

INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION

CONSTITUTION

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ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be the International Baptist Convention (hereafter known as the "IBC" or the "Convention").

ARTICLE II - VISION AND MISSION

Vision Statement: To be an effective instrument of God to aid member churches in leading people to saving faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement: With a focus on the English language, our mission is to provide the framework and available resources for member churches and their missions to:

- Proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Plant new churches
- Strengthen member churches
- Enhance fellowship among member churches
- Support other Baptist groups
- Promote world-wide Christian missions

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership

Membership of this Convention is open to all churches that willingly seek to implement the following principles and practices described in this Constitution and the IBC Operations Manual. A church, for the purposes of this Constitution, is a regenerate, worshipping and witnessing Christian assembly practicing believer's baptism and upholding the principles defined in the IBC Constitution.

Section 2. Application for Membership

An existing church desiring membership shall submit a letter to the IBC's Executive Council requesting membership. The letter shall contain the following information:

- Description of the historical background and development of the church
- Description of the nature of the community which the church is serving
- Description of the broad nature of the present membership, the numbers regularly attending and anticipated future trends
- Description of the nature and number of ministries operating within the church
- Description of the structure, calling and qualifications of its present leadership
- A church-approved annual financial statement covering the two previous years and the current year
- A statement of intent to cooperate financially in the work of the Convention

- A statement of acceptance of the IBC's Constitution and Summary of Basic Beliefs
- A copy of the Vision or Mission Statement of the church
- A copy of the Constitution and/or Bylaws of the church

The application must be received not less than sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Convention Meeting at which action is to be taken.

Section 3. Associate Membership

Associate membership is offered to fellowships, missions or churches that are not able to meet the requirements of membership but wish to be involved in the vision and mission of the Convention. Associate member churches may send one (1) voting messenger each to the Annual Convention Meeting. Their individual members may serve on Ministry Teams, but not as Ministry Team Coordinators, Regional Council Coordinators, or as officers of the Convention.

Categories of associate membership are listed below:

- A Bible fellowship that began without formal sponsorship
- A mission sponsored by and accountable to an established IBC member church
- A mission sponsored by and accountable to a recognized Baptist entity other than a member church
- A non-English language church that wishes to identify with the IBC
- An existing church that wishes to identify with the IBC

Section 4 – Application for Associate Membership

Applicants for associate membership should submit a letter of application to the IBC's Executive Council requesting such membership. The letter should contain the following information:

- Description of the historical background and development of the fellowship or church
- Description of the broad nature of the present membership, the numbers regularly attending and anticipated future trends
- A statement of intent to cooperate financially in the work of the Convention
- A statement of acceptance of the IBC's Constitution and Summary of Basic Beliefs

Section 5. Termination of Membership: Termination of membership in the IBC shall be effected in one of the following ways: (1) by written request of the church, (2) by disbanding of the church, or (3) by action deemed appropriate by the Convention.

ARTICLE IV – SUMMARY OF BASIC BELIEFS

This IBC Summary of Basic Beliefs was adopted by the ACM at Wiesbaden in 2008 (see Appendix).

ARTICLE V - AUTHORITY

The IBC does not claim and will never attempt to exercise authority over any other religious entity. Conversely, no other religious entity shall exercise authority over the International Baptist Convention.

The legislative authority within the IBC lies with the Convention's member churches, represented by their messengers in assembly at the Annual Convention Meeting.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

Officers of the IBC shall be the President, Vice-President, Past-President, Clerk, General Secretary and Treasurer. These shall be elected annually with the exception of the General Secretary who holds an indefinite tenure of office, and the President and Past-President who succeed into these offices.

Those intending to nominate candidates for Convention officers are requested to send a brief, written description of the background, experience and IBC service of those being nominated to the IBC office not less than thirty (30) days prior to the Annual Convention Meeting at which these nominations will be presented. These nominations will be publicized prior to the Annual Convention Meeting. This preference shall not preclude nominations being made from the floor. All nominees should have at least one year of participation in the IBC. When vacancies occur between meetings, they should be filled by a vote of the Executive Council.

In the event a paid employee of the IBC is elected to serve on the Executive Council, Executive Sub-Council or any other Ministry Team they will forfeit their voting right.

