

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

1.0 Name of church: **International Evangelical Church of the Algarve** (*referred hereto as the IECA*)

2.0 Purpose:

2.1 The mission of this Church is to glorify God by being led by the Holy Spirit to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, to train all in Biblical truth and to include each one in a community of faith and fellowship.

2.2 To spread and make known the good news of the Gospel of Christ in the Algarve and beyond by means of regular worship services, prayer meetings and bible study and other evangelistic outreach activities decided by the church.

3.0 Organisational Structure: The church comprises of a General Assembly, a Body of Elders, a Body of Deacons, an Audit Committee and paid staff.

4.0 Church Leadership:

4.1 Body of elders: Elders shall be responsible for overseeing all the affairs of the Church. Function and responsibilities of elders are set out in *Schedule 3*

5.0 Membership

5.1 Membership of the Church is open to any individual who meets the qualifications and responsibility for membership set out in *Schedule 2*.

5.2 All members will be expected to fully accept and uphold the *Statement of Faith* set out in *Schedule 1*.

6.0 Record Keeping

6.1 The church's annual financial year shall run from 1st January to 31 December

6.2 The annual report for the activities of the church shall be prepared each year and presented to the Annual Church Members Meeting (AGM).

6.3 A statement of the church accounts incorporating financial statements of all Church organisations shall be presented to the AGM for approval.

7.0 Power of Amendment

7.1 Subject to *Schedule 5* this constitution may be amended by the Elders.

7.2 No amendment may be made to this constitution that would have the effect of making the Mission cease or be contrary to the Statement of Faith.

8.0 Closure: The Church may dissolve by decision of the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Elders, as set out in *Schedule 5*.

9.0 Schedules

Schedule 1 **Statement of Faith** (*page 2*)

Schedule 2 **Membership** (*page 3*)

Schedule 3 **Church Governance** (*page 4*)

Schedule 4 **Church members' meetings** (*page 6*)

Schedule 5 **Closure and amendments** (*page 7*)

SCHEDULE 1 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

The IECA's Statement of Faith is regarded as a summary of those doctrines commonly held by the Church and is subordinate to Scripture, reads:

1.1 The Scriptures

WE BELIEVE in the verbal inspiration and total inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as original and complete revelation given by God; their sole sufficiency and ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice.

1.2 God

WE BELIEVE in One God in three distinct persons, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-equal, co-eternal, sovereign and active in creation, providence and redemption.

1.3 The Lord Jesus Christ

WE BELIEVE the essential deity and perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and men; His virgin birth, sinless life, and sacrificial death on the cross as the only substitute for sinners; His burial, bodily resurrection and ascension to heaven; His high priestly ministry and personal return to judge the living and the dead.

1.4 The Holy Spirit

WE BELIEVE in the work of the person of the Holy Spirit convicting men of sin, regenerating the sinner and indwelling, sanctifying, and empowering the believer, he comforts, teaches and advocates on our behalf, bestowing spiritual gifts.

1.5 The Devil

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the adversary, who is also known as Satan and the devil, along with his demonic army, evil activity and final doom.

1.6 Humanity

WE BELIEVE in the creation of humanity, biologically male and female, in the image of God, equal in value and complementary in role; the creation ordinance of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman; the entrance of sin through Adam's disobedience; the fallen and totally depraved state of all humanity; their subjection to God's wrath and condemnation; their responsibility to repent and believe the Gospel.

1.7 Justification

WE BELIEVE in the justification of the sinner by God's grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and the eternal security of the believer.

1.8 The Church

WE BELIEVE in the church, the body of Christ, made up of those drawn, called out and chosen from the foundation of the world from every tribe, language, people and nation throughout history who are added to it by the work of the Holy Spirit through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and given the commission to go out and make disciples of all the nations.

1.9 The Future State

WE BELIEVE in the unconditional immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; to the believer, eternal fellowship with God; and to the unbeliever, the conscious eternal punishment in hell.

SCHEDULE 2 – MEMBERSHIP

2.0 Membership

2.1 Composition

The Church membership shall be composed of those who:

1. Profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as our one and only saviour.
2. Have been recommended and approved by the Eldership
3. Submit to the Statement of Faith as the teaching standard of the Church; and
4. Submit to all other matters contained in the Constitution and agree to be bound by them.

