

By-Laws

1 Status

- 1.1 These By-Laws have been made by the Executive Committee of The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (the **Assembly**) pursuant to clause 27 of the constitution of the Assembly (the **Constitution**), which provides that the Executive Committee may from time to time make such reasonable and proper By-Laws as they may deem necessary or expedient for the proper conduct and management of the Assembly, provided that such By-Laws must not be inconsistent with any provision of the Constitution.
- 1.2 Capitalised words used but not defined in these By-Laws have the meaning given in the Constitution.
- 1.3 If there is any conflict between these By-Laws and the Constitution, the Constitution shall take precedence.
- 1.4 Copies of these By-Laws must be made available to any member of the Assembly on request.

Meetings of the Executive Committee and its Committees

Notice of Meetings

- 1.5 In accordance with clause 19 of the Constitution, the Chief Officer shall send to every member of the Executive Committee notice of the time and place of every meeting, whether ordinary special or adjourned, at least seven days before the meeting, and the nature of such notice and the conduct of such meeting shall be in accordance with the procedure adopted by the Executive Committee.

Financial Statement

- 1.6 The Honorary Treasurer shall present to each meeting of the Executive Committee a written financial report in relation to the Assembly and at the appropriate Executive Committee meetings an annual budget and an end-of-year statement for the Assembly.

Committees

- 1.7 In accordance with clause 18 of the Constitution, the Executive Committee may appoint committees (each a **Committee**) to whom the Executive Committee shall delegate such of its powers from time to time as the Executive Committee shall specify in terms of reference.
- 1.8 Each Committee shall be authorised to the extent of such delegated powers to initiate and carry out action without a requirement to refer back to the Executive Committee, but they shall report to the Executive Committee in such manner and at such intervals as shall be specified in its terms of reference.

Finance

- 1.9 The Executive Committee, having received the advice of the Honorary Treasurer, shall, at the beginning of each financial year, approve a budget for each Committee.

Conflicts of Interest

- 1.10 Members of a Committee who are not also members of the Executive Committee must declare and manage any conflict of interest in the same manner as the members of the Executive Committee (in accordance with clause 7 of the Constitution).

Minutes

- 1.11 Minutes shall be taken of every meeting of the Executive Committee and of every Committee, and these shall be read, amended if necessary, and signed by the Chair at a meeting of the Executive Committee or the chair of the relevant Committee.

2 Full Membership of the Assembly

- 2.1 Clause 9.4 of the Constitution provides that a Congregation, Affiliated Society or District Association may only be admitted as a Full Member if a resolution for their admission has been proposed by the Executive Committee by way of a Motion for approval by the voting members of the Assembly at a general meeting and their admission is so approved by way of a resolution of the voting members.
- 2.2 In accordance with clause 9.4 of the Constitution, the Executive Committee has adopted the criteria specified below in relation to the admission of Congregations, Affiliated Societies and District Associations following the Incorporation Date.

Congregations

- 2.3 As regards Congregations, the following criteria will apply:
- 2.3.1 A Congregation must have at least 8 subscribing members over the age of 18 years, and must have existed for regular worship for not less than one year.
- 2.3.2 A copy of the rules and/or constitution and by-laws must be supplied and these must be approved by the relevant District Association (if there is one) and by the Executive Committee.
- 2.3.3 The Congregation's constitution must embody a clause specifying that, in the event of the Congregation ceasing to exist, its funds and property shall be transferred to an approved specified body. This will normally be the sponsoring relevant District Association (if there is one) or the Assembly, as appropriate.
- 2.3.4 Meetings for a religious purpose must be held at least once a month.
- 2.3.5 An annual subscription must be paid to the Assembly and to the District Association (if there is one), if required.
- 2.3.6 A copy of the most recent annual report and audited/independently examined accounts as submitted to the annual meeting of the Congregation's members must be sent to the relevant District Association (if there is one) and to the Assembly.
- 2.3.7 The application must have the support of the relevant District Association (if there is one) and, in accordance with clause 9.4.3 of the Constitution, the Executive Committee must have received and considered a report on such Congregation from that District Association (if there is one).
- 2.3.8 Before the application is proposed by the Executive Committee and proposed to the voting members of the Assembly by way of a Motion, the Congregation must be visited by a representative of the Executive Committee who shall make a report on the visit to the Executive Committee.

