

# CONSTITUTION

## **Bahamas Evangelical Church Association**

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Joining our hands to strengthen His Church

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# CONSTITUTION

## SECTION I: NAME AND IDENTITY C.

**Name:** Bahamas Evangelical Church Association is the name of this Bahamian Fellowship of Churches.

**Identity:** We are an association of evangelical churches, biblically grounded, committed to a common purpose and a shared set of values, working together to build the Church of Jesus Christ in our local communities and around the world.

## SECTION II: PURPOSE

The association exists to provide a framework which enables member churches to stimulate and encourage each other to be more effective in building the Church of Jesus Christ through interaction, joint service projects, mutual assistance, accountability and fellowship.

## SECTION III: ARTICLES OF FAITH

### A. Holy Scripture

We believe that all of the Scriptures, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, are fully inspired (God-breathed,) wholly without error in the original manuscripts, the unique Word of God, written by men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Pet. 1:21). We believe this Word is truth (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:15), that its message, the Gospel, is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:15), and that it provides for the instruction, correction, and equipping of the believer (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

### B. God

We believe in One living and true God, eternal, perfect, a Spirit (Psa. 90:2; 102:24-27; Heb. 1:12), in whom all things have their origin, source, support, and purpose (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:21; Acts 17:28; Eph. 4:6; Heb. 11:3; 1 Tim. 6:16).

We believe God is holy (Isa. 6:3), omniscient (Acts 15:18; Heb 4:13), omnipresent (Psa. 139:7; Jer. 23:24; Amos 9:2-3), omnipotent (Gen. 1:1, 26, 35:11; Jer. 10:12-13), sovereign (Dan. 2:20-22; 4:17), the Creator (Gen. 1:1, 26; John 1:1-3), the Sustainer (Psa.104:27-30; Matt. 10:29-30; Col. 1:15-17; Heb 1:3), who is immutable [unchanging] (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17).

Scripture affirms this God as Spirit (John 4:24) and Person (Gen. 1:26; 3:8-9; 6:6; Ex. 3:14; Psa. 94:9-10; John 3:16; 17:1-26; Acts 14:15; 1 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 3:19 ff).

### C. Jesus Christ

We believe Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is Himself God, the express image of the Father. Being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 3:16; Heb. 1:5-10), He took upon himself humanity (Heb. 2:14). Being true God and also perfect man (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 3:5), He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind (1 John 2:2) as a vicarious, substitutionary (representative)

sacrifice (Isa. 53:5-6). We hold that His death effectively saves all who believe (John 1:12; Acts 16:31); that our justification is grounded in the shedding of His blood (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7); and that it is proven by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Rom. 4:23-25).

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ rose triumphantly from the grave on the third day. He ascended into heaven, where He now intercedes on our behalf at the right hand of God. From heaven He will come again in visible form to judge the living and the dead to establish His rule as Lord of lords and King of kings (Matt. 25:31 ff; John 5:22-29; 20 and 21; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:15; 2 Tim 4:1).

#### **D. The Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit is divine, eternal, personal, and sovereign (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 5:3-4; Heb. 9:14), a participant in creation (Gen. 1:2) and the author of Scriptures (Acts 4:25; Heb 10:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-15; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). He came to Earth at Pentecost to perform His special work in the Church (Acts 2:17-18, 33). In this age of grace, He convicts the world (John 16:8-11), and restrains the progress of evil (2 Thess. 2:7). He is the believer's Counsellor/Helper (John 14:16-17) and Intercessor (Rom. 8:26), regenerating (John 3:3, 5; Tit. 3:5), baptizing (1 Cor. 2:10-13), indwelling (2 Tim. 1:14), teaching (1 Cor. 2:10-16), and empowering the believer for life and service (Eph. 3:16).

#### **E. Trinity**

We believe in the unity of the Godhead, a Triune God, one essence in three persons, God the Father (Rom. 1:7); God the Son (Heb. 1:8), God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4); that these three

are one God, coequal in power and glory, having the same nature, attributes and perfections (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19), while carrying out distinct functions relating to each other and all creations.

#### **F. Angels, Satan, and Demons**

We believe God created angels as spiritual beings who were righteous and had freedom of choice (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Resulting from Satan's fall, both righteous and unrighteous angels exist. All angels have supernatural powers subject to God's sovereign purposes (Job 1-2).

##### **1. Righteous Angels**

We believe righteous angels are ministering spirits or messengers of God (Matt. 13:41, 18:10; 1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 1:7, 14). Through spirits, they have appeared in visible form to manifest God's power (Gen. 19:1-26; Luke 1:26; John 20:12; Rev. 20:1-10). Angels ministered to Jesus during His earthly sojourn (Matt. 4:1-10; 28:2-70; Luke 22:43; Acts 1:10-11), serve God in executing judgment (Gen. 19:13-15; Rev. 9:1-5, 19:17) minister to those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14), and guard and strengthen God's people (2 Ki. 6:17; Psa. 34:7; Acts 5:19-20, 12:7-11).

