

# Contents

1 – The Bible basis for the ecclesia .....	3
2 – Caring and sharing .....	4
3 – Becoming a Christadelphian .....	4
4 – Interviewing a person who wants to be baptised .....	5
5 – Baptism .....	5
6 – The right hand of fellowship .....	6
7 – The breaking of bread .....	6
8 – Ecclesial life .....	6
9 – Order in the ecclesia .....	7
10 – Qualifications of those serving the ecclesia .....	8
11 – The ecclesial Secretary .....	8
12 – Ecclesial finances .....	8
13 – Welfare .....	9
14 – The ecclesial Treasurer .....	9
15 – Arranging Brothers (elders) .....	10
16 – Business meetings .....	10
17 – Sunday Schools and Youth Circles .....	10
18 – Willing service .....	11
19 – Separation from the world .....	11
a) Marriage .....	11
b) The State .....	12
c) Military service .....	12
d) Worldly pressures .....	13
20 – Disputes .....	13
a) Personal matters causing offence .....	13
b) A dissatisfied group within the ecclesia .....	13
21 – Dealing with difficulties .....	13

<b>22 – Withdrawal of fellowship .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>23 – Returning to fellowship .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>24 – The Statement of Faith.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>25 – Relationships between ecclesias.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>26 – Transfer of members .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>27 – Formation of a new ecclesia.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>28 – A Constitution .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>29 – The spirit of Christ .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Statement of Faith and Commandments of Christ .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – A model Constitution .....</b>	<b>29</b>

# Developing the Ecclesia

## Belonging to the Body of Christ <sup>1</sup>

*“The body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:14)*

### 1. The Bible basis for the ecclesia

When someone is baptised into Christ, they become “members of his body” (Ephesians 5:30). The Bible teaches that the “the body” of Jesus is “the church” and that Jesus Christ is “the head” (Colossians 1:18). Through the sacrifice of Christ, baptised believers are the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23; 5:30). They have responsibilities and obligations to each other. They are “the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10) – a family, sharing in a common life (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-18).

The word “church” in the original Greek is the word “ecclesia”. It describes people called out by God to worship Him. Many people think of a church as a building. The word “ecclesia” emphasises that Christadelphians are a community, distinct from other people, brought together out of the world to share a common hope.

The start of this ecclesia was on the Day of Pentecost. Those who were baptised “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). They were united on the basis of their new-found faith.

As the Gospel spread out from Jerusalem, other ecclesias were established, for example at Antioch. From there the Apostle Paul set out with his companions (Acts 13:1-3) preaching the Gospel, teaching and baptising (Acts 14:3). If possible they would make return visits, encouraging the believers and appointing “elders” to manage the affairs of each “church” (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5). They were termed “faithful men” (Hebrews 13:7; 2 Timothy 2:2). Once these newly formed groups of believers were meeting regularly, they were expected to manage their own affairs. They were responsible for maintaining their own discipline, guided by the words of the apostles.

Many of the New Testament letters are written to ecclesias, including the letters of Jesus Christ himself to the “seven churches” in Asia Minor (Revelation 1:20, 2:1-3:22).

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1 – This booklet draws on many of the points made over 100 years ago by Brother Robert Roberts, the first editor of “The Christadelphian” magazine, in a very helpful booklet called “A Guide to the formation and conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias”. It has stood the test of time in providing wise guidance on how ecclesias are formed, how they should function and on their relationship to other ecclesias as part of our one worldwide ecclesia.

## 2. Caring and sharing

True believers are sons and daughters of God and they are “brothers and sisters in Christ” – that is the meaning of the word “Christadelphians” (Hebrews 2:11; Colossians 1:2). They enjoy a “fellowship” (a sharing together) with others who believe the same things ( 1 John 3:1-3; Ephesians 2:1-7,17-22; Philippians 2:1-3). When Christ prayed “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me and I in You” (John 17:21), he was thinking of a close, loving family relationship between his Father, himself and believers.

Believers who are in isolation, a long way from other Christadelphians, are still members of the body of Christ. They still belong to the worldwide Christadelphian community, the greater “ecclesia”. They keep in contact with other brothers and sisters by letters, telephone, e-mail, occasional visits, by reading about them in magazines and attending Bible schools. They may be attached to an established ecclesia elsewhere. They will have a close association with their Christadelphian Bible Mission team, organised by its CBM linkman. Where other brothers and sisters live within travelling distance of each other, they become a local ecclesia, in fellowship with other Christadelphian ecclesias.

