

Note: It is recommended that constitutions be as short as possible and contain the core principles of the church's legal existence and standing. While not un-changing, the constitution should be changed infrequently. Items such as how leadership is elected and how frequently business meetings are held should be in the by-laws or operations manual. These should be easier to change (although should require approval of the church) to match the changing needs of a congregation. Check with your local Baptist union for any legal requirements that you may need to include. Because the IBC Office is located in Germany, we have included some items that should be reflected in constitutions for churches in Germany based on our work with the German Baptist Union (Bund).

PREAMBLE

<The purpose of the constitution – to be completed.>

Article I. NAME AND LOCATION

This body shall be known as <name of church>of <location> (hereafter designated as <abbreviation>). <include the legal status>

<Germany, if applicable: The church is a member of the Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R. According to Article 4 of the Bund's constitution, the church is a legally independent part of the Bund and shares in the legal rights of the Bund. It carries out its business independently and in accordance with the Bund's regulations.>

Article II. RELATIONSHIPS

<Name of church/abbrev> is a member of the International Baptist Convention (IBC), headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany and <official name of the local Baptist union>. The church is affiliated with <to be completed>.

Article III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is <to be completed>.

The church will pursue its religious and charitable purposes in accordance with the local tax laws.

Article IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH

<statement of faith>

or

This church holds to the articles of faith as expressed in the IBC Statement of Basic Beliefs as adopted by the International Baptist Convention in 2008.

Article V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 5.01 Definition of Membership

Membership is defined as <to be completed>. <Can include a church/member covenant or the duties of a member>.

Section 5.02 Membership Eligibility

Membership is available for <to be completed>.

Section 5.03 Termination of Membership

Membership in <name of church/abbrev> can be terminated in any of the following ways:
<to be completed>

Section 5.04 Inactive Status

Note: It is recommended that in an IBC church that an inactive status or something similar be included in order to keep the membership roll up-to-date.

- ❖ Members will be placed on “inactive” status as a result of permanent departure from the area. Persons who are temporarily unable to participate in church activities but wish to retain their affiliation may be placed on “inactive” status upon request. Persons who have not participated in church activities for <length of time> months will be considered by the <leadership> for “inactive” status. Requests or recommendations for “inactive” status will be presented to the congregation at a regular <business> meeting. These procedures will also be used for return from “inactive” status to “active” status.
- ❖ Persons on “inactive” status may not hold office or vote on church business and will not be considered a member for quorum purposes.

Article VI. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of the church consists of <to be completed>. The qualifications, selection, responsibilities, and terms of service are defined in the <by-laws of this constitution/operations manual>.

Section 6.01 Pastor

Section 6.02 <Other Leadership>

Section 6.03 Church Officers

In addition to the pastor and <other leadership>, the following positions are defined as officers of the church: clerk, treasurer, and trustees.

Section 6.04 Church Council / Other Leadership Group

The <church council> shall consist of <to be completed>, each selected according to the process described in the <by-laws of this constitution/operations manual>.

Article VII. CHURCH (BUSINESS) MEETINGS

The church shall hold regular meetings throughout the year to conduct the business of the church. The frequency and rules of governance of these meetings are found in the <by-laws of this constitution/operations manual>.

Article VIII. CHURCH FINANCES

The church is financed through tithes, gifts, and donations of its members and friends of the church. All money received will be used for church and charitable purposes in accordance with local tax laws. No financial benefits will be given to individuals – especially volunteers. This does not include reimbursement of reasonable expenses or payment under an employment contract. Members do not share in the church's assets and cannot claim a return on any funds donated to the church.

The financial year is <1 January - 31 December>.

Article IX. AMENDMENTS

<to be completed but should include the process for amending the constitution and requirements for notification to the church. Quorum and voting percentage for approval should be included here or in the by-law/operations manual. See Article V in the By-Laws/Operations Manual.>

Article X. CLOSURE

Section 10.01 The church can be closed by an affirmative vote of <??> percent of the members present and voting at a meeting called for this purpose. Advance notification of a called business meeting must be provided to the church <during the worship service on two consecutive Sundays preceding the meeting>.