##### **2. Satan and Demons**

###### **a. Satan**

We believe Satan was a sinless being, created by God, who fell from that exalted position (Isa. 14:12-17), and

so became the enemy of God and of all good. While he seeks to destroy (Matt. 13:19, 39; Mk. 1:13; John 13:2), God limits the scope of his power (Job 1:12; 2:1-6; Luke. 22:31 ff; 1 Cor.10:13).

b. Demons

We believe many angels fell together with Satan (Rev. 12:7-9), beings the Scriptures now identify as demons. Though under the direct control of Satan to do his will (Matt. 9:34; 25:41, Rev. 12:9, they are limited by and ultimately serve the purposes of God (1 Sam. 19:9; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 12:7).

At Christ 's second coming, Satan will be bound a thousand years and ultimately be cast into the lake of fire where he and his angels will be tormented forever (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

**G. Anthropology – Man**

1. His Creation

We believe that, by an immediate act of God, mankind was created in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). God intended that mankind should fill and rule the Earth (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-2), and should be holy and blameless before Him to give Him praise (Eph. 1:4-6).

2. His Fall

We believe mankind's loyalty and freedom were tested in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15-17). Adam voluntarily and consciously disobeyed God's command (Gen. 3:1-3, 6), so mankind fell, and his relationship with God was broken (Gen. 3:16-19; 2:16-17). The

whole human race was condemned, separated from God and subject to death (Rom. 5:12, 18), the consequence of sin. Mankind is now alienated from God.

3. His Redemption

We believe God, consistent with His nature, cannot have fellowship with anyone whose sin has not been judged (Psa. 34: 16; Isa. 59:1-2). Jesus Christ, God's Son, offered Himself voluntarily (John 10:17-18) on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1 John 2:2), the just suffering for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18), bearing sin's curse, and tasting death for every man (John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9: 11-12; 1 Tim 2:5-6). Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on Earth, except unbelief: hid voluntary rejection of Jesus Christ as the substitute for the penalty for sin (John 3:14-16; 3:36; Acts 16:31).

4. His Resurrection

We believe every person will be raised bodily from the dead, the believers to eternal life, the unbelievers to eternal separation from God (John 5:28, 29).

**H. Soteriology – Salvation**

1. Faith

We believe faith (i.e., taking God at His word and acting accordingly – Heb. 11:1) is the means of receiving salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). The sole object of our faith is Jesus Christ who saves us through his substitutionary

death, triumphant resurrection, and ascension (John 14:6; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Only by such faith can one be saved from eternal condemnation (John 5:24; 20:30-31).

## 2. Repentance

We believe repentance is a response to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11) that leads one to turn from sin to God (Isa. 55:6-7; Acts 3:17-4:4; 1 Thess. 1:9), and is demonstrated by a transformed life (Luke 3:8-14; Acts 26:20).

## 3. Regeneration

We believe regeneration is the impartation of a new and divine life, a new creation; not the old nature altered or re-invigorated, but a new birth from God (John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:10). At regeneration we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The power of the indwelling Spirit then enables the believer to become holy in character and conduct (Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17).

## 4. Justification

We believe justification is an act of God (Rom. 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who put their faith in Christ alone (Rom. 3:23-24; 28; 4:5). This righteousness is not based on any true virtue or work of man (Rom. 3:20; 4:6), but involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

## 5. Sanctification

We believe sanctification, a setting-apart unto God, involves both the work of God and the will of man (Phil. 2:12-13). Sanctification is threefold: positional, progressive, and ultimate. It is positional, for every believer is in Christ and therefore is identical with Christ's position before God (1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 10:10). We believe, however, that he retains his sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the believer in Christ is perfect, his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. Therefore a believer experiences progressive sanctification, growing in a grace and becoming changed by the unhindered power of the Spirit (John 17:17; Rom. 6:19; 2 Cor. 7:1). Ultimate sanctification will occur when the believer sees the Lord and becomes "like Him" (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 2:28-3:3).

## 6. Eternal Security

We believe all believers will be kept saved forever (1 Pet. 1:5) because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love (John 5:24) because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven (Heb 7:25; 1 John 2:1), because of the unchangeable promises of God (John 10:28), and because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved (John 14:16-17; Eph. 1:13-14). We believe that our righteous Father cannot overlook

the sin of His children and will, when they persistently sin, discipline them in infinite love (Heb. 12:6). We believe He will finally present every believer faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30; Jude 24).

## **I. Ecclesiology – the Church**

We believe the Church, which Christ began to build on the day of Pentecost (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2) and will complete at His second coming (1 Thess. 4:16-17), consists of all regenerate believers (Eph. 2:14). Local churches practice two ordinances, the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-34) and believer's baptism (Matt. 28:19-20), and seek to reconcile wayward members back to Christ and to each other, administering discipline when all attempts at reconciliation have failed (1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:5-11). Church leaders (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1) shepherd the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), equipping believers to serve (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:11-16) in order to move the whole body toward maturity and unity. Believers gather to worship God together, to discipline one another, and to fellowship; they disperse to care for the needs of the body and to bear witness of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 2:42-47).