We would not necessarily have chosen for our friends those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Through our ecclesial membership our Heavenly Father is teaching us the need to be patient, to be merciful, to love. We must love even those who are difficult to get along with (see Matthew 5:43-45): “He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness” (1 John 2:9); “By this we know the love, because he (Jesus) laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

It is in the challenges and demands of our membership of the ecclesia that we develop our characters. Each of us has to find how we can contribute to the ecclesial community as well as benefiting from it. The New Testament word for fellowship is about having one mind; it is also about sharing – both giving and receiving (Philippians 4:14-19).

The word “ecclesia” emphasises that we are a distinct community, apart from other churches, brought together out of the world to share in a common Hope. The word “meeting” is also commonly heard among Christadelphians, for the same reason. Whatever word we use, it is important that we learn to appreciate that in our journey to God’s kingdom we belong to the ecclesia.

### **3. Becoming a Christadelphian**

Only those who understand and believe the true Bible Gospel and its requirements can become Christadelphians. They are baptised by full immersion in water, which is the only way to be saved (Mark 16:16). After baptism they must try to obey the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles. That is why anyone who comes to baptism must have a sound understanding of the Gospel and of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ.

### **4. Interviewing a person who wants to be baptised**

Because of this, people should not be baptised until they have had a full discussion about their beliefs. Such discussions are best carried out by at least two mature and responsible Christadelphian brothers who are recognised as having a very sound understanding of what we believe. If a woman is being interviewed, it is best if a sister is present. Where possible a local brother or sister should be present who speaks the same language as the candidate. The CBM linkman will normally agree who is qualified to do this with the local brothers and sisters. The interview should be carried out prayerfully and sympathetically, with the aim of establishing the candidate's motivation, commitment and understanding. The CBM has a summary of the topics that should be covered. It would be unfair to all concerned to baptise people without them understanding what they are doing or what their obligations are to Christ and to their Christadelphian brothers and sisters.

Candidates should try to support their answers by reference to the Bible. This shows that they have not simply learnt a list of prepared answers to questions, but have allowed the teaching of God's word to convince them of the need to be saved from sin and death. It is not acceptable to interview candidates in a group, since each person must show that he or she is fully convinced in his/her own mind (1 Peter 3:15,21).

### **5. Baptism**

This can take place wherever there is sufficient water to enable the candidate to be covered completely by the water. If possible it should be carried out in the presence of witnesses (John 3:23; Acts 8:36-38; Romans 6:3-5). The arrangements for baptism should always be made in consultation with the CBM linkman and/or by the appointed ecclesial elders. It is not important who actually does the baptising. It is usual practice to incorporate a baptism into a short service of hymns, readings and prayers. At the appointed moment in the service, when the candidate is ready, he/she goes down into the water and is asked by the baptising brother: "Do you believe the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus

Christ?" When the candidate has said "Yes, I do", the baptising brother says: "Upon this public confession of your faith, you are baptised, by God's commandment, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for the remission of your sins" (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 19:5; Romans 10:9). These are the words given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ himself and often used at baptisms around the world. The exact words are not important and some baptising brethren will say, "I baptise you into the name of the Lord Jesus" instead of "into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; Galatians 3:27).

### **6. The right hand of fellowship**

On the first occasion that the newly baptised member is present at the breaking of bread it is good to welcome them into the worldwide ecclesia of brothers and sisters. This is done before the sharing of the bread and the wine. It is referred to as offering the "right hand of fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). The brother leading the meeting says a few Scripturally based words of welcome to the new member before shaking hands.

### **7. The breaking of bread**

Jesus commanded his disciples to break bread regularly: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The bread and the wine represent the body and blood of our Lord, the life that he gave for us (Luke 22:19,20; John 6:53-56; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). We read of the believers meeting on "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). Christadelphians meet on Sundays in many countries where Sunday is the first day of the week. But there is no requirement that it be only on Sundays. On any day when believers who share the same faith meet together, they can break bread in memory of their Lord. Some must do this regularly on their own, because they live far from other brothers and sisters. The type of bread used is not important nor the type of wine. Sometimes bread and/or wine are not available and biscuits and/or fruit juice or some other liquid are used. There is nothing "magical" about the bread and wine. No miracle happens when we share them. They are symbols. What counts is our faith and understanding of what they represent. The breaking of bread service is a solemn but joyful occasion, shared by those who are in fellowship with one another in Christ. For this reason those who are not baptised or who do not share the same basis of faith cannot take part.