A. President: The President shall preside over meetings of the Convention and the Executive Council. The President shall be Chairman of the Executive Council and be a non-voting ex-officio member of all Ministry Teams. The term of office of the President is from one Annual Convention Meeting to the next.

B. Vice-President: The Vice-President shall preside in the absence of or at the request of the President and shall succeed to that office at the next Annual Convention Meeting (without the necessity of a further vote). The Vice-President shall also succeed to the office of President if the President is unable to complete the term of office. In that case, when the Vice-President's position becomes vacant, a new Vice-President shall be elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Convention.

C. Past-President: The Past-President serves on the Executive Council and the Executive Sub-Council and may deputise for the President or Vice-President as required. He or she serves from the Annual Convention Meeting at which his or her term as President concludes to the following one (without the necessity of a further vote).

D. Clerk: The Clerk shall be responsible for registration of messengers and visitors at the Annual Meeting of the Convention and keep an accurate record of the business transacted during the meetings of the Convention, Executive Council, and Executive Sub-Council. The Clerk shall be responsible for the printing and distribution of the minutes to all members of the Executive Council and pastors of the IBC. The Clerk shall furnish letterforms to each church and mission of the IBC, as early as possible prior to the Annual Convention Meeting, and provide necessary information for the IBC office secretary to prepare the Annual Book of Reports.

E. General Secretary: The General Secretary shall be nominated by a special committee of seven (7) persons appointed by the President in consultation with the Vice-President, with such appointment approved by the Executive Sub-Council. The General Secretary shall be elected by a two-thirds majority of the messengers attending the Annual Convention Meeting.

The General Secretary's responsibilities shall be to provide leadership and coordination to the Convention by working with individual churches, Convention Ministry Teams and auxiliaries, national Baptist unions and the IBC's officers, Executive Council, IBC staff and other employees. The General Secretary will be responsible for administration of the day-to-day activities of the Convention.

The General Secretary shall be an ex-officio, non-voting member of all Convention Ministry Teams and committees, including the Council of Trustees. As organizational leader, serious consideration is always to be given to the General Secretary's views on all issues pertinent to the IBC's witness, wellbeing and structure. The General Secretary shall make written reports to the Executive Council and to the IBC at its Annual Meeting.

The General Secretary shall promote the work of the Convention and conserve its records. His dedication to Christian principles and his pastoral experience should make him a trusted friend and counselor to all persons in church leadership.

The term of office of the General Secretary shall continue until resignation or until the Convention declares the office vacant by a two-thirds majority of the messengers attending the Annual Convention Meeting.

If a suitable candidate for General Secretary is not immediately available, an interim General Secretary, nominated by the Executive Council, may be elected by a two-thirds majority of the messengers attending the Annual Convention Meeting. The term of service of the interim General Secretary shall continue until resignation or until the Convention in the Annual Convention Meeting elects a new General Secretary.

F. Treasurer: The Treasurer shall work in cooperation with the General Secretary, Bookkeeper, Executive Council and the Budget & Finance Ministry Team to receive contributions and make disbursements according to the IBC's budget.

The Treasurer shall also provide regular financial reports to the Executive Council and the Annual Convention Meeting. The Treasurer shall submit the financial records for independent audit annually. The Treasurer shall be accountable to the General Secretary.

ARTICLE VII - ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Section 1. Executive Council

The Convention Officers, Regional Council Coordinators and Ministry Team Coordinators, with the exception of the Resource Ministry Team, shall constitute the IBC's Executive Council. The Executive Council shall encourage, coordinate and facilitate the work of the Convention.

The Executive Council shall assume the functions of the Convention between Annual Convention Meetings.

Should both President and Vice-President be absent, the remaining members of the Executive Council may convene and elect a moderator pro tem – providing there is at least a sixty (60)% quorum present.

The Executive Council will present minutes and reports of its meetings at the next Annual Convention Meeting.

Section 2. Executive Sub-Council

The Convention Officers, Coordinator of the Budget & Finance Ministry Team, the Coordinator of the Plans & Policies Ministry Team and the Coordinator of the Church Development Ministry Team (or their delegated representatives in case of enforced absence) shall constitute the Executive Sub-Council.