Affiliated Societies

- 2.4 As regards Affiliated Societies, the following criteria will apply:

- 2.4.1 the Affiliated Society shall exist on an international, national (UK) or cross-District basis;
- 2.4.2 the Affiliated Society shall have existed for at least two years before seeking affiliation;
- 2.4.3 the Affiliated Society's minimum membership shall be 12;
- 2.4.4 the Affiliated Society's constitution and rules shall be duly stated and observed;
- 2.4.5 the Affiliated Society's objects shall be clearly stated;
- 2.4.6 the Affiliated Society shall hold an annual general meeting to appoint officers and committee and adopt reports and audited/independently examined accounts copies of which shall be supplied to the Assembly;
- 2.4.7 the Affiliated Society shall pay an annual subscription to the Assembly, as determined by the Executive Committee from time to time; and
- 2.4.8 an application for affiliation may be made at any time and shall be considered, along with objects and constitution, by the Executive Committee, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting.

District Associations

- 2.5 As regards District Associations, the following criteria will apply:
 - 2.5.1 the District Association shall exist on a regional basis;
 - 2.5.2 the District Association's minimum membership shall be 2 congregations;
 - 2.5.3 the District Association's constitution and rules shall be duly stated and observed;
 - 2.5.4 the District Association's objects shall be clearly stated;
 - 2.5.5 the District Association shall hold an annual general meeting to appoint officers and committee and adopt reports and audited/independently examined accounts, copies of which shall be supplied to the Assembly;
 - 2.5.6 the District Association shall pay an annual subscription to the Assembly, as determined by the Executive Committee from time to time, on request; and
 - 2.5.7 an application to become a District Association may be made at any time and shall be considered, along with objects and constitution, by the Executive Committee, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting.

3 Elected Trustees

Criteria for appointment

- 3.1 In accordance with clause 12.7 of the Constitution, the Executive Committee has adopted the following criteria for candidates for appointment as **elected trustee** members of the Executive Committee (including the Honorary Treasurer and retiring members of the Executive Committee who are seeking reappointment). Candidates must:
 - 3.1.1 be eligible to become a member the Executive Committee in accordance with the Constitution of the Assembly (and otherwise be eligible in accordance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements);

- 3.1.2 be a Full, Honorary or Associate Member of the Assembly or a Congregation Member;
 - 3.1.3 not be a student in training for the Unitarian ministry or (in the opinion of the Executive Committee) a close family member of anyone employed by the Assembly or connected professionally with any person employed to run a qualifying election;
 - 3.1.4 be willing to accept and abide by the Code of Conduct and to accept the office of charity trustee by signing a Letter of Appointment;
 - 3.1.5 be willing to attend meetings, in-person or otherwise, including the AGM;
 - 3.1.6 demonstrate 3 years of active commitment to the Unitarian community;
 - 3.1.7 be in sympathy with the Objects of the Assembly;
 - 3.1.8 be willing to be the subject of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken by the Assembly at any time;
 - 3.1.9 consent to their email address being shared with The Inquirer and other Unitarian publications;
 - 3.1.10 not engage in negative campaigning or discriminatory remarks; and
 - 3.1.11 not use paid-for advertising or websites in order to campaign for election.
- 3.2 In addition, candidates must have:
- 3.2.1 experience in one or more of the following roles:
 - (a) an officer or member of a governing body of a Congregation or District Association;
 - (b) an officer or member of a committee of an Affiliated Society;
 - (c) a trustee, officer or member of the governing body of a charity or a similar body e.g. a voluntary organisation such as a sports club or parent teacher association; or
 - (d) as a Minister, Lay Pastor or Lay Person in charge of a Congregation; and
 - 3.2.2 a good understanding of the Unitarian community.
- 3.3 Candidates for appointment as Honorary Treasurer must also have an appropriate experience, or qualification in business, accounting and/or finance.
- 3.4 **Election procedure**
- 3.5 Clause 12 of the Constitution enables the Executive Committee to make By-Laws as regards the procedure for the election of elected trustees, subject to the following provisos:
- 3.5.1 a **qualifying election** must be held once in every two calendar years to appoint four individuals each of whom shall serve a term of four years with effect from the end of the first AGM of the Assembly following the date of their election;
 - 3.5.2 the qualifying election will be conducted by way of a postal ballot of the Electors and shall be overseen by an **Electoral Panel** appointed by the Executive Committee in