### **8. Ecclesial life**

Sometimes a new brother or sister may be alone, but even in their isolation they are members of the body of Christ. They should try to establish a regular pattern of daily prayer and Bible reading, preferably using The Bible Companion and Bible study – perhaps making use of study material

sent to them or articles from our magazines – and to have a weekly breaking of bread.

If there are several believers in one area, they are expected to meet together regularly, for the breaking of bread, to share in Bible study, to preach to others and to develop their relationship with each other in Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:24,25).

It may be easiest to meet in the homes of the members at first (1 Corinthians 16:19). As numbers grow, it will be wise and helpful to rent or purchase suitable premises. The CBM linkman will give guidance about funding for this. No appeal for funds should be made to non-baptised individuals or to other organisations. It is not *the place* where we meet that is important but *the relationship* of the brothers and sisters to each other and to our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1Peter 2:3-10).

Every brother or sister should be actively involved in ‘witness’ but the new group of brothers and sisters should plan and be involved in formal and informal preaching initiatives. These ideas should be discussed with the appropriate linkman and his team so that the new ecclesia can be a ‘light stand in a dark world of ignorance’ (2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 4:18, 5:8; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 1:20).

The ecclesia provides the structure for fellowship between brothers and sisters and a suitable environment for spiritual growth. Guidance should always be sought from the word of God in developing a life together in Christ (2 Timothy 3:14-17). In all communities there must be order and mutual support in order to achieve agreement. Love for our brothers and sisters must lead to a willing submission to one another (1 Corinthians 12:14-27).

### **9. Order in the ecclesia**

The only head of the Christadelphian community is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:8; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). Any spirit of human control or domination is unacceptable. The Lord has shown us that we must *serve* one another in love (Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-5). It is a privilege to serve the ecclesia because serving one another is serving Christ (Matthew 25:40; John 13:14-17).

There is clear Bible teaching that some roles in the ecclesia need to be filled by brothers wherever possible. The Apostle Paul said: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12). The presiding and speaking duties of the ecclesia, assuming brothers are present, should be carried out by the brothers, as is clear from 1

Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11,12. Only if there are no brothers available to organise or to teach, should sisters make the arrangements and as soon as it is appropriate, pass this responsibility to the brethren.

The precise structure of ecclesial organisation is not the same in every place. It may be adapted to suit local needs. In the early stages of ecclesial life, the CBM linkman will provide advice and guidance about suitable arrangements. However, as the ecclesia grows, any such responsibilities will be undertaken by those who are elected by the members or appointed by the elders on behalf of the ecclesia. Whatever method is used to choose people, it should be done prayerfully and involve all the members, if possible. Since today there is no direct guidance from the Holy Spirit, ecclesias have to make the best arrangements they can. In a small ecclesia these decisions can be made after prayerful discussion among the members – providing all members are able to be present to have their say. In larger Christadelphian ecclesias, a simple method of allowing all the members to indicate their choice by voting is the best way to achieve harmony.

#### **10. Qualifications of those serving the ecclesia**

Paul presents the ideals for these in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Every effort should be made to follow his apostolic instructions. The only true ‘authority’ of brothers in the ecclesia is their moral and spiritual experience and excellence showing itself in spiritual wisdom.

#### **11. The ecclesial Secretary**

Someone will be needed to co-ordinate arrangements on behalf of the ecclesia. This brother is often called the Recording Brother or “Secretary”. The Secretary of a Christadelphian ecclesia is not a priest or a pastor. His duty is to carry out the wishes of the ecclesia, guiding them at the same time into Scriptural principles of action (1 Peter 5:1-3). He and the Arranging Brothers should seek to obtain the feeling and wishes of the ecclesia before making decisions other than the most trivial ones. The Secretary should draw up the agenda for meetings of the Arranging Brothers in consultation with the members. The chairman for each meeting should be agreed. The Secretary should keep a record of the main points and agreed decisions (usually called minutes) arising from their discussions. The minutes are read at the next meeting and agreed or amended so that they form an agreed record. The Secretary should be the key person to communicate with the CBM linkman. He should also keep the brotherhood informed of important news, such as baptisms, marriages, deaths, members’ transfers or withdrawals. “The Christadelphian” magazine is always pleased to publish such information and this contributes to the close fellowship within the ecclesial world.

