

The FCE Constitution

ARTICLE I: THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The Free Church of England otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereinafter referred to as 'the Free Church of England'), is a branch of the Holy Catholic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, united by faith to Him Who is the Head over all things to the Church which is His body.

ARTICLE II: THE DOCTRINE OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The doctrine of the Free Church of England is founded in the Holy Scriptures and, following the example of the Reformers, in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.

In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Declaration of Principles, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and the authorised liturgies of this Church.

ARTICLE III: THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS CHURCH BY CONVOCATION

THE AUTHORITY OF CONVOCATION The Free Church of England, deriving its authority from Christ, Who is the Head over all things to the Church, doth declare that the Convocation of the said Church, consisting of the Bishop Primus, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, together with the representatives of the Laity, shall in all matters therein, have chief legislative power and jurisdiction.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL Convocation shall appoint at its Annual Meeting a Council of its members not less than eight and not more than ten in number (exclusive of the Bishops, Convocation Secretary, Registrar, Treasurer, Diocesan Secretaries and Diocesan Treasurers who shall all be ex-officio members of such Council) and delegate to such Council such administrative powers and functions as Convocation shall from time to time resolve. The Council thus appointed shall hold office until the next succeeding Annual Meeting of Convocation.

As to any matter or thing concerning the conduct and discipline of the Congregations, Clergy and Ministers of this Church, in respect of which other canonical oversight or direction shall not at the time have been provided, the Council shall have an ad interim power and jurisdiction until the next Annual meeting of Convocation.

The Convocation shall appoint annually such standing Committees as it may deem necessary.

ARTICLE IV: THE MEETINGS OF CONVOCATION

MEETINGS OF CONVOCATION The Annual Convocation shall meet between the first day of March and the Thirty first day of August in each year in such place as shall be determined by Convocation itself, and in case there should be any good and sufficient cause to alter the place or time fixed, the Council shall have power to appoint another convenient place and time for the holding of such Convocation.

SPECIAL MEETINGS OF CONVOCATION

A Special Meeting of Convocation may be convened at any convenient time by the Bishop Primus, or by the General Secretary with the consent of the Bishop Primus.

A Special Meeting thereof shall be convened by the General Secretary, on the written request of more than half of the members of Convocation,

specifying the object or objects of such Special Meeting, and if such Special Meeting be not convened by the said General Secretary within fourteen days from the date of requisition, then the requisitionists, or any other Members amounting to the required number, may themselves convene such Special Meeting.

No such Special Convocation may be called less than three months before the date of the next ensuing Convocation.

QUORUM AND NOTICE

Before Convocation shall proceed to business, twenty members must be present (of whom five at least shall be Presbyters) except that six members shall be sufficient to adjourn. In all business of Convocation freedom of debate shall be allowed.

Not less than fourteen days previous notice in writing shall be given of any Ordinary or Special Meeting, and notice through the Minister of the Church shall be deemed to be valid Service.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP OF CONVOCATION

MEMBERSHIP OF CONVOCATION

The Convocation shall consist of all the Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons of this Church, in good standing, together with the Churchwardens and two lay delegates from each duly organised Congregation of this Church.

Before taking his seat, every person so elected, shall sign a declaration in the following form in a book to be kept for that purpose by the proper officer of Convocation.

Clergy

"I MM, do solemnly make the following declaration: - I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to Salvation, and I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of

the Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, so long as I shall continue a Minister thereof.

“I believe the Doctrine of the said Church, as set forth in the Declaration of Principles thereof, to be agreeable to the Word of God, and in Public Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, I will use the Forms canonically prescribed and none other, except so far as is or shall be

ordered or permitted by lawful authority; and further, I will pay true and canonical obedience to the lawful authorities of the said Church.”

Laymen

“I, MM, a Representative of N, do solemnly declare that I am a Communicant of the Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, and I do solemnly promise and engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the said Church as set forth by the authority of the Convocation thereof.”

VOTES

The votes of all Members of Convocation shall be equal in value, and except in cases otherwise provided for, a majority of those present shall be sufficient to pass a Resolution thereof.

ARTICLE VI: THE CLERGY

CLERGY

The Free Church of England holds and teaches that from the earliest times there have been these Ministers in Christ’s Church: Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons.

No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Presbyter or Deacon in this Church, or permitted to execute any of the functions of the said Ministries except he be called, tried, examined and admitted thereunto by such forms as this Church shall authorise; or has had formerly consecration or ordination in a Church whose Orders are recognised and accepted by the Free Church of England.

Guided by the New Testament and by the Tradition of the Church, the Free Church of England admits only baptized males to the ministries of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon.

For the due and solemn consecration of Bishops, the ordination of Presbyters and the ordering of Deacons, this Church will use the Forms provided in its authorised Book of Common Prayer, and none other, except such as may be ordered by Convocation.

ARTICLE VII: BISHOPS AND DIOCESES

BISHOPS

The Bishops of this Church shall be chosen or received agreeably to such rules as shall be fixed by Convocation, and their jurisdiction, powers, and duties in any Synod or Episcopal Jurisdiction shall be such as Convocation itself shall determine from time to time.

