

International Baptist Convention

CONSTITUTION

INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION

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ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be the International Baptist Convention (hereafter known as the “IBC” or the “Convention”), located in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The business of the IBC is conducted under the legal entity of the Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R. (BEFG) within the German legal system.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE & PRINCIPLES

Section 1. Mission

We exist to mobilize and multiply disciple-making churches.

Section 2. Vision

We envision a movement of global-minded churches that are reproducing healthy disciples, leaders, and congregations.

We dream of...

- **... stimulating churches toward mission advancement.** We see churches intentionally and consistently sending members to live out the mission of the Gospel. We see churches working in partnership with one another and with other Great Commission organizations.
- **... helping churches to keep their focus on making and multiplying disciples.** We see churches being equipped to teach and train their members to be lifelong, loving, and loyal followers of Christ who are actively sharing their faith.
- **... developing pastors and leaders in essential ministry skills.** We see pastors and leaders equipped with knowledge and skill and filled with passion for Christ and love for His people. We see churches where Scripture is being preached and taught with relevance, power, and clarity.
- **... becoming a catalyst for strategic church-planting.** We see churches praying for, contributing to, and supporting an ever-increasing number of church plants to reach people with the Gospel, blessing the communities and churches where they are located.
- **... nurturing a spirit of love that bridges cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, generations, politics, privilege, position, and religious backgrounds.** We see churches learning to manage, celebrate, and leverage their diversity to become worthy examples of grace and peace, encouragement and unity, acceptance and compassion.
- **... fostering fellowship and connections among pastors and churches.** We see leaders and churches taking initiative to start and develop deep relationships with one another because they view themselves as utterly dependent on God and mutually dependent on one another.
- **... supporting churches in times of need and transition.** We see leaders being assisted to help their churches take steps toward achieving and maintaining health and growth in their congregations.

Section 3. Core Values

Our core values define us as an international family of churches and drive all our decisions and ministries. They describe essential beliefs that determine why we do what we do. Affirming Scripture as the authoritative guide for all faith and practice, we believe the following biblical values enable us to live and serve together in the most effective, God-honoring way.

- **We value Fellowship.** We believe that community among Christ-followers facilitates encouragement, prayer, edification, and accountability. We believe that Christian friendships develop when we take the time and effort to share our joys, sorrows, and challenges. (1 Thess. 5:14, Gal. 6:2)
- **We value Church Planting.** We believe that every church should be involved in some way in helping to start new congregations. We desire to expand our reach to strategic places around the world where the Gospel is needed. (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18-20)
- **We value Diversity.** Since Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations, we celebrate that people from many nations and cultures come together in our churches. We believe that our diversity expresses the creativity and eternal plan of God. (Gen. 12:3, Rev. 7:9-10)
- **We value Unity.** The unity of the Spirit among our churches exhibits the oneness of all believers in Christ. We will seek to work out differences that may arise because we believe the power of the Gospel to unite us is stronger than the power of our enemy to divide us. (John 17:20-23, Eph. 2:19-22)
- **We value Healthy Churches.** Because we believe that the local church is God's primary means of presenting the Gospel and establishing His kingdom, we will seek to help churches achieve their unique, disciple-making mission in relevant and effective ways. (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Thess. 1:2-10)
- **We value Partnership.** We believe that working together with other churches to reach common goals enriches churches. Every church has something to offer. We also believe in connecting with other Christ-following groups. We can achieve more in this way than working independently of one another. We believe that cooperation is a gift of God. (Phil. 1:3-11, Eccl. 4:9)

Section 4. Summary of Basic Beliefs¹

We do not view our **Summary of Basic Beliefs** as a creed or a statement to which our staff, volunteers, or churches are forced to subscribe, but rather it is a basic summary of beliefs and emphases generally held by Baptists. It does not take the place of the Bible, which is our standard for faith and practice, but emerges out of it.

We believe...

- in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – co-eternal, co-existent, co-equal and co-operative, as affirmed in Scripture and as summarized in the ancient Christian confessions of faith.²
- that the Bible is inspired by God and is the standard against which all Christian belief and behavior is measured.
- that human beings are incapable of saving themselves and stand in need of God's gracious love and that Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully human, has, through His death and resurrection, done everything necessary for us to have a personal one-to-one relationship with God; we begin to experience the benefits of this when we repent from

¹ Adopted in October 2008

² This refers to the Trinitarian formulae of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

and confess our sin, and commit our lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, our only Savior.