## **12. Ecclesial finances**

It is good if even the poorest brother or sister makes some financial contribution to the work of the ecclesia (Luke 21:2). Some churches insist on a tithe (= 10%) but Christadelphians have always encouraged the idea of a donation given freely. All should give as they are able, not according to a rule (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6,7). It is normal to hold a collection as part of the breaking of bread service.

It is wrong to have the attitude that the CBM is there to provide money for everything. CBM funds depend on the generosity of brothers and sisters all over the world, many of which are themselves poor. The CBM has to account to them for all expenditure, as well as to civil authorities, because the CBM is a registered charity. It should be a pleasure to provide from our means to assist in the work of the ecclesia, through cash contributions and through other practical support (Acts 2:44; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6,7). The aim of each ecclesia should be to become self-supporting.

## **13. Welfare**

The first believers shared all that they had (Acts 2:44). If we look upon our possessions as God-given, then we should use what we have to benefit others. Those who are rich should help to provide for those in need (1 Timothy 6:18). Guidance was given to the early church to ensure that people did not take advantage of others. Only those who were genuinely in need were to be helped. Those able to support themselves and their families were expected to do so (1 Timothy 5:8,16). Paul organised a collection of money from the newly established ecclesias in Gentile areas to assist the poor brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, who had probably lost their jobs when they became Christians (1 Corinthians 16:2,3). Many of those who gave money were themselves poor (2 Corinthians 8:1-4). The spirit of Christ moved them to help their brothers, even though they themselves were in need. For this reason, all should think upon welfare needs as an opportunity to give. Jesus commended the poor widow who put her last little coin into the collection (Luke 21:3). As “members one of another” we need to look to ways in which we can support our brothers and sisters by whatever means we have.

## **14. The ecclesial Treasurer**

The Treasurer is a brother (or sister) responsible for ensuring the ecclesia’s money is well managed. The principal quality in any Treasurer is trustworthiness. Two members should always be present when any ecclesial collection of money is counted and a record made and signed by both. A clear and full record of all receipts and payments is essential and should be examined regularly by a suitable brother or sister who is

appointed as an independent auditor. A clear account of all income and expenditure should be provided for each meeting of the Arranging Brothers and for the whole ecclesia at each business meeting. The way in which Paul managed the collection made by the ecclesias for the poor believers in Jerusalem shows us the importance of openness and accountability (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Acts 20:4; 2 Corinthians 8:18-23).

### **15. Arranging Brothers (elders)**

When an ecclesia has enough members, it is usual to appoint a committee of elders or 'Arranging Brothers', as they are often called. They organise and manage arrangements and activities on behalf of the ecclesia. They should be brothers with wisdom and spiritual maturity (1 Timothy 3:2-13, Titus 2:2). Their first priority should be to provide good spiritual leadership, like shepherds who care for the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4). They should meet regularly. Their meetings should begin with prayer and reading of the word of God. Meetings are best planned with an agenda and work best with a chairman. The Secretary should keep an agreed record of what is discussed and decided. They should be responsible for what ecclesial meetings are held and how they are organised, the welfare of brothers and sisters, the maintenance of true belief, the preaching of the Gospel and the work of any Sunday School and Youth Circle. Above all, the Arranging Brothers should try to set the tone in the ecclesia, ensuring that there is sound teaching and good behaviour (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:12,13; 2 Timothy 1:13).

### **16. Business meetings**

The Arranging Committee and any others carrying out duties are accountable to the whole ecclesia. Any very important decisions should be made by the whole ecclesia, helped by a recommendation from the Arranging Committee. It is better if no business is discussed at the breaking of bread meeting. It is best to hold a separate meeting, even if it follows other meetings.

Ecclesial business meetings should be held at least every six months, preferably once every three months. After prayer and Scripture reading, the minutes of the Arranging Brothers' meetings should be read and approved. Other matters of concern to all the ecclesia should also be discussed and decisions taken on the basis of the agreement of a majority. The Secretary should keep minutes, to be read and agreed or amended at the next meeting. The business meeting should be chaired wisely and carefully so that disputes do not arise and that all business is completed in a spirit of love and respect (1 Corinthians 14:40; Acts 15:6-22; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Romans 14:19).