The Executive Sub-Council shall work with the General Secretary, acting for the Executive Council in emergency situations or in day-to-day situations that allow no time for the Executive Council to meet. The General Secretary in conjunction with the President and Vice-president is authorized to call such meetings. Minutes are to be kept of all meetings and provided to the Executive Council in a timely manner.

Section 3. Council of Trustees

The IBC Council of Trustees is accountable to the Executive Council. Its primary roles are:

- To serve as an advisory body to the Convention and the Executive Council on all legal aspects of the IBC's operation and the employment of personnel. Any recommendations it makes are subject to the approval of the Executive Council.
- To serve as the operational arm of the IBC in the acquisition, management and disposal of the Convention's property and other material assets, subject to the Convention's approval.
- To supervise all necessary audits of the IBC's accounts.

Its composition and membership are defined in the IBC Operations Manual. Members' qualifications and competencies should reflect the professional knowledge needed to assist with decisions concerning legal issues affecting personnel employment, property acquisition and financial matters in the country where the IBC has its legal base and central office.

The General Secretary shall be a co-signature on all documents created by it.

ARTICLE VIII - PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

A Parliamentarian may be appointed by the President annually prior to the Annual Convention Meeting. The Parliamentarian shall advise and assist the presiding officer of the Convention on all matters involving proper parliamentary procedures, especially at the Annual Convention Meeting. *Robert's Rules of Order* (Latest Revised Edition) shall be used as a guide.

ARTICLE IX - CONVENTION MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings

The Convention shall normally meet once annually as determined by the Executive Council; this meeting shall be known as the Annual Convention Meeting.

Section 2. Messengers

The Annual Convention Meeting shall be composed of duly elected messengers holding membership in member churches of the IBC.

For the Annual Convention Meeting, each member church shall be entitled to three (3) messengers for the first twenty-five (25) members or fraction thereof and one (1) additional messenger for each additional twenty-five (25) members or fraction thereof, provided that no church shall send more than ten (10) messengers.

Associate Member churches are entitled to send one (1) messenger each to the Annual Convention Meeting.

The registered messengers attending the ACM shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3. Called Meetings

The Executive Council may call a special meeting of the Convention for emergency purposes. Notice in writing of such meeting, including agenda, must be given to all member churches not less than thirty (30) days in advance. Only items on the agenda of the called meeting may be considered.

ARTICLE X - OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Section 1. National Baptist Unions

The IBC shall seek to promote a fraternal relationship with other national Baptist Unions.

Section 2. European Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance.

The IBC is a member of the European Baptist Federation and Baptist World Alliance, contributing a percentage of all undesignated receipts to the work of these two bodies.

Section 3. The Southern Baptist Convention

The IBC shall seek to promote a fraternal relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Section 4. International Baptist Church Ministries Corporation

(The International Baptist Church Ministries Corp., a non-profit Texas Corporation, P.O. Box 833276, Richardson, TX 75083-3276 was established to support English-language Baptist churches in Europe and other areas overseas. It was approved on November 3, 1997 as a non-profit corporation and given charter number 01466023.)

The IBC or its member churches may receive donations from the International Baptist Church Ministries Corporation.

No part of the net income or net earnings of this corporation shall inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. No substantial part of its activities shall consist of carrying on political propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. This corporation shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

This corporation may be dissolved in accordance with the laws of the United States of America. Upon dissolution of this corporation, any surplus property remaining after the payment of its debts shall be disposed of by transfer to one or more corporations, associations, institutions, trusts, community chests or foundations organized and operated for one or more of the purposes of this corporation, and described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 of the United States of America, as now enacted or as hereafter amended, in such proportions as the Board of Directors of this corporation shall determine. Notwithstanding any provision herein to the contrary, shall nothing herein be construed to affect the disposition of property and assets held by this corporation upon trust or other condition, or subject to an executory or special limitation, and such property, upon dissolution of this corporation, shall be transferred in accordance with the trust, condition or limitation imposed with respect to it.

Section 5. European Baptist Mission

The IBC supports the European Baptist Mission in its worldwide ministries.

Section 6. Other Christian Bodies

The IBC recognizes and affirms the essential unity in Christ of all Christian believers, churches and institutions that practice New Testament Christianity. When mutually beneficial, the IBC will seek to work with other "Great Commission" Christians to further the cause of Christ.