- that each local church is an autonomous assembly of believing disciples responsible to discern the mind of Christ for that body of Christ - in the light of Scripture, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, and under the Lordship of Christ.
- that Christ has, according to the Scriptures, instituted two church ordinances for believers:
 - **believer's baptism** as an act of obedience and an expression of a personal commitment to Christian discipleship. The baptism of the believer into and under water "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the end of an old way of life; and the beginning of a new life in Christ. It affirms the Holy Spirit's work that is already experienced by the believer and this public baptism is an outward visible sign of the ongoing and life-long sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit; and
 - **the communion of the Lord's Table** as a repeated and frequent reminder of our communal life in Christ, whose death we remember, whose resurrection we celebrate, and whose return we eagerly await.
- that church membership is only for those who can testify personally of God's saving grace.
- that each local church is to model a better way of life according to the principles of the Kingdom of God. Because a Christian disciple's first and highest loyalty is to God, so also each church, while respecting those secular laws not in conflict with the commands of God, should be free from state control.
- that in every country all people should be entitled to the freedom of religious expression, while respecting the laws of that country and the beliefs of others.
- that we, in response to the Great Commission,³ have been sent out⁴ and given the task of making disciples – disciplined followers of Jesus Christ – from among all ethnic groups (nations).
- that just as the Trinity is the model of eternal co-operation so we as IBC churches are to co-operate together in mission with God, with each other, and with other like-minded Christian churches and organizations: locally, nationally, and internationally - so that the world may believe.⁵

As the International Baptist Convention we celebrate and affirm our unity in diversity as part of the worldwide body of Christ. We seek no uniformity in worship or service but are "many faces, many places, one message" not restricted by national or cultural bounds. We live and serve together here on earth in anticipation of our future celebration and service of God in Glory with the redeemed of every nation and generation.⁶

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership

Membership of this Convention is open to all churches that willingly seek to support the mission and vision of the IBC, to respect the principles and practices contained in the IBC Constitution and Operations Manual, and to participate in the life of the Convention. Member churches commit to and participate in the life of the Convention as described in the IBC's Membership Covenant. A church, for the purposes of this Constitution, is a

³ Matthew 28: 18-20

⁴ John 20: 21-22

⁵ ibid & John 17: 21

⁶ Revelation 7: 7-12

regenerate, worshipping, and witnessing Christian assembly practicing believer's baptism and upholding the principles defined in the IBC Constitution. The primary language of IBC churches is English.

Section 2. Associate Membership

Associate membership is offered to church plants, fellowships, or churches that wish to covenant with the Convention in its work but that cannot fully comply with the membership application requirements. A description of the involvement of associate member churches can be found in the IBC Operations Manual.

Section 3. Termination of Membership: Termination of membership in the IBC shall be effected in one of the following ways: (1) by written request of the church, (2) by disbanding of the church, or (3) by action deemed appropriate by the Convention.

ARTICLE IV – AUTHORITY

The IBC does not claim and will never attempt to exercise authority over its member churches or any other religious entity. Conversely, no other religious entity shall exercise authority over the International Baptist Convention.

The legislative authority within the IBC lies with the Convention's member churches, represented by their messengers in assembly at all convention meetings.

ARTICLE V - ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Section 1. Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leadership Team shall be composed of

- Core Strategy Directors
- Presidents
- General Secretary

The Executive Leadership Team members shall be elected by the Convention according to the process described in the IBC Operations Manual.

The Executive Leadership Team shall be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the IBC's strategies for fulfilling its mission and vision, in accordance with the core values of the Convention.

The Executive Leadership Team is answerable to the Convention, which approves and commissions its work at each Annual Convention Meeting.

Further information about the Executive Leadership Team, including individual responsibilities of the members, can be found in the IBC Operations Manual.

Section 2. Church Liaisons

The Church Liaisons group shall be composed of members from each church (one member for associate member churches, two for member churches), duly elected by their church. The Church Liaisons shall receive regular updates and give input to the Executive Leadership Team. The Church Liaisons' input and involvement shall be important to help the Executive Leadership Team in its effectiveness.

Further information about the Church Liaisons group can be found in the IBC Operations Manual.

Section 3. Council of Trustees

The Council of Trustees shall be elected by the Convention based on the composition and membership as defined in the IBC Operations Manual. The Council of Trustees shall be responsible for advising the Convention on all legal aspects of the IBC's operation and for overseeing the IBC's finances and assets.

The Council of Trustees is answerable to the Convention, which approves and commissions its work at each Annual Convention Meeting.

Further information about the Council of Trustees can be found in the IBC Operations Manual.

ARTICLE VI - CONVENTION MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings

The Convention shall meet annually to conduct the business of the Convention; this meeting shall be known as the Annual Convention Meeting.

Special meetings may be called by the Executive Leadership Team or the Council of Trustees. Notice in writing of such meeting, including agenda, must be given to all member churches not less than thirty (30) days in advance. Only items on the agenda of the called meeting may be considered.

