

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
OF
THE BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**As revised and adopted at the Annual Assembly in 1933,
and amended at subsequent Assemblies**

1. Name

THE BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

2. Definitions

In the Constitution and By-laws of THE BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA the following terms will have the meaning herein assigned to them:

BOARD shall mean a group of individuals appointed annually by the Assembly in accordance with approved Terms of Reference, to administer specific areas of the Union's ministry, as defined by the Assembly from time to time.

CHURCH shall mean a gathered community of Protestant believers which accepts the supreme and final authority of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith and practice, observes the two ordinances of Believers' Baptism by Immersion and the Lord's Supper, and affirms its adherence to the Declaration of Principles as set forth in Clause 4.

DELEGATE shall mean a person appointed as an accredited representative by a Member Church, Territorial Association and who has been officially registered as such.

EXECUTIVE shall mean the committee constituted as under 9.1.

GENERAL ASSOCIATION shall mean an association which is not a Territorial Association but comprises individuals, churches or groups united in a common interest for specific purposes in keeping with the objects of the Union by means of a constitution acceptable to the Union; which association is recognised and accepted as such by the Union, although not a member thereof.

MEMBER CHURCH shall mean a church in membership with the Union.

MINISTER shall mean a person whose name appears on one of the accredited ministerial lists of the Union.

OFFICERS OF THE UNION shall mean the President, Vice-President, Ex-President, the General Secretary, and the Associate General Secretary.

TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATION shall mean an association which includes 10 or more member churches in a distinct and separate geographic area which are united by way of a formal constitution as an association for the purpose of fellowship and

service and is admitted as such to membership of the Union by a 75 per cent vote of the Assembly.

TRUSTEES OF THE UNION shall mean such persons as the Assembly shall from time to time appoint as such.

UNION shall mean The Baptist Union of Southern Africa.

3. Membership

3.1. The Union shall comprise:

3.1.1. All Member churches at the date of adoption of the Amended Constitution and such Churches as shall be admitted to membership by vote of the Assembly.

3.1.2. All Territorial Associations in membership with the Union at date of adoption of the Amended Constitution and such Territorial Association as shall qualify for and be admitted to, membership by vote of the Assembly

3.2. Dismissal of Members:

Notwithstanding anything contained in 3.1 above the Assembly shall have power to remove from membership any Member Church, Territorial Association by a 75 per cent majority vote of the Assembly. If however a motion from the Executive is introduced for removal or dismissal pursuant to By-Law 2 (b), a majority vote by the Assembly shall be sufficient authorisation for the removal of the member church from membership of the Union.

4. Declaration of Principle

The basis of the Union is:

4.1. That the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty to interpret and administer His Laws.

4.2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day."

4.3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

5. Objects

The objects of the Union are:

- 5.1. To advance the cause of the kingdom of God primarily in Southern Africa.
- 5.2. To promote unity and brotherly love among its member churches and churches moving towards membership.
- 5.3. To disseminate Baptist Principles and to maintain religious liberty.
- 5.4. To establish and assist Churches wherein Baptist Principles are practised.

6. Functions and Powers

- 6.1. To collect information respecting the history, organisation and work of Member Churches and Associations.
- 6.2. To co-ordinate and combine the efforts of Member Churches in all matters affecting the general welfare of the Union, and its Members.
- 6.3. To engage in medical, educational, relief and other benevolent work and to confer and co-operate as occasion may require with Member Churches and other christian communities and philanthropic societies.
- 6.4. To make provision for retiring and relief allowances for its staff, Ministers, Missionaries and their wives or widows.
- 6.5. To provide for theological education and for training for service in the churches.
- 6.6. To control admission to and deletion from the Union's lists of accredited ministers.
- 6.7. To provide for the supply of church and mission requisites.
- 6.8. To give services of advice or arbitration in cases of difference or dispute, with the consent of the parties concerned.
- 6.9. To receive, purchase, hold, hypothecate, sell, donate, lease, exchange and partition movable and immovable property.
- 6.10. To act as Trustee for any Church or Association whether established or to be established.
- 6.11. To invest funds of the Union in such manner as may be prescribed by By-Law

- 6.12. To confer and co-operate as occasion may require with Member Churches and Ministers in connection with ministerial settlement and the like.
- 6.13. To tender advice to Member Churches and Ministers on all matters appertaining to ministerial settlements and the like.
- 6.14. To borrow money with or without security for the purposes of the Union, and Associations, in such manner at such times and on such conditions as the Executive may determine.
- 6.15. To appoint and dismiss staff.
- 6.16. To make or amend such By-Laws as it may deem necessary for the proper administration of its business.