## **J. Eschatology – The Last Things**

### **1. The Return of Christ**

#### **a. The Return of Christ in the Clouds**

We believe in the personal, imminent, premillennial return of Christ in the clouds to "catch away" His Church

(Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Tit. 2:13). This hope of Christ's coming to receive his own (1 Thess. 4:13-17) is a purifying element in the life of the believer (1 John 3:3) and a warning to the unbeliever (Matt. 24:42; 2 Pet. 3:10). Believers will be judged according to their works to receive rewards or suffer loss (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 9:25; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 3:11).

#### **b. The Return of Christ to the Earth**

We believe that, following the great tribulation (Rev. 3:10; 7:14), Christ will visibly return to the Earth in glory with His saints (Rev. 19:11-16) to defeat the enemies of Israel and to judge Israel (Eze. 20:33-44; Matt. 25) and the nations (Rev. 19:17-21). Following this He will establish His millennial kingdom (Rev. 20).

### **2. The Resurrection and Final State**

We believe in the eternality of the soul, in the bodily resurrection of the saved and the unsaved (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:22), and in the final judgment of good or evil deeds (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). We believe that at the resurrection the believer's body will be made like Jesus' glorified body (Phil 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:17) to be forever with the Lord. We believe that the unbeliever will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment of God when all not found recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life will face eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; 46; Rev. 20:11-15).

3. God's Plan for the Church and Israel

We believe Scripture distinguishes between Israel and the Church, and that God will keep His promises to both.

**SECTION IV: ORDINANCES AND PRACTICES**

**A. Ordinances**

1. Definition

We believe that an ordinance is an observance which Christ ordered the Church to follow until He returns, and that it sets forth, in symbolic form, central truths of Christian faith. It is not a sacrament because it does not confer upon participants any spiritual grace either for salvation of living the Christian life. Its spiritual value for the participant lies in obedience to Christ and in remembrance of His death for our sins.

2. Baptism

- a. Water baptism symbolizes the experience of regeneration and union with Christ (Acts 8:36-39); it is a public testimony of that inner reality (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Mark 16:16); it is to be administered to believers only (Acts 8:37; 16:30-34; 18:8).
- b. Water baptism has no saving or cleansing merits, but rather an act of obedience demonstrating the new relationship with Christ. While other modes of baptism are practiced by other

denominations, the B.E.C.A. recognizes and practices "Baptism by immersion only!"

3. Lord's Supper

- a. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance, instituted by Christ in the night of betrayal, to be observed frequently (in our Fellowship at least four times a year) by believers until He returns.
- b. The consecrated emblems consist of bread symbolizing Christ's broken body, and the fruit of the vine as a symbol of His shed blood (1 Cor. 11:23-29). The observance of this ordinance is to be preceded by honest self-examination.
- c. There is no salvation element in this ordinance; it rather serves as a reminder of Christ's vicarious atonement (1 Pet. 3:18), and out continues dependence upon Him.
- d. The communion table is open to all believers who practice consistent Christian living.

**B. Practices**

1. Home and Family

The Christian home is recognized as essential for the nation in upholding the social, political and spiritual integrity of the country. The Christian family should observe closely the Biblical teaching regarding the home. Grace at every family table, daily

family altar, hospitality to friends and strangers, profitable leisure time and regular church attendance should be the unfluctuating standard of every Christian home.

## 2. Marriage

- a. We believe that the Bible teaches that the marital relationship was designed by God to be a lifelong union of husband (one man) and wife (one woman) (Gen. 2:1-8, 21-23; Matt. 19:3-9), to be entered into with an attitude of godly reverence and wisdom, love purity (Gen. 1:27; 2:18, 24; Prov. 18:22; Matt. 19:4-6). Therefore, divorce should not even be considered as an option among believers.
- b. We believe that it is unscriptural for a believer to unite with an unbeliever in the bond of matrimony (Deut. 7:2-4; Neh. 13:25-27; 1 Cor. 7:39). Consequently, social friendships with unbelievers inclined to lead toward courtship and marriage should be discouraged.
- c. Weddings and all activities connected therewith, shall be planned and conducted in keeping with a Christian testimony.

## 3. Divorce and Remarriage

- a. The BECA believes in the sanctity of marriage and

encourages couples to keep their marriage commitment for life in spite of the difficulties they may encounter.

- b. However, Evangelical Christianity, including some of our Association churches and pastors, are not united on the question of divorce and remarriage. There are those who would grant a divorce on the ground of fornication (Matt. 5:31-21; 19:9), or desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15), and not stand in the way of remarriage while both divorcées live. Because of these differences of interpretation, the pastor will be asked to follow the constitution of the local church of which he serves in regards to divorce and remarriage.
- c. Separation without divorce, although not encouraged, is recognized in Scripture (1 Cor. 7:10-16). Reconciliation should always be the goal of God's people. In such cases, local churches should do everything they can to facilitate reconciliation.
- d. Remarriage after death of either husband or wife has biblical sanction (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3).

## 4. The Lord's Day

We believe that Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week makes Sunday the logical

day for corporate worship, as it was in practice in early church (Acts 20:7). However, we recognize that for the New Testament believers, no single day of the week has been consecrated by God (Rom. 14:5-6; Col. 2:16), and that corporate worship can rightly be practiced on any day. The central exhortation of the New Testament is that believers do regularly assemble together (Heb. 10:24-25) for worship and encouragement and one day in the divine cycle of seven be devoted for this purpose.