relation to each qualifying election and who shall hold office until the completion of such qualifying election; and

- 3.5.3 the Electoral Panel shall set out in writing the process and procedures (the **Election Procedure**) by which the qualifying election will be carried out and will report to the members of the Assembly at the AGM in relation to the conduct of such qualifying election.
- 3.6 In order to facilitate the conduct of qualifying elections, the Executive Committee has determined that:
 - 3.6.1 The Electoral Panel shall consist of three members appointed by the Executive Committee for such term as is determined by the Executive Committee. In normal circumstances, one member shall be replaced for each qualifying election, such that a member shall serve for a maximum of three qualifying elections.
 - 3.6.2 The Election Procedure must confirm the timetable for the conduct of qualifying elections.
 - 3.6.3 If so required by the Executive Committee, the Electoral Panel must seek the approval of the Election Procedure by the Executive Committee.
- 3.7 The Election Procedure must provide that:
 - 3.7.1 Each Elector can cast no more than one vote for each candidate in each qualifying election and must address the steps that will be taken to seek to avoid any "double counting" of votes.
 - 3.7.2 If the number of candidates for election as elected trustees is equal to the number of vacancies on the Executive Committee, the relevant candidates shall be declared elected unopposed.
 - 3.7.3 If the number of candidates for election as elected trustees is less than the number of vacancies on the Executive Committee, the relevant candidates shall be declared elected unopposed.
- 4 **Criteria for appointment as President and Vice President**
 - 4.1 The Executive Committee has adopted the following criteria for candidates for appointment as President and Vice-President: Candidates must:
 - 4.1.1 be eligible to become a member and Honorary Officer in accordance with the Constitution of the Assembly (and otherwise be eligible in accordance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements);
 - 4.1.2 be a Full, Honorary or Associate Member of the Assembly or a Congregation Member;
 - 4.1.3 not be a student in training for the Unitarian ministry or (in the opinion of the Executive Committee) a close family member of anyone employed by the Assembly or connected professionally with any person employed to run a qualifying election;
 - 4.1.4 be willing to attend meetings, in-person or otherwise, including the AGM;
 - 4.1.5 demonstrate 3 years of active commitment to the Unitarian community;
 - 4.1.6 be in sympathy with the Objects of the Assembly;

- 4.1.7 be willing to be the subject of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken by the Assembly at any time;
 - 4.1.8 consent to their email address being shared with The Inquirer and other Unitarian publications;
 - 4.1.9 not engage in negative campaigning or discriminatory remarks; and
 - 4.1.10 not use paid-for advertising or websites in order to campaign for election.
- 4.2 In addition, candidates must have:
- 4.2.1 experience in one or more of the following roles:
 - (a) an officer or member of a governing body of a Congregation or District Association;
 - (b) an officer or member of a committee of an Affiliated Society;
 - (c) a trustee, officer or member of the governing body of a charity or a similar body e.g. a voluntary organisation such as a sports club or parent teacher association; or
 - (d) as a Minister, Lay Pastor or Lay Person in charge of a Congregation; and
 - 4.2.2 a good understanding of the Unitarian community.
- 5 Alteration and review of the By-Laws**
- 5.1 In accordance with clause 27 of the Constitution, the Executive Committee may from time to time alter these By-Laws.
 - 5.2 The Executive Committee will review these By-Laws annually (or at such other intervals as the Executive Committee may determine from time to time).