Every effort shall be made to make it possible for member churches to participate, either in person or virtually.

Section 2. Messengers

The meetings of the Convention shall be composed of duly elected messengers holding membership in member churches of the IBC.

Each member church shall be entitled to three (3) messengers for the first twenty-five (25) members or fraction thereof and one (1) additional messenger for each additional twenty-five (25) members or fraction thereof, provided that no church shall send more than ten (10) messengers.

Associate member churches shall be entitled to send one (1) messenger each.

The registered messengers in attendance shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3. Parliamentarian and Clerk

A parliamentarian and a clerk shall be appointed by the presidents annually prior to the Annual Convention Meeting.

The parliamentarian shall advise and assist the presiding officer of the Convention on all matters involving proper parliamentary procedures at convention meetings. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall be used as a guide.

The clerk shall be responsible for registration of messengers and visitors, and for keeping an accurate record of the business transacted during the convention meetings, and distributing the minutes of those meetings.

ARTICLE VII - OPERATIONS MANUAL

The IBC Operations Manual is a supplementary document that provides guidelines for the Convention's policies and structures. These guidelines may be subject to modification from time to time in order to enhance the effectiveness and functionality of the Convention's ministries, providing that such modifications do not conflict with the articles of this Constitution.

ARTICLE VIII - PARTNERSHIPS

Section 1. European Baptist Federation and Baptist World Alliance

The IBC is a member of the European Baptist Federation and Baptist World Alliance, contributing to the work of these two bodies.

Section 2. European Baptist Mission International

The IBC is a member of and supports the European Baptist Mission International in its worldwide ministries.

Section 3. International Baptist Church Ministries Corporation

The IBC or its member churches may receive donations from the International Baptist Church Ministries Corporation (IBCM). Funds received from the IBCM are to be used to further the work of the IBC as stated in the grant application. The International Baptist Church Ministries Corp., a non-profit Texas Corporation (Charter Number: 01466023), was established to support English-language Baptist churches in Europe and other areas overseas.

Section 4. National Baptist Unions

The IBC shall seek to promote a fraternal relationship with other national Baptist Unions.

Section 5. Other Christian Bodies

The IBC recognizes and affirms the essential unity in Christ of all Christian believers, churches, and institutions that practice New Testament Christianity. When mutually beneficial, the IBC shall seek to work with other "Great Commission" Christian groups to further the cause of Christ.

ARTICLE IX - LEGAL STATUS

Section 1. In Germany

The International Baptist Convention conducts its business under the legal entity of the Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R. (BEFG) within the German legal system. The assets of the IBC are held as "Special Fund IBC". Bank accounts are held in the name of the BEFG with the description "Special Fund IBC". For the management of the Special Fund, the conditions of the "Ordnung für die Treuhandverwaltung des Bundes" (Rules for the handling of assets held in trust by the Bund) shall apply. The signatories of the IBC shall be in accordance with the BEFG's requirements.

Section 2. For Investments in the United States of America

For investments in the United States of America, the following two paragraphs are needed for compliance with the 501 (c)(3) requirements of the Internal Revenue Service of the United States of America.

No part of the net income or net earnings of the International Baptist Convention shall inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. No substantial part of its activities shall consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The International Baptist Convention shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

The Convention may be dissolved in accordance with the laws of the German Federal Republic. Upon dissolution of the International Baptist Convention, any surplus property remaining after the payment of its debts shall be disposed of by transfer to one or more corporations, associations, institutions, trusts, community chests, or foundations organized and operated for one or more of the purposes of this corporation, and described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 of the United States of America, as now enacted or as hereafter amended, in such proportions as the Executive Leadership Team and Council of Trustees of the International Baptist Convention shall determine. Notwithstanding any provision herein to the contrary, shall nothing herein be construed to affect the disposition of property and assets held by the International Baptist Convention upon trust or other condition, or subject to an executor of special limitation, and such property, upon dissolution of this corporation, shall be transferred in accordance with the trust, condition, or limitation imposed with respect to it.

The International Baptist Convention is not a 501(c)(3) corporation but is compliant with the requirements for tax exempt status.

Section 3. Official Language

All of the meetings and records of the International Baptist Convention shall use the English language as the official language.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

Any proposed amendment shall be sent to member churches of the Convention by the Executive Leadership Team at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the Annual Convention Meeting.

The proposed amendment(s) to this constitution must be presented in writing in the first session of the Annual Convention Meeting and voted on at a later session. It must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the messengers present and voting to become valid.

ARTICLE XI – DISSOLUTION

In the event that the IBC is dissolved, its assets shall be given to the Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R. for use in international Baptist work.