Furthermore, even though we do not believe that the specific regulations of the Law of Moses governing the day of rest apply to us, we do believe that the one-day-in-seven rest cycle is of divine origin (Gen. 2:2, 3). It is preceded the Law of Moses and is for all people. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all believers to observe this principle in obedience to God and for their own spiritual, physical and emotional benefit.

#### 5. Christian Walk

We believe that man is created in the image and similitude of God (James 3:9; Eph. 2:24; Gen. 1:26). A Christian, therefore, should be willing to walk in all simplicity and humanity, love and unity, honesty and purity. Discretion should be used in regards to appearance and dress. Believers should glorify God in all things (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:8-10; 4:12; 1 Pet. 3:1-16; Col. 3:1-14;

Eph. 4:1-7; Rom. 12:9-12; 1 Cor. 11:1-16; Deut. 22:5).

#### 6. Christian Stewardship

We believe and teach that God is the possessor and sustainer of everything (Hag. 2:8; Ps. 24:1; Col. 1:16-17). The Bible clearly teaches systematic and proportionate giving (1 Cor. 16: 1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8). To give the tithe and beyond the tithe has the promise of God's blessing (Mal. 3:10; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6, 10). The Christian is also steward over that which he retains as well as his time and talents (Matt. 25:14-30; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

#### 7. Dedication of Parents and Children

We support parents who voluntarily declare their willingness to educate their children in biblical values and to release them to the Lord for whatever ministry He desires of them. Therefore, children may be dedicated when the parents so request.

#### 8. Divine Healing

We believe that divine healing of the body can be realized by God's children on condition as set forth in Scripture (James 5:13-16). The believer is admonished to preserve life and health (Ex. 20:13; Phil. 4:5, 11; 1 Cor. 9:27; 10:31; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). In light of these passages we caution against the obvious abuse of the spectacular in the modern day phenomena of mass "faith healing."

#### 9. Sign Gifts

We believe that the New Testament sign gifts (tongues-speaking, interpretation of tongues, miracles, healings) served to authenticate the Apostles' message and ministry (1 Cor. 14:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4).

We reject signs and gifts as indicators of one's spirituality, since these gifts can be imitated by unbelievers and Satan (Matt. 7:21-24; 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). Instead, evidence of spirituality is to be found in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Rather than embrace gifts for self-edification, believers should pursue that which builds up the whole Body of Christ (1 Cor. 14).

#### 10. Civil Government

We believe that civil government is ordained of God for the punishment of evil doers, for the protection of the good, and to justify direct the interaction of society (Rom. 13:1-7; Ex. 18:21-23). We, therefore, consider it our duty to pray for our political, judicial, and administrative leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-3), and to be submissive and obedient to their authority except in things which militate against the supreme law and will of our Lord Jesus Christ (Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:13-14; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Matt. 23:10; Rev. 19:16; Rom. 14:9-13).

#### 11. Education

We believe our children and youth are God-given heritage and the Bible teaches parental responsibility for their education. Whether children attend public, private or home schools, parents must be discerning about the teaching their children receive. The quality of these schools rest largely upon the parents and teachers. Educational convictions should be guided by scriptural principles. We should seek to protect quality education which respects Christian conscience and conviction.

#### 12. Oaths and Profanity

We believe that the Scriptures clearly indicate that believers are to be honest, trustworthy people, whose "yes" is "yes" and whose "no" is "no" (Matt. 5:37; Jas. 5:12). Therefore, any oath in a court of law should be unnecessary in order to affirm our words, yet the taking of such an oath is not an act of sin. However, the scriptures do teach that it is a sin to use the name of the Lord irreverently (Ex. 21:7).

#### 13. Secret Societies

We believe that all secret orders are contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. There is nothing belonging to Christianity of which the followers of Christ need to be ashamed or want to conceal to men. Therefore, under no circumstances should members be allowed to hold on membership in any secret organization. (John 3:18-20; Eph. 5:11-12; 2 Cor.

6:14-18), neither shall any such person be received into church membership.

#### 14. Instigating Lawsuits Against Believers

We believe that the Scriptures teach us to “Follow peace with all men” (Heb. 12:14), to be inoffensive (Eph. 4:3; Rom. 12:8), not to seek revenge or repay evil for evil to anyone (Rom. 12:17-21), and particularly instruct believers to not settle disputes between themselves via lawsuits in secular courts (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt. 5:25).

#### 15. Response to Conflict

a. We believe that God has called us to live peaceably with all men, to overcome evil with good, and to walk worthy of our vocation (2 Cor. 10:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; John 15:12; Gal. 5:3-15; 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 1 John 3:15, 23).

b. Our churches respect the right of individual conviction and recognize that various positions will be taken on war and military service. We support our youth who because of faith and conscience accept exemptions or alternatives to combat service. We also support youth who choose military service by encouraging them to exert a positive testimony for Christ.

c. We believe that the proper expression of Christian love and discipleship is by a daily

manifestation of a meek spirit. We believe that it is necessary in daily living to return evil with good and not evil for evil. The principle of non-resistance is as important in daily contacts with people as it is in any national or international crisis.

d. We also believe that the taking of a non-resistant position, and the registering of the same with our government, shall be a matter of personal conscience and conviction.