## **17. Sunday Schools and Youth Circles**

It is important that parents educate children in the knowledge and love of God (Deuteronomy 6:5-7; Ephesians 6:4). In the extended family of the ecclesia the teaching of the Gospel to children and teenagers is an important responsibility. The organisation of this teaching in a more formal Sunday School or Youth Circle should be planned in co-operation with the CBM linkman and his team. Someone will be needed to look after this. The ecclesia must supervise and give good support to this vital work, ensuring that it is soundly based and well resourced. Those involved should submit their plans to the ecclesia, usually through regular reports to the Arranging Brothers and to the whole meeting.

## **18. Willing service**

Once the ecclesia has appointed those who undertake the various duties, it is not an opportunity for the rest to opt out of any contribution or responsibility. Everyone should serve the ecclesia by loyalty and a willingness to play their part. The Secretary is not there to do everything, but, along with the Arranging Brothers, to provide leadership and organisation on behalf of all the members. No one should be asked or appointed to a duty before they start to serve. All can show a loving welcome to others when they meet, can contact and support brothers and sisters in need and can show their faith by setting good standards of spirituality and practical care (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:4-8; Colossians 3:12-16).

According to the size and circumstances of the ecclesia, it may be wise to agree together how to share duties such as who will look after the meeting room, who will prepare the table with the bread and the wine for breaking of bread services, who will be stewards, doorkeepers, and Sunday School teachers. Some of these duties can be done by rota. Someone may be needed to look after any ecclesial library or to distribute Christadelphian magazines. Some of these duties can be carried out by sisters.

## **19. Separation from the world**

It is the duty of the ecclesia to uphold the highest standards of life in Christ. There are certain aspects of the life in Christ that require particular attention today.

### *a) Marriage*

Clear Bible-based teaching should be given in the ecclesia about the principles and practice of marriage for believers. There are Christadelphian publications that give sound advice based on the Scriptures. Everything possible should be done to help husbands and wives and to encourage those who are seeking partners in the Lord in their relationships with each

other. The teaching of Scripture is clear: marriage should be a union of hearts and minds for life (Genesis 2:24,25; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31).

Sound apostolic teaching and practice is that brothers and sisters marry baptised sisters and brothers and this should be the accepted pattern for giving a better foundation for a true spiritual home (Ephesians 5:23-31; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). The ecclesia should make clear its disapproval of marriage outside the Christadelphian community, though the difficulties of some young members in small ecclesias and in isolation clearly need sympathetic understanding.

The Scriptures have much to say about sexual morality both in and outside marriage. It is important to ensure that divine principles are upheld, whatever the culture, traditions and moral values of the particular society in the world around. Pre-marital sex and adultery are contrary to God's commandments (Exodus 20:14; Ephesians 5:3-4; Hebrews 13:4).

#### *b) The State*

Another aspect of Christian life in which ecclesial guidance will be needed is in relations with the State at both local and national level. Baptised believers are citizens of the "age to come" (Philippians 3:20,21; Hebrews 11:10,13-16). There is a constant temptation and pressure to compromise this faithful position by involvement in party politics, protest and the affairs of this world. At baptism, a person becomes a son/daughter of God, a citizen of heaven, seeking to obey His laws and teaching. As the apostle Peter stated, "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In consequence Christadelphians do not fight for any human government and keep away from any situation or work where violent behaviour is expected (such as the army, police force, prison officers, security guards). Their king and government are of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (John 18:36; 1 Peter 2:11; Revelation 1:6). At the same time, of course, Christadelphians respect the laws of the government where they live, pray for those who have rule over them, pay taxes and fulfil any obligations so long as they do not conflict with the commandments of Christ (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-9; 1 Peter 2:11-24).

#### *c) Military service*

A particular aspect of a believer's relationship to the State is the subject of military service. Many countries impose a rule that all men and women serve in the military for a specified period of time. Since the beginnings of their community, Christadelphians have stood against all forms of military service whether in a combatant or non-combatant role. They have claimed a conscientious objection to such matters and some countries have allowed brothers and sisters to be engaged in work of 'national

importance' like farm work, hospital service and food production. However, sometimes this is not possible and a stand has to be made against involvement in something that is clearly against the teaching of Christ. Individuals have faced imprisonment, suffering and even execution in faith, and strong ecclesial support is needed in such a situation.