7. Method of Functioning

- 7.1. The Union shall function through its Assembly.
- 7.2. The Union as a legal body shall exist in its own right, separate from its members.
- 7.3. The Union shall continue to exist even when its membership changes and there are different office bearers.
- 7.4. The Union shall be able to own property and other possessions.

8. The Assembly

- 8.1. The Assembly shall consist of:

- 8.1.1. Delegates

- 8.1.2. The Executive

- 8.2. Right to attend the Assembly:

The following persons shall have the right to attend the Assembly and with the consent of the President, to participate without the right to vote:

- 8.2.1. Past-Presidents in membership of a Member Church, Ministers, and two representatives of each General Association.

- 8.2.2. Those persons who at October 1976 were Personal Members of the Union and who have continued to fulfil their obligations as such.

- 8.3. The Assembly shall meet annually when possible, and the Executive shall have power to summon a special Assembly.

- 8.4. The resolutions of the Assembly shall be executed by the Executive unless the Assembly otherwise direct.
- 8.5. 10% of the total member churches of the Union present shall constitute a quorum.

9. The Executive

9.1. The Executive shall consist of:

9.1.1. The Officers of the Union.

9.1.2. Representatives from and elected by each Territorial Association to reflect the total constituency of the Association, based on the principle of proportional representation. The formula to be determined by the Assembly from time to time.

(The formula for the proportional allocation of the 24 Territorial Association seats of the Executive to be as follows:

9.1.2.1. There will be a minimum of three and a maximum of six representatives per Association.

9.1.2.2. The actual allocation of seats will be determined annually by the post-Assembly Executive, based on a simple percentage of churches belonging to the Union in each Association.)

9.1.3. One representative from each recognised Board.

9.1.4. Such other members but not exceeding four in number as may be co-opted by vote of three-fourths of the Executive members present at the meeting dealing therewith.

9.2. Each member of the Executive shall be a baptised believer in membership with a Member Church.

9.3. The Executive shall meet at such times and places as may be considered necessary for the dispatch of business.

9.4. The Executive shall be fully constituted provided there is the necessary quorum notwithstanding the failure on the part of any Association referred to in sub-clause 9.1.2 to elect a representative thereto or thereon.

10. Submission of Differences

It is desired and expected that every member of the Union shall submit all grave differences, which tend to create divisions, to the Executive for arbitration and

shall abide by the award therein subject to a right of appeal to the next meeting of the Assembly.

11. Union Assets

All immovable property of the Union shall be registered in the name of the Trustees of the Union.

12. Authentication of Documents

The General Secretary of the Union or his deputy is authorised to issue under his signature any certified copies of, or extracts from, the Constitution and By-Laws of the Union, or of minutes of meetings of the Assembly or the Executive, to which full faith and credence shall be given.

13. Dissolution

13.1. The dissolution of the Union may be effected by a 75% majority vote of the delegates present at the Assembly.

13.2. In the event of 13.1 such Assembly shall authorise the Executive to transfer any assets that remain, after all the liabilities of the Union have been met, to another non-profit organisation having similar objectives.

14. Alterations of Constitution and By-Laws

Amendments to this Constitution shall be effected by resolution of the Annual Assembly in pursuance of a notice of motion in writing given at the previous Assembly and published as that Assembly shall direct. Such a resolution shall require the approval of a two-third majority of those present and entitled to vote at the Assembly except in the case of a proposed amendment of the Declaration of Principle which shall require approval by all members of the Union.