### SECTION V: MEMBERSHIP

A. Organized and Autonomous churches within our Association, shall, at all times, be governed by a constitution and/or bye-laws of their own that has been approved by The Superintendent and the Executive Officers of B.E.C.A and shall be accountable to the Commission on Churches.

B. Emerging churches, however, are accountable to the Commission on Churches and the Commission on Church Planting (either directly or through their extension committee or their mother church). This relationship remains in effect until the specific criteria to become an Organized church have been fully met by the Emerging church.

C. The following defines the membership status of a church in relation to our Association.

#### 1. Full Membership

An Organized Church and an Autonomous Church shall hold full membership.

- a. An Organized Church – in this regard shall be an established Church, holding membership under the B.E.C.A at the time of approval of this revision. Organized Churches with one hundred or more members may request autonomous status. This shall be in the form of a letter to the Commission on Churches outlining its desire coupled with a commitment to abide by the guidelines set forth by the Commission.

The structure of governance of an ORGANIZED Church must be approved by the Superintendent and Executive Officers and shall consist of the following officers:

The Pastor – who shall be the recognized leader of the church and shall serve as Chairman of all church boards. The church will seek the assistance of the Commission on Churches for the call of a Pastor and also seek, in writing, the approval of the Superintendent and Executive Officers of the Association for the call of a Pastor;

The Elders – (1 Tim. 3:1-7) who are appointed on recommendation of the Pastor and the approval of the members of the congregation.

An Elder may serve in that office for a period of three (3) years, each term of appointment, and may also be allowed to serve successive

terms.

Deacons – (Acts 6:1-3 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13) who are appointed by the Board of Elders. A Deacon may serve in that office for a period of three (3) years, each term of appointment, and may also be allowed to serve successive terms;

An ORGANIZED Church shall have an annual business meeting with the members of the Church. Minutes of previous meeting shall be read and a proper financial report presented to the Church.

A copy of the annual church reports is to be sent to the National Office of the Association. The pastor shall be chairman of all business meetings except in a case where Executive Officials are called upon to hold a meeting with the Church. In such cases the Superintendent or another Executive Official of the Council designated by the Executive Committee of the Council shall preside.

An ORGANIZED Church shall be represented at the sessions of the Council by its pastor, his wife and five (5) delegates.

An ORGANIZED Church shall lose its organized status and the authority to govern, direct and administer the day-to-day affairs of such Church (including its financial affairs) shall become exclusively vested in the Superintendent and the Executive Committee of the Council in place of the Pastor and/or Board of

Elders, Deacons and Trustees for such period of time determined by the Superintendent and the Executive Committee to be necessary to protect the integrity of the Association, if any one or more of the following events occurs:

- (a). When the membership drops to twenty or below.
  - (b). When the Church fails in sending financial support into the National office of the Association
  - (c). When and if the church condones or teaches doctrines contrary to the Statement of faith on Fundamental Truths as set out in the Constitution of the Association.
  - (d). When and if the Church persists in receiving persons into the membership of the church without regard to the requirements of membership as set out in these Articles.
  - (e). If the Church persistently fails or neglects to adhere to any of the provisions of this Constitution or discharge their duties as a member of the Association, after being given a reasonable opportunity to remedy or correct such failures or areas of neglect.
- b. An Autonomous Church – shall be an established Church organized under the rules of the B.E.C.A. Autonomous Churches will retain their independent status as it relates to all business and legal matters of the local congregation.

An Autonomous Church is one that has been duly set in order in

accordance with the requirements as set out in these Articles.

When a Church wishes to become an Autonomous Church, application must be made, in writing to the Commission on Churches of the Association. After investigation, the Commission on Churches of the Association may grant autonomy provided:

- i) The Church has a membership of one hundred or more.
- ii) The Church has a current certificate or membership in the Association.
- iii) The Church has met the qualification of an ORGANIZED Church.
- iv) The Church has presented to the Commission on Churches of the Association the proposed Constitution of the Church.
- v) The Church has had the proposed Constitution approved by the Superintendent, Executive Officers and Commission on Churches of the Association.
- vi) The approved Constitution was adopted by the membership of the Church at a meeting presided over by the Commission Officials of the Association.
- vii) The Church has an up-to-date membership roster having active, inactive and junior members listed separately.
- viii) The Church has kept proper records of church proceedings.
- ix) The Church has proper financial records to the satisfaction of the membership of the Commission on Churches of the Association.

- x) The Church has been consistent in sending financial support into the National Office of the Association.
- xi) The Church stands firmly behind the National policies and programs of the Association.
- xii) The Church has not deviated from the Statement of Fundamental Truths as set out in the Constitution of the Church.
- xiii) The Church does not condone the teaching and preaching of those who would confuse the mind of the membership doctrinally.
- xiv) The Church has incorporated into its proposed Constitution the requirements for church membership as set out in these Articles.

An AUTONOMOUS Church shall have the right to purchase, own, sell, lease, mortgage and otherwise dispose of property, where the property is not owned by the Association, in accordance with its own Constitution.