2.2 Responsibilities of Membership

Those admitted to membership are expected, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Attend and support as frequently as possible the church gatherings (including General Meetings of the Church);
2. Support the work of the Lord by cheerful, systematic and proportionate giving made through the Church;
3. Serve in one or more ministries of the Church; youth may serve, where appropriate, until the age of 18 when they will be invited to be members. Non-members may not serve in any spiritual ministry.
4. Actively seek to cultivate fellowship with one another so that they may better be able to pray for, love, comfort, and encourage one another and help one another materially as necessity may require.
5. Members shall seek to develop a spirit of unity in the Church;
6. Keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the Church and do not discuss them with persons outside of the Church;
7. Seek to use every opportunity to bear witness to their faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and testimony, and by involvement in the work of the Church as they are able;
8. Grant to one another liberty of conscience in those practices which God has not expressly forbidden in His Word;
9. Recognise and submit to the scriptural authority entrusted to the Elders of the Church; and
10. Live God glorifying lives.

2.3 Membership Application Procedure

1. Any person (18 years of age or over) who desires to become a member of the Church should speak to a Pastor or Elder. Two Elders shall interview them.
2. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, and if considered appropriate by the Elders, contact will be made concerning the person's standing with that church.
3. The applicant shall be informed of the decision of the Elders at the earliest opportunity.
4. The applicant shall be formally received into membership at the next church service.

2.4 Removal of Membership

Membership of the Church may be terminated:

1. When a member of the Church is removed by death, their name will automatically be removed from the membership roll.
2. When a member in good standing resigns their membership
3. When a member who is persistently absent from the services of the Church and who fails to honour the responsibilities of membership has been interviewed by the Elders.
4. When a member who falls into grievous sin and remains unrepentant shall, on the recommendation of the Elders and after appropriate pastoral care, be subject to the disciplinary removal of their name from the membership and the church notified.

SCHEDULE 3 – CHURCH GOVERNANCE

3.1 The Elders

3.1.1 Function of Elders

- Elders shall be responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Church, with particular responsibility for spiritual matters, by being servant leaders and shepherds of the flock of God; teaching, caring, upholding the church in prayer and upholding the theology of the Church as expressed in the Church's Statement of Faith, (see *Schedule 1*).
- The Elders will keep confidential written records of their meetings. Quarterly reports from the elders will be sent to church members.

3.1.2 Responsibilities of the elders

- To Maintain Church membership list
- To prepare and issue the Church's annual Budget for agreement by the Eldership and Church.
- Manage and supervise the use of the property in accordance with the character and purpose of the Church.
- Appoint and manage employment contracts for all employees of the Church as recommended by the Eldership.
- Manage the fiducial responsibility of the church and submit, as required, an annual financial report to the Church or to any person who requests it. A charge may be made to provide the report unless the request is from a church member.

3.1.3 Qualifications for Elders

Those eligible to serve as Elders shall:

1. Be chosen from the male membership of the Church.
2. Display the necessary biblical qualifications.
3. Affirm and hold unreservedly the Statement of Faith of the Church in *Schedule 1* and agree to be bound by the Church Constitution.

3.1.4 Appointment of Elders

- The recommendation of a new elder shall be made by the existing Eldership. The names of those so nominated will be circulated to Church members four Sundays prior to the appointment to give the Church an opportunity to raise any objections.
- The appointment of a pastor shall be upon recommendation of the Eldership, which will then be brought to the church members for a vote of a two-thirds majority.

3.1.5 Term and Removal of Elders

The position of 'Elder' shall be permanent until:

- An elder wishing to resign will issue a letter of resignation, which will be presented to the existing Eldership
- An Elder may be removed from office by a majority vote in the Eldership and the church informed.

Sabbatical periods may be agreed upon from time to time.

3.2 Deacons

3.2.1 Function of Deacons

- Deacons, too, have a crucial role in the life and health of the church, but their role, while spiritual in nature, is different from the elders'. The biblical role of deacons is to take care of the physical

and logistical needs of the church under the authority of the elders so that the elders can concentrate on their primary calling.

- The deacons shall meet monthly, or as necessary, and agree to issue written records of the meetings as required to keep the Eldership informed. Quarterly reports from the deacons will be sent to church members.

3.2.2 Qualifications for Deacons

Members to be considered for appointment as Deacons shall:

1. Be chosen from all the membership of the Church.
2. Display the necessary biblical qualifications.
2. Affirm and hold unreservedly the Statement of Faith of the Church in *Schedule 1* and agree to be bound by the Church Constitution.