ARTICLE XI - AMENDMENTS

Any proposed amendment shall be sent to member churches of the Convention and the Executive Council at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the Annual Convention Meeting.

The proposed amendment to this Constitution must be presented in writing in the first session of the Annual Convention Meeting and voted on at a later session. It must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the messengers present and voting to become valid.

ARTICLE XII - LEGAL STATUS

The legal status of the IBC is that of a "Werk" (an official "work" or ministry) of the German Baptist Union (*Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R*) (hereafter known as the BEFG). As such, the IBC functions as a legally registered, non-profit-making, charitable organization within Europe under German law.

All of the meetings and records of the International Baptist Convention, its Administrative Councils, its Regional Councils and Ministry Teams shall use the English language as the official language.

ARTICLE XIII - OPERATIONS MANUAL

The IBC Operations Manual is a supplementary document that provides guidelines for implementing the policies and structures contained in the IBC's Strategy and Consultation Committee Report adopted by the Convention at the Annual Convention Meeting, October 2000. These guidelines may be subject to modification from time to time in order to enhance the effectiveness and functionality of the Convention's ministries--providing that such modifications do not conflict with the Articles of this Constitution.

APPENDIX

IBC Summary of Basic Beliefs

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We do not view our **Summary of Basic Beliefs** as a creed or a statement to which our staff, volunteers, or churches are forced to subscribe, but rather it is a basic summary of beliefs and emphases generally held by Baptists. It is what “we believe” when we serve God together within the structures and Ministry Teams of the IBC. It does not take the place of the Bible, which is our standard for faith and practice, but emerges out of it.

International Baptist Convention - Summary of Basic Beliefs (2008)

We believe...

- in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – co-eternal, co-existent, co-equal and co-operative, as affirmed in Scripture and as summarized in the ancient Christian confessions of faith.¹
- that the Bible is inspired by God and is the standard against which all Christian belief and behavior is measured.
- that human beings are incapable of saving themselves and stand in need of God’s gracious love and that Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully human, has, through His death and resurrection, done everything necessary for us to have a personal one-to-one relationship with God; we begin to experience the benefits of this when we repent from and confess our sin, and commit our lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, our only Savior.
- that each local church is an autonomous assembly of believing disciples responsible to discern the mind of Christ for that body of Christ - in the light of Scripture, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, and under the Lordship of Christ.
- that Christ has, according to the Scriptures, instituted two church ordinances for believers:
 - **believer’s baptism** as an act of obedience and an expression of a personal commitment to Christian discipleship. The baptism of the believer into and under water “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the end of an old way of life; and the beginning of a new life in Christ. It affirms the Holy Spirit’s work that is already experienced by the believer and this public baptism is an outward visible sign of the ongoing and life-long sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit; and
 - **the communion of the Lord’s Table** as a repeated and frequent reminder of our communal life in Christ, whose death we remember, whose resurrection we celebrate, and whose return we eagerly await.
- that church membership is only for those who can testify personally of God’s saving grace.
- that each local church is to model a better way of life according to the principles of the Kingdom of God. Because a Christian disciple’s first and highest loyalty is to God, so also

¹ This refers to the Trinitarian formulae of the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed.

each church, while respecting those secular laws not in conflict with the commands of God, should be free from state control.

- that in every country all people should be entitled to the freedom of religious expression, while respecting the laws of that country and the beliefs of others.
- that we, in response to the Great Commission,² have been sent out³ and given the task of making disciples – disciplined followers of Jesus Christ – from among all ethnic groups (nations).
- that just as the Trinity is the model of eternal co-operation so we as IBC churches are to co-operate together in mission with God, with each other, and with other like-minded Christian churches and organizations: locally, nationally, and internationally - so that the world may believe.⁴

As the International Baptist Convention we celebrate and affirm our unity in diversity as part of the worldwide body of Christ. We seek no uniformity in worship or service but are “many faces, many places, one message” not restricted by national or cultural bounds. We live and serve together here on earth in anticipation of our future celebration and service of God in Glory with the redeemed of every nation and generation.⁵

² Matthew 28: 18-20

³ John 20: 21-22

⁴ ibid & John 17: 21

⁵ Revelation 7: 7-12