### **Cessation of Autonomous Status**

An AUTONOMOUS Church shall lose its Autonomous status and the authority to govern, direct and administer the day-to-day affairs of such Church (including its financial affairs) shall become exclusively vested in the Executive Committee of the Council in place of the Pastor and/or Board of Elders, Deacons and Trustees of such Church, for a period of time determined by the Executive Committee of the Council to be necessary to protect the integrity of the Association, if any one or more of the following events occurs:

- When the membership drops to fifteen or below.
- When the Church fails in sending financial support into the National Office of the Association.
- When and if the Church condones or teaches doctrine contrary to the Statement of fundamental Truth as set out in the Constitution of the Association
- When and if Church persists in receiving person into the membership of the Church without regard to the church membership requirements as set out in these Articles.
- If the Church persistently fails or neglects to adhere to any of the provisions of this Constitution or discharge their duties as a member of the Association after being given a reasonable opportunity to remedy or correct such failure or areas of neglect.

## **2. Associate Membership**

- a. An Emerging Church shall hold associate membership and will be granted full membership and corresponding voting privileges (according to Section V. Paragraph A of the Constitution) when the following criteria have been met:
  - 1) A resolution to establish the Church is approved by the Field Council of the BECA.

- 2) Establish an official membership list.
- 3) An annual membership meeting with proper minutes.
- 4) An annual budget with clear evidence that the church is making a conscious effort to respect it throughout the year.
- 5) Duly appointed elders (at least two apart from the pastor) who are genuinely qualified for that office according to scriptural norms.
- 6) Make application for membership to the Commission on Churches.
- 7) An emerging church will relate solely to the Commission on Churches when the following additional criteria have been met:
  - b. No longer receiving any subsidies from the Commission on Church Planting.
  - c. Approval from its regional extension committee or mother church to be considered as an autonomous church within the BECA.

**Admission of Congregations:** Any church that is in agreement with the Constitution and Articles of Faith of the Bahamas Evangelical Church

Association may apply to the Association for membership, and upon approval will be accepted as a member Church. Application of a congregation for membership shall be submitted in writing to the Commission on Churches which shall evaluate it and make a recommendation to the delegate body or Field Council.

## SECTION VI: SESSIONS

- A. The Association shall meet annually to conduct its business. Additional sessions may be called as deemed necessary.
  1. By Delegate Body is meant the Field Council.
- B. Representation at the annual convention.
  1. All officers of the Association, church leaders and delegates are strongly urged to attend the annual convention sessions. Members who are not delegates shall be privileged to participate in open deliberations. Non-members may request the privilege to participate in open deliberations by permission of the delegate body. This privilege does not include voting power.
  2. A member congregation voting rights at the convention or semi-annual conference shall be vested in the Senior Pastor, his wife and the elected delegates. Each congregation in addition to the vote of the Senior Pastor and his wife shall have the right to

- elect five (5) delegates, each having one (1) vote.
3. The officers of the Association Superintendent/ President, vice president, secretary, treasurer and asst. treasurer, representative at large, district superintendents three (3) – by virtue of their office shall be entitled to cast one vote on any and all questions coming before the annual or special sessions of the Association.
  4. Any congregation, organized or unorganized, served by an Association worker and under the direction of the Association, may be represented by the worker in charge or any other person recognized by the Commission on Churches.
  5. **The Fellowship's fiscal year shall close December 31.**
- C. Final authority in all Association action and decisions rests with the delegate body or the Field Council at the annual convention. This shall not deter any regularly elected commission or committee from performing its prescribed duties. In addition to the regular reports from the respective commissions and committees, matters of policy or procedure changes and major expenditures not budgeted for, shall be brought to the delegate body or the Field Council for action.
- SECTION VII: ELECTIONS**
- A. The Executive officers and members of the commissions shall be elected at the annual convention by the delegates.
  - B. All elections shall be by ballot.
  - C. The Executive officers shall be elected by majority vote.
  - D. A plurality vote shall decide the election of the commission members i.e., excess of votes for one individual over those cast for any one of several competing candidates.
  - E. To be eligible for nomination to a commission, a person shall have been a member of a local BECA church after two years, or may be appointed at the discretion of the President/Superintendent.
  - F. All newly elected organization officers and commission members shall take office at the close of the annual convention.
  - G. No member shall serve on more than one commission concurrently.
  - H. A term of office shall be three years unless otherwise determined by delegate or Field Council action. With the exception of salaried personnel, an officer or commission member cannot succeed himself after serving three successive terms. Such person however, is eligible to serve on the same commission or committee after one year.
  - I. The appointment of professional and/or management personnel shall be made by the Executive Committee, subject to ratification by the delegate

body or Field Council at the annual convention.

- J. The Executive Committee shall fill any vacant office until the following convention.
- K. Members of the Executive, the Commissions on Churches and the Commission on Church Planting must be elder-qualified men.