3.2.3 Appointment of Deacons

The recommendation of a Deacon shall be made by the Eldership. The names of those so nominated will be circulated to Church members four Sundays prior to the appointment to the Church, allowing an opportunity to raise any objections.

3.2.4 Removal of Deacons

The role of Deacon shall be considered permanent until:-

- A Deacon wishing to resign will write a letter of resignation to the Elders.
- A Deacon may be removed from office by the Elders

3.3 Treasurer

3.3.1 Function of the Treasurer

The treasurer shall fulfil the role required by the Eldership as set out in the Church Constitution, providing all necessary fiduciary management of the Church accounts.

3.3.2 Qualifications for Treasurer

Members to be considered for appointment as Treasurer shall:

1. Display the necessary biblical qualifications and financial experience required for the role.
2. Affirm and hold unreservedly the Statement of Faith of the Church in *Schedule 1* and agree to be bound by the Church Constitution.

3.3.3 Appointment of the Treasurer

- The Eldership shall select the Treasurer from the membership.
- The Treasurer will serve the church, under the authority of the eldership as set out in the Constitution.

3.3.4 Removal of Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be considered permanent until: -

- The treasurer wishing to resign will write a letter of resignation to the Elders.
- The Treasurer may be removed from office by the Eldership.

SCHEDULE 4 – CHURCH MEMBERS’ MEETINGS

4.0 Church Meetings

The Church Members’ Meeting shall be responsible for:

1. Confirmation of the appointment and removal of all officers and persons appointed by the Eldership to serve the Church;
2. The confirmation of the appointment of an Elder by the Elders;
3. The confirmation of applications for membership;
4. The approval of the budget and any extraordinary expenditure;
5. The amendment of the Church Constitution and Rules as proposed by the Eldership;
6. All decisions raised by the Elders relating to property;
7. The dissolution of the Church in accordance with *Schedule 5*.

All meetings of Church Members called under the arrangements set out in this document will be regarded as General Meetings. The Annual General Meeting will normally be held in January.

The formal notice convening a General Meeting shall be given by announcement at the Services four Sundays preceding the Meeting, when a written Notice and Agenda will be available, with the notice also sent out by email to church members.

4.1 Annual General Meeting

The meeting will:

1. Receive and scrutinise written reports of the work of the Church carried out in the previous year.
2. Consider and approve the annual budget by a majority vote of two-thirds.
3. Voting on any major decisions raised by the Eldership at the Annual General Meeting shall normally be by ballot vote and require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

4.2 General Meeting

This meeting will:

1. Consider and approve the audited annual accounts.
2. Confirm or amend the audit committee currently operating and its membership.

4.3 Extraordinary General Meetings

Special meetings of the Church shall be convened by the Eldership on any major decisions that are required to obtain approval between the AGMs.

Any voting required at the EGMs shall normally be by ballot vote and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting.

4.4 Elders’ and Deacons’ Meetings

1. Elders and Deacons shall normally meet each other quarterly.
2. All such Meetings shall be conducted in confidence.
3. The Church Treasurer shall report to the Elders at each scheduled meeting on the current financial position of the Church.

4.5 General requirements

1. At AGMs, GMs and EGMs, an attendance of one-third of Church members shall be required to form a quorum; otherwise, no decision on matters defined above shall be taken at the meeting.

SCHEDULE 5 – CLOSURE AND AMENDMENTS

5.1 Amendment of the constitution

- 5.1.1 Any amendment to the constitution must be presented by the elders to the church four weeks in advance of an Extraordinary General Meeting (the full text of the proposed change shall be circulated in writing to all church members).
- 5.1.2 The amendment shall be approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the General Assembly.

5.2 Dissolution

- 5.2.1 In the event of a schism within the Church, the assets shall be awarded to the group that remains faithful to the doctrinal principles and objectives of the Church, as assessed by the Elders, with the decision made by simple majority.
- 5.2.2 If a simple majority is not reached, the Elders shall request an external and impartial authority to appoint three arbitrators who will determine which of the conflicting parties the Church's assets should be awarded to, according to the aforementioned criteria.
- 5.2.3 On dissolution, where property assets of the Church are held by separate associations, Those associations will govern the distribution of the property assets.
- 5.3.4 On dissolution, the assets of the church (other than the property assets), after the satisfactions of debts and liabilities, shall be applied for charitable purpose that further the goals of the church.