*d) Worldly pressures*

There are many other aspects of the world that differ from Bible-based Christianity. This is all the more reason to work together in the ecclesia to encourage healthy and spiritually uplifting activity, setting an example to the children and young people and helping them to find friendship and satisfaction within the life of the brotherhood (Romans 12:1,2; 1 John 2:15-17).

## **20. Disputes**

*(a) Personal matters causing offence*

In most of these, the exercise of a little Christian love will prevent or heal them. Taking offence is as bad as giving offence. However, if a really serious misunderstanding does arise, it is the duty of each to meet the other and put the matter right at once, in a spirit of forgiveness. Those who do not forgive will not be forgiven by God (Matthew 18:35).

*(b) A dissatisfied group within the ecclesia*

It is a Scriptural requirement that each brother and sister must meet to break bread together as often as possible. The New Testament example is every first day of the week (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7). It is a mistake to think that God is pleased if individuals break bread on their own when they should be meeting with other members of the body. To separate because the rest of the ecclesia refuses to accept someone's opinion shows that being part of the 'body of Christ' has not been fully understood. The apostolic command is to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).

In all matters involving disputes and offences the great need is for humility. It is humbling to the offended to have to go and see the person who has offended him/her. If a brother or sister, or group of members, is too proud to submit to this, they are self-condemned: for the proud are unacceptable to God (Proverbs 16:5; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 5:23,24; James 4:6).

## **21. Dealing with difficulties**

Even in happy families problems sometimes arise. The same is true in the ecclesial family. Brothers and sisters can forget the loving forgiveness of their Heavenly Father and lose sight of the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. The example of Moses is instructive. When the children of Israel rebelled, Moses put the matter in God's hands and prayed for their

forgiveness (e.g. Deuteronomy 9:23-25). Although Elkanah and Hannah knew that the situation was bad in Shiloh where they worshipped at the tabernacle, they continued to go, prayerfully seeking a way to improve things there (1 Samuel 1:3,11). When Daniel confessed before God the sins of Judah, he did not dissociate himself from his people (Daniel 9:3-19). The greatest example of all is the Lord Jesus Christ, who “has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4,5).

From these examples it is clear that brothers and sisters must not ignore situations where wrongdoing is evident, where the name of Christ is being brought into disrepute or where ill feeling and division are being created. They must try to help. If a case of wrong teaching or wicked behaviour becomes clearly known to a brother or sister, they should try to deal with it as the Lord Jesus Christ described (Matthew 18:15-22). They should speak to the offender alone, with a view to giving the person an opportunity to explain themselves and put things right. This should be done in private, so that if the person repents no more is heard of it. It is wrong to tell everyone as soon as someone’s fault is discovered.

If this is unsuccessful, one or two other mature brothers and sisters should go, with the same intention (Deuteronomy 17:6; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

## **22. Withdrawal of fellowship**

If a situation is sufficiently serious, the Arranging Brothers must carefully consider all the evidence. If all attempts have failed to bring a satisfactory solution, they should recommend to the ecclesia that it ‘withdraw’ from the offending brother or sister (Titus 3:10,11; Revelation 2:20-22). The final decision must be made after prayerful, Scriptural consideration by the ecclesia as a whole. Withdrawal from any brother or sister is a serious step and ought not to be taken lightly. It erects a barrier not easily removed. It is most important that the facts in the case be proved, clearly evident to all and not merely the result of gossip. Every effort should be made, prayerfully and using the wisdom of God’s word, to turn a brother or sister from error (Jude 23, James 5:20).

There are two main causes for withdrawal:

- a) A lifestyle which is contrary to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5:5,11) ;
- b) Wrong teaching that is in conflict with the true Gospel message and can lead to division among brothers and sisters. The real meaning of ‘heresy’ is ‘causing division’ (e.g. 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:18,19,21; Titus 3:10,11).