### **SECTION VIII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- A. The Executive Committee shall provide spiritual leadership and give oversight to the activities of the Fellowship so that its life and affairs will honor God, be consistent with our understanding of Scripture, enable the Fellowship to accomplish its objectives, and respect its Constitution and policy statements.
- B. The Executive Officers are the Superintendent, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer and Asst. Treasurer, Representative at large, District Superintendents, Three (3).
- C. The Executive Committee shall include the Executive Officers and chairmen of the Commission on Churches, Church Planting, Education, Missions, Outreach, and of Trustees. To be eligible for a position on the Executive Committee, other than the Administrator, a person shall have served one full three-year term on a commission unless otherwise determined by Executive recommendation and delegate action.

- D. Following the biblical pattern of male leadership in the home and the church, and due to the spiritual nature of the leadership role of the Executive, the chairmen of the Commissions must be elder qualified men with the exception of the Commission on Women's Ministries which will be represented by the vice president. (See IX.F.7.d.)

#### **E. Duties:**

1. Coordinate the work of all the BECA commissions.
2. Lead the commissions and the convention delegates in establishing direction and goals for the whole Fellowship.
3. Ensure that the work of each commission contributes to the overall vision and current goals of the Fellowship.
4. Ensure that each commission has an up-to-date job description, manual and clearly articulated goals.
5. Give direction to the work of those employees who are directly accountable to the Executive and conduct periodic evaluations of their ministry.
6. Ensure that the Fellowship has a doctrinal statement which is faithful to the Scripture and that the Fellowship remains true to that statement.
7. Approve all recommendations for the modifications to the BECA Constitution as well as to other policy statements and procedures

prior to the presentation to the delegate body for vote.

8. Initiate appropriate action in case of moral and/or serious ethical failure by an Executive or commission member or a BECA employee.
  9. Review plan for the annual Conventions and Workshops.
  10. Appoint a new chairman for a commission, in the event that the vice chairman of the commission cannot assume this responsibility, in the case of a sitting chairman.
  11. Arbitrate in case of conflict between member churches and between BECA commissions.
  12. Meet at least twice a year.
- F. Duties of Executive Officers
1. Superintendent
    - a. Preside at all sessions of the convention, Field Council and Executive Committee and perform such other duties as pertains to his office.
    - b. Make the necessary appointments for the annual convention.
    - c. By virtue of his position he is an ex-officio member of all commission.
    - d. The Superintendent is mandated to intervene in the operation / administration of any organized congregation in the Association where the following occurs:

i). The Senior Pastor makes a decision to leave abruptly.

ii). The church ministry, finances and membership deteriorates to a level below the organized Church established limits.

iii). The role of the Superintendent and the Executive Officers in such cases shall be:

- Review of ministry structure
- Appointment of an interim leadership team
- Provide leadership of the interim leadership team until such time as the growth and stability of the Church warrants the call of another Pastor.

e. The Superintendent by virtue of his Office may attend any business meeting of Churches within the Association as an observer.

2. Vice-President
  - a. Exercise all the rights, duties, and privileges of the Superintendent / President when he is absent, unable to serve or when so assigned by the President.
  - b. In case of resignation of the President, the Vice-President shall become President until the following annual election.

- c. Serve as chairman of the nomination committee.
  - d. Represent the Commission of Women's Ministries on the Executive Committee.
3. Recording Secretary
- a. Record sessions of the delegate body or Field Council and Executive Committee meetings.
  - b. Submit the minutes of the convention for the publication.
  - c. Be responsible for the safe keeping of all minutes, records, and papers belonging to the Association except such as shall be specified assigned to another party.
4. Treasurer
- a. Carry out the policies of the Association and oversee the preparation of the International Office.
  - b. Assist any commission as requested and able.
  - c. Consult with the Executive Committee in interpreting and communicating the total association program and ministry to the local congregations.
  - d. Make appropriate recommendations to the respective commissions, and shall be an ex-officio,

non-voting member of all commissions.

- e. Be custodian of all legal documents and instruments, and shall be responsible for the safe-keeping of the same.
- f. Serve as treasurer of the Association.

#### 5. Representative at Large

Duties defined by the Superintendent.

#### 6. District Superintendents

Duties are defined by the General Superintendent. Each will be posted to one or more of the following districts:

- a. Abaco and Cays
- b. Grand Bahama, Island
- c. New Providence and Andros
- d. Southern Bahamas

### **SECTION IX: COMMISSIONS**

- A. The Commissions on Churches, Church Planting, Education, Missions, Outreach, Trustees, and Women's Ministries shall integrate and coordinate the work of the Association.
- B. Organization
  - 1. The Commission on Churches, Missions and Education shall consist of nine members, three of whom shall be elected annually by the delegate body or Field Council.