Section 10.02 In the event of <name of church/abbrev> ceasing to exist as a church, it will seek appropriate advice from the IBC and the <local Baptist union> for handling legal issues such as disposal of assets*.

Note: It is recommended that upon closure all remaining assets are transferred to the IBC, a similar church in the local country, the local Baptist union, or another institution with a similar status under the condition that the assets are only used for church and/or charitable purposes in accordance with local tax laws.

ratified/approved <date>

BY LAWS/OPERATIONS MANUAL

Article I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Section 1.01 Pastor

- ❖ Qualifications
- ❖ Responsibilities
- ❖ Call
- ❖ Terms of Service
- ❖ Termination
- ❖ Pastor-Church Covenant
- ❖ Annual Review

Section 1.02 <Other Leadership>

- ❖ Qualifications
- ❖ Responsibilities
- ❖ Selection
- ❖ Terms of Service
- ❖ Termination
- ❖ Meetings

Section 1.03 Church Officers

- ❖ The church officers shall be nominated by <to be completed> and elected by the church. The clerk and treasurer shall be elected annually. The trustees shall be elected to serve a two-year term.
- ❖ Clerk
 - The duties of the clerk shall include:
 - <to be completed>.
 - If the clerk is not available at a business meeting of the church, the moderator shall name an acting clerk for that meeting.
- ❖ Treasurer.
 - The duties of the treasurer shall include:
<to be completed>.

❖ Trustees

☐ The duties of the trustees shall include:

- To serve as legal representatives of the church.
- To coordinate an audit of the financial records. The financial records of the church will be audited <timeframe>.
- <For churches in Germany > To hold power of attorney for the Bund giving them authorization to act on behalf of the Bund and <name of church/abbrev>. The Bund provides these powers of attorney. No decision can be made by these representatives without a vote of the church in a business meeting.

Article II. CHURCH (BUSINESS) MEETINGS

Section 2.01 Regular Meetings

- ❖ Church (business) meetings will be conducted in the church <frequency>. The <leadership group> shall schedule them and place them on the church calendar at its first meeting of the year.

Section 2.02 Called Meetings

- ❖ A called meeting may be called by the pastor and/or the <leadership>. <Include advance notification needed.> The purpose of the meeting shall be stated beforehand and shall be limited to the purpose stated in the notices.

Section 2.03 Moderator

- ❖ <Process for electing/naming moderators for business meetings.> Moderators should have a good understanding of church organization and parliamentary procedures. *Note: Some churches elect these annually; some churches have the pastor serve as moderator; others name them meeting-by-meeting*

Section 2.04 Voting and Procedures

- ❖ Only members <specify age, if necessary> and above may vote in business meetings. All action taken at any business meeting shall be by a simple majority of active members present, except as may otherwise be specified by the constitution or <by-laws of this constitution/operations manual> of the church. <Absentee ballots will not be accepted.> All procedures will be conducted in a spirit of Christian unity, mutual respect, and love and conform to the latest edition of <Robert's Rules of Order.> *Note: Robert's Rules of Order is the standard for parliamentary procedure in the U.S. It is not really well-known in Europe. But some type of procedure should be specified. Absentee ballots: whether you accept them or not should be included in the by-laws. It is recommended that absentee ballots not be accepted but if they are, there should be clear guidelines as to the process for accepting/collecting them.*

Article III. CHURCH MINISTRY YEAR

The church year shall begin on <date> and end the following year on <date>. *Note: The church ministry year may be different than the calendar year and/or financial year.*

Article IV. QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of:

- <to be completed>% of the active voting members for regularly scheduled and called meetings.
- <to be completed>% of members for changes to the by-laws.
- A <majority> of active members for the call or dismissal of the pastor.

Article V. BY LAWS/OPERATIONS MANUAL

The by-laws/operations manual may be revised or amended by an affirmative vote of <to be completed>% of the members present and voting at the meeting where such changes are presented. A quorum for this meeting is set elsewhere in these by-laws/operations manual.

ratified/approved <date>