No Bishop of this Church may perform any act of the Episcopal office in any Church, or for any Congregation, outside the jurisdiction of Convocation, without the consent of the Bishop Primus and Council.

DIOCESES

This Church shall have such Dioceses as Convocation shall decide, and each Diocese, with the approval of Convocation or the Bishop Primus, may form a Synod under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of such Diocese. Each Synod shall be composed of the Clergy and Ministers of this Church within its geographical limits together with the Churchwardens and two lay delegates from each organised Congregation and each Synod shall have absolute independence in all matters whatsoever within the limits of its jurisdiction, except where otherwise ordered in this Constitution, and each Synod shall have power to frame bye-laws for its own Government – provided always, that no such bye-laws made or operating in opposition to the Declaration of Principles, or to this Constitution, shall be good or valid to any intent or purpose whatsoever; and provided also, that any Resolution or Injunction of a Synod may be appealed against to Convocation, whose decision shall be final.

ARTICLE VIII: CONGREGATIONS

CONGREGATIONS

Any Congregation of Christian people may be admitted to union with this Church, under such Conditions as Convocation may determine from time to time.

ARTICLE IX: TRUSTS

TRUSTS

All funds, other than those for purely Congregation purposes, shall be held in Trust by Trustees who shall be Communicants of this Free Church of England otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, and no other person shall be appointed a Trustee of any Freehold, Leasehold, or other property settled upon, or in Trust for, the said Church.

All monies, and other property held in trust for the use of the said Church, shall be disposed of, and applied (except the Declaration of any Trust shall express to the contrary) in such manner and way as Convocation by vote at its meeting shall direct.

Properties already held in Trust shall be administered according to the provisions of the said Trusts, by the Free Church of England Central Trust.

New Properties, which it is proposed to Vest in Trustees for the uses and purposes of the Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, shall be placed in Trust under such Model Trust Deed as shall be approved and adopted by Convocation.

TRUSTEES

If any person appointed a Trustee shall cease to be a Member and Communicant of the said Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, such person shall

cease to be a Trustee, and any Trustee refusing to obey a Resolution or Injunction of Convocation (of which a Certificate signed by the Bishop Presiding, and the Secretary of the Convocation concerned, shall be sufficient evidence) shall thereby be considered as resigning his or her Trusteeship, and shall cease to be a Trustee, and such Trustee shall convey, assign, and transfer the Trust estate and premises so vested in him or her, unto other Trustees or Trustee thereof, duly nominated or appointed by Convocation.

ARTICLE X: THE WORSHIP OF THIS CHURCH

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

The Book of Common Prayer with its Rubrics, Administration of the Sacraments, and other Services of this Church, Articles of Religion, and Forms for ordaining and consecrating Bishops and other ministers, as revised in 1956, shall be valid and binding, and subject to the provisions hereinafter recited, shall be used in this Church at such time and with such liberty as the Canon on this subject shall provide.

No alteration or additions shall be made in this Book of Common Prayer, or other Offices of this Church, or the Articles of Religion, unless the same shall be approved by a Vote of three-fourths of those present and voting in one Convocation, and ratified by a similar majority in the ensuing Annual Convocation, provided that there shall be not less than three calendar months between the two meetings, and that such alterations do not contravene the Declaration of Principles.

ARTICLE XI: SPECIAL FORMS OF WORSHIP

SPECIAL FORMS

It shall be lawful for Convocation to adopt a Special Form or Forms of Common Prayer with Rubrics, etc., for use by the Churches or Congregations, as are or shall be established overseas and Convocation may delegate to a special Committee the settlement of such Form or Forms.

The Forms, when so adopted, shall bear the signatures of the Bishop Primus, and the Convocation Secretary or Secretaries of this Church, and shall be alterable only in the manner provided for in Article X.

ARTICLE XII: ORNAMENTS

ORNAMENTS

No decorations, ornaments, vestments, postures, or ceremonies contrary to the doctrine of Free Church of England, shall be allowed in the worship of this Church.

ARTICLE XIII: ANCIENT LAWS AND CUSTOMS TO BE PRESERVED

ANCIENT LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Except where otherwise canonically specified, or where contrary to Evangelical and Protestant Principles, this Church conforms to the ancient laws and customs of the Church of England.

ARTICLE XIV: DISCIPLINE

The composition of Courts of Discipline, and the rules and procedures thereof shall be decided by Convocation and shall be set forth in the Canons of this Church.

ARTICLE XV: NAME AND CONSTITUTION

CONSTITUTION

The Name of this Church, and this Constitution shall be unalterable, unless the proposed alteration shall be approved by a Vote of three- fourths of the members present and voting in one Convocation, and ratified by a similar vote in the ensuing Annual Convocation, provided that there shall be not less than three calendar months between the two meetings.

ARTICLE XVI: CANONS

CANONS

Convocation shall adopt and publish Canons for the government and administration of this Church. No Canon shall be valid or binding, save, or in so far only, as it is consistent with this Constitution, and no Canon shall be altered or rescinded nor shall any new Canon be enacted, save by a majority of three-fourths of the Members present and voting in one Convocation, and ratified by a similar vote at the ensuing Annual Convocation, provided that there shall be not less than three calendar months between the two meetings.