (Reformed). The oversight would ask that each member should prayerfully read and consider its contents regularly.

CONSTITUTION OF
WHITEABBEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (Reformed)

The praise and worship in this Church shall be conducted Biblically, as was the worship of our Independent Puritan forefathers. Only Metrical Psalms (1650 Edition) shall be sung unaccompanied by any musical instrumentation. Therefore the ‘Regulative Principle’ is upheld and ‘The Savoy Declaration of Faith’ obeyed.

- 1a. This Church shall be known as Whiteabbey Congregational Church (Reformed), and shall be constituted of those who have become members in the way described in point 3.
- 1b. The Oversight of Whiteabbey Congregational Church shall be constituted of Minister/teaching Elder, Elders and Deacons as shown plainly from Scripture (I Timothy 3).
2. The essential conditions of membership are repentance toward God and confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, a resolution to live day by day in all engagements of life according to His teachings and willingness to uphold the beliefs, discipline, work and worship of this Church by the consecration of individual gifts of time, talent and means (see ‘Responsibilities of a Church Member’).

3. Persons wishing to become a member of this Church are asked to make their desire known to the Minister or Oversight. They will then be interviewed by the Minister or Oversight and, if appropriate, recommended to the Church Members' Meeting.
4. A member who is regularly absent from Church will be visited by the Minister/Oversight. If the absence continues, without valid reason, then they will be removed from membership because they have no desire to meet with God's people (Hebrews 10:25).
5. The Communion Service will be held at least monthly on the first Sabbath evening of each month (I Corinthians 11:23). Any member regularly absent from Communion will be visited (as above) and should the absence continue without valid reason the member's removal from membership shall be recommended to the Church Members' Meeting.
6. The Church's roll of members shall be revised each year.
7. The Church Members' Meeting is the gathering of members of this Church for worship and fellowship, for admission of members, for the reception of reports and for discussion and decisions concerning matters pertaining to the service of Christ and the Kingdom of God. It is the assembled Church seeking the mind and will of Christ concerning its work. Therefore all members should regard it as a privilege and obligation to attend. Child/Immature Members may also attend but cannot vote until authorised by the Oversight upon reaching maturity.
8. Notice of Church Members' Meetings shall usually be given on two Sabbaths immediately prior to the intended meeting to be held so that members can plan to attend. However, the Oversight can call an emergency Members' Meeting at short notice.
- 9a. The Annual Church Members' Meeting (AGM) will normally be held in February or March. Other Members' Meetings shall be called as necessary.

- 9b. At the AGM the general accounts statements duly audited and church reports shall be submitted. The election of Church Secretary and Church Treasurer will also take place (as necessary). The Church Secretary and Church Treasurer shall be chosen from the Oversight and their names recommended to the AGM for election. (If there is no one standing as Church Treasurer from the Oversight then temporary measures can be implemented until one becomes available.)
10. Matters raised at a Members' Meeting which are not on the Agenda will usually be referred to the next Oversight' Meeting and reported back to the Church Members' Meeting.
- 11a. A call to a Minister can only be made at a properly convened Church Members' Meeting. The call requires a two-thirds majority of those present.
- 11b. The Minister is called by the Church to be its leader and guide in spiritual matters, to preach The Word, to exercise pastoral office and to administer the ordinances. In his task of spiritual leadership and pastoral care, the Minister is dependant on the love and loyalty of his people. His ministry will be greatly enriched as they give to him their sympathy, their friendship, their co-operation and their prayers.
- 11c. By virtue of his office the Minister/or Elder is entitled to preside over all Church Meetings.
12. Elders/The Minister are/is recommended by the Oversight and appointed by the Church Members. An Elder/Minister must fulfil the Biblical qualifications laid down in I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:1-9. Elders are primarily the spiritual leaders of the Church, and are responsible for the same duties as the Minister -Teaching Elder (see 11b).
13. Deacons are recommended by the Oversight and appointed by the Church Members. A Deacon must also fulfil the Biblical qualifications of I Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6.

Deacons are required to give consideration to all the Church's work and to carry out all its practical decisions. They are responsible for the business and secular affairs of the Church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace.

- 14a. The Minister, Elders and Deacons are the Church Oversight and are dependant upon the sympathy, confidence and loyal support of the Church Membership.
- 14b. The Oversight shall be elected for an indefinite term so long as they are willing and continue to fulfil the Scriptural criteria.
- 14c. Only male Members of gift, who are mature can be appointed to as Elder or Deacon.
- 14d. Anyone called to the Oversight must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the 'Constitution', 'Code of Doctrine' and 'Articles of Faith' of this Church. If, at any time, he is unable to do so, he must make this known to the Church.
- 14e. Nominees to be elected should have the support of the majority of those present at the Church Members' Meeting and are entitled to vote, but not for themselves.
15. Members may approach the Oversight at any time if they believe some other Member fulfils the Biblical qualifications of Minister/Elder/Deacon. This will then be discussed at an Oversight Meeting. If the recommended person does indeed fulfil the Biblical criteria, then they will be approached by the Oversight to see if they are willing to stand. This will then be reported back the Member who made the initial recommendation.
16. The Oversight Meeting shall be usually held every two months, and it is desirable that these should be opportunities for Christian fellowship, conference and prayer, and not merely occasions for transacting business.