2. The Commission on Outreach shall consist of not more than five members, elected by the delegation body or Field Council to three alternating terms.
  3. The Commission on Trustees shall consist of not more than nine (9) members and not less than seven (7). They shall be elected annually.
  4. The Commission on Church Planting shall consist of nine members, one chosen by and from each of the functioning regional extension committees for three-year terms and the remaining members elected by the delegate body or Field Council to three-year alternating terms.
  5. The Commission on Women's Ministries shall consist of at least five and not more than nine members, elected by the delegate body or Field Council to three-year alternating terms.
- C. Each commission organizes annually during the annual convention by electing from its membership a chairman, vice- chairman and secretary. The chairman must have served one full three-year term on the commission unless otherwise determined by the Executive action.
- D. Each commission chairman shall make regular reports on activity within his respective commission to the Executive Committee.
- E. Each commission shall prepare its annual budget and submit it to the Commission of Trustees at the semi-annual session.
- F. Duties of Commission:
1. Commission on Churches
    - a. Examine and recommend to the delegate body all candidates for licensing and ordination to the ministry.
    - b. Give assistance and advice to a local church in a calling pastor.
    - c. Assist when requested on arranging for Bible conferences and evangelistic meetings.
    - d. Encourage pastoral church leadership development.
    - e. Advise and assist member churches in their exercise of biblical discipline.
    - f. Withdraw credentials from ordained and licensed personnel who fail to respond to redemptive biblical discipline.
  2. Commission on Outreach
 

Identify and provide resources and approaches to assist individual churches in establishing and maintaining an outreach passion throughout their respective congregations.
  3. Commission on Church Planting

- a. Formulate policies, goals, guidelines, and strategies for planting BECA churches.
- b. Work with regional extension committees in carrying out the church planting projects and programs that have been designed and implemented.
- c. Ensure that BECA policies and guidelines are respected in carrying out church planting.
- d. Encourage and assist in the formation of regional extension committees in areas where such a body does not exist.
- e. Select and supervise leadership to carry out church planting work in areas without a regional extension committee or mother church.
- f. Approve pastoral personnel for BECA church planting projects and emerging church prior to a call being issued. The Commission on Churches shall examine and recommend such personnel to the delegate body, and assume the responsibility for pastoral discipline in accordance with IX.F.1. above, as with all other pastors.
- g. Recommend the allocation of BECA funds for church planting activities carried out by the commission, regional extension committees and churches.

#### 4. Commission on missions

- a. Encourage and assist active and retired BECA missionaries.
- b. Make contact with perspective missionaries.
- c. Recommend to the convention delegates, after satisfactory interview, the acceptance of missionary candidates, and the reappointment or returning missionaries.
- d. Recommend to the Commission on Churches, the ordination of missionaries when requested by their sending agencies.
- e. Represent the Association on affiliated mission boards.
- f. Promote the cause of world missions in all churches of the Association.

#### 5. Commission on Education

- a. Church Based Education
  - 1) Assess curriculum and educational tools and advise the churches in their use.
  - 2) Be a resource for a variety of educational ministries to children, youth and adults.
- b. Christian and Secular Education

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Be aware of and communicate trends in Christian and secular education.</li> <li>2) Manage a scholarship program for post secondary students majoring in Bible.</li> <li>3) Plan and implement convention programs for children and youth.</li> <li>4) Develop and maintain an Audio-Visual Library.</li> <li>5) Develop and maintain a BECA Historical Library.</li> <li>6) Develop and produce Association publications; select and employ editor(s).</li> </ol>                                                          | <p>Association and is authorized to execute any and all legal documents required in the transfer of property. It shall receive and hold trust bequests, annuities, and donations; dispose of and/or administer the same; negotiate loans as instructed, maintain and insure properties; pay all interest and other bills affecting the properties held in trust; pay bills pertaining directly to the administration of the Fellowship; and act on any other capacity as directed.</p> |
| <p>6. Commission on Trustees</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Be responsible for the business administration of the fellowship, properties, funds and investments, and for the preparation and promotion of the annual budget. Following Executive Committee approval, the commission shall present the annual budget to the delegate body.</li> <li>b. All Association property shall be in their trust and subject to the laws of the jurisdiction in which the property is located.</li> <li>c. Serves as the legal representative of the</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Invest and maintain holdings according to the direction of the donors and/or the resolutions of the Fellowship.</li> <li>e. The Chairman and Secretary of this commission shall be authorized to sign documents on behalf of the commission. Other signatures may be appointed by the commission.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>7. Commission on Women's Ministries</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Promote spiritual fellowship growth among the BECA women.</li> <li>b. Offer leadership to, evaluate and provide resources for local women's ministry groups.</li> <li>c. Coordinate and encourage support for BECA missionaries through prayer and contributions toward their ministry needs.</li> </ol>                                                                                          |

- d. The Chairman shall report directly to the Vice-President who will represent them to the Executive Committee.

## **SECTION X: EXTENSION COMMITTEES**

Wherever there are sufficient numbers of BECA churches in a region, they are encouraged to form a regional extension committee.

The primary purpose of an extension committee is to select, plan, initiate and supervise local church planting projects in its area. Each committee will respect policies and guidelines set forth by the Commission on Church Planting while showing consideration for the local culture.

The primary duties of an extension committee are set forth in the job description of an extension committee in the Church Planters Manual.

The bylaws of each extension committee will include the purpose statement above and the duties of an extension committee as outlined in the above mentioned job description.

In its efforts to stimulate church planting, the Commission on Church Planting will partner with the extension committee in regions where such a committee exists.

## **SECTION XI: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended only by two-thirds majority vote of the delegate body present at the annual

convention, providing notice is given three months or more in advance of the proposed change to allow time for discussion and recommendation by the delegates.