17. The Church's buildings must only be used for the glory of God.
18. Any organisation connected with the Church seeking monetary assistance, or other help for any cause, must first apply for and receive the sanction of the Oversight/or the Church if necessary, before issuing any appeal.
19. It is essential that the Church Membership provides leadership and helpers for in all her organisations and positions in the Church.
20. No clause of this Constitution, Code of Doctrine or Responsibilities of a Church Member, shall be rescinded or altered until agreed at the Church Members' Meeting. A notice of intention must be given in writing to the Oversight. These changes must then be agreed by the Oversight before being recommended to a Church Members' Meeting within the previous six months of the AGM. These changes can be passed at the AGM by a simple majority.

CODE OF DOCTRINE OF
WHITEABBEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (REFORMED)

The following paragraphs give a brief summary of Whiteabbey Congregational Church's doctrinal basis.

- (1) We believe that Almighty God in His great goodness has revealed all that is necessary to life and salvation in the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture which is the Word of God. All Scripture was given by inspiration of God, is infallible and inerrant, and is sufficient in all matters of faith and practice. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinion of men.
- (2) We believe in the one true and living God, in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is invisible, personal, omnipresent, eternal, dependent on no-one, unchanging, truthful, trustworthy, almighty, sovereign, omniscient, righteous, holy, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering and gracious and the Creator of all things.
- (3) We believe that God made our first father, Adam, perfect, holy and upright. He was appointed representative and head of the human race thereby exposing all his offspring to the effects of his obedience or disobedience to God's commands.
- (4) We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring death, condemnation and sinful nature.
- (5) We believe it is utterly beyond the power of fallen man to know God, to love Him, to keep His laws, to believe the Gospel, to repent of sin or trust in Christ.
- (6) We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, for His own glory did elect an innumerable host of people to eternal life as an act of free and sovereign grace. This election was in no way dependent upon his foresight of human faith, decision, work or merit. This in no-way

negates, but necessitates a free unlimited offer of the Gospel to all sinners.

- (7) We believe God so loved lost sinners that He sent His Son into the world, conceived of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, unchangeable sinless, both God and man, born under the law to live a perfect life.
- (8) We believe that God's Son died at Calvary to effect propitiation, reconciliation, redemption and atonement for His elect people. God bore testimony to His Son's work by raising Him from the dead for our justification.
- (9) We believe that God's Son ascended to the right hand of His Father and is enthroned in glory, where He intercedes on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sake.
- (10) We believe that the Holy Spirit has been sent from Heaven to glorify Christ and to apply His work of salvation. By the mystery of His all-powerful work, those dead in sins are brought into spiritual life. They hear the call of God through His Word and are given the desire and ability to repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.
- (11) We believe the Holy Spirit 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.
- (12) We believe the elect, who are called by grace, are justified in the sight of God on account of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ which is received by faith alone.
- (13) We believe those that are regenerated, called and justified shall be preserved in holiness and will enter into the joys of Heaven.
- (14) We believe that the Lord's Supper is a privilege to be administered under the discipline of the local Church.
- (15) We believe that the local Church is under the authority of Christ alone. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between Churches by mutual love, care and encouragement.

- (16) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to judge all people, to raise the dead (both righteous and unrighteous), and that the righteous shall be glorified and enjoy everlasting life and the wicked endure everlasting punishment.
- (17) We believe that it is the responsibility and privilege of the local Church to be obedient to Christ's Commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all mankind, seeking to disciple and baptise believers, establishing them into local Churches.
- (18) We declare that true fellowship unites and exists only between Churches that are faithful to the Gospel. To unite with those who deny essential Gospel truth (as contained in points 1-17 in this 'Code of Doctrine') is unbiblical and wrong. We stand together united and fellowship only with those who believe and preach the Gospel of grace here contained.
- (19) We believe in singing only the Psalms as given/authorised by God in Scripture.
- (20) We believe there is no Biblical warrant for musical accompaniment to singing under the New Covenant.

A fuller expression of the doctrinal position of Whiteabbey Congregational Church (Reformed) can be found in 'The 1658 Savoy Declaration of Faith' (minus chapters 28-29) and chapters 26-30 of 'The 1689 Baptist Confession.'

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CHURCH MEMBER

- To live a life consistent with the Gospel and worthy of high calling in Christ.
- To spend some time every day in reading the Scriptures and prayer remembering the Pastor, Office-bearers, Members and the work in the Church generally.
- To share each Lord's Day, unless unavoidably prevented, in the corporate worship of the Church and to be regular in observance of the Lord's Supper.
- To seek, in conjunction with the Minister, the responsibilities of believer's baptism by immersion.
- To fulfil the ministry of intercession both privately and by being present, whenever possible, at meetings for corporate prayer.
- To live in loyal love and fellowship with all other Members of the Church, avoiding undue criticism.
- To accept personal responsibility for the government of the Church by being present, whenever possible, at the Church Members' Meetings.
- To set aside and give tithes and offerings for the work of God's Kingdom at home and overseas.
- To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed, thus sharing in the evangelisation of the area.
- To attempt by personal invitation, hospitality and visitation to introduce and bring others to the Church.
- To use the gift/s God has given for the edification and up-building of the Church (I Corinthians 12). The older women are to teach and admonish younger women, older men, likewise, are to teach and admonish the younger men that we may be built up in our most holy faith (Titus 2:1-8; James 5:19-20).