In dealing with such cases it should be remembered that all fail and all sin. There is a need therefore to be patient and kind (Romans 14:15; 2 Timothy 2:25,26; Jude 22). When fellowship is withdrawn, it is with humility and sorrow. Remember that the offender can no longer be in fellowship and share the emblems of bread and wine. However, it is important to maintain Godly standards in the ecclesia. The aim of such action is to help the person to realise their sin and to repent, that they might seek the forgiveness of their Father in heaven and of their brothers and sisters and return to fellowship (2 Corinthians 7:8-10). When Christadelphians withdraw fellowship, they are not making a judgement about a person's eternal salvation (Matthew 7:1,2). It would not be right, however, to continue to break bread with those who no longer believe the same things or whose lives are quite clearly and deliberately immoral or dishonest (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

### **23. Returning to fellowship**

Great care must be exercised before withdrawal. Such care is also necessary before one who has erred resumes his/her place at the breaking of bread. Any such person should be carefully interviewed in a humble spirit by two elders of the ecclesia. They should report to the Arranging Brothers, who will make a recommendation to the ecclesia. The whole ecclesia must help to decide before someone is invited to return to fellowship (2 Corinthians 2:6,7). There must be an acceptance of the Bible's teaching and a genuine desire to change any situation that caused the withdrawal of fellowship. This may not always be possible, for example in a marriage where a partner has left and is not willing to return. The ecclesia should try to exercise common sense in such matters, while upholding divine principles. The CBM is always ready to offer help and advice.

### **24. The Statement of Faith**

Because each Christadelphian ecclesia manages its own arrangements, there may be differences in ways of doing things between one ecclesia and another. However, each ecclesia within the "Central" fellowship of the Christadelphian brotherhood meets on the basis of an agreed Statement known as "The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith" (BASF) – a copy of this is at Appendix 1. What is important is not the precise wording of such a document but the Bible teachings it sets out. The Statement incorporates the essentials of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles taught.

There is much teaching in the New Testament about the one body of Christ (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Ephesians 4:4-6). Those who are members of the body of Christ should have one mind (Philippians 2:1,2).

It follows therefore that we cannot fellowship those who do not share our beliefs (1 Corinthians 10:21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

## **25. Relationships between ecclesias**

Individual ecclesias are in fellowship with members of all ecclesias that consistently meet on the same basis. We have a responsibility to uphold that basis, to be loyal to its teachings and to promote the unity of the body in our worship and witness.

Ecclesias do not accept into fellowship anybody who has been withdrawn from by another ecclesia and is therefore out of fellowship. If such a brother or sister approaches another ecclesia and asks for fellowship, that ecclesia should contact the ecclesia that withdrew from them in the first place, in order to find out the cause. As a matter of courtesy no one should be accepted back into fellowship until after consultation with his/her most recent ecclesia.

## **26. Transfer of members**

Although a member of the body of Christ, each brother or sister usually belongs to a particular ecclesia. When a brother or sister moves from one area to another, they should make every effort to move near to other Christadelphians, preferably where there is an ecclesia. They should ask their ecclesia to commend them to the nearer ecclesia. Normally the Secretary writes a letter to the receiving ecclesia, passing on relevant information, such as date of birth, date of baptism etc. It is good to be able to 'recommend' someone to another ecclesia (Acts 18:27). If there is no ecclesia and the member is living in isolation, he/she still belongs to their previous ecclesia. That ecclesia should do everything in its power to keep in touch and provide spiritual help.

It is not possible to resign from an ecclesia without at the same time ceasing to be in fellowship with the Christadelphian brotherhood worldwide.

## **27. Formation of a new ecclesia**

This must always be done with the blessing of the ecclesia to which the members of the proposed new ecclesia already belong. Christadelphians do not recognise ecclesias formed as a result of quarrelling and strife. It will normally be appropriate to consult the CBM linkman about any plans to form a new ecclesia, since the CBM will need to be satisfied that the new ecclesia is needed and can be supported.

## **28. A Constitution**

A Constitution is simply a set of agreed rules. A Constitution based on the model (Appendix 2) should be prepared and adopted by the ecclesia

as soon as possible after its formation. The advice of the CBM linkman, his supporting team and other ecclesias possessing a Constitution, should always be sought. The value of a Constitution is that it sets out the principles and procedures for the way an ecclesia functions. Once these are agreed there is no need to have endless and distracting debates about procedures. At the same time, it explains the proper procedures for altering any of the ecclesial rules. A Constitution is not like the law of the Medes and Persians (Daniel 6:8). But it does help to maintain harmony and stability in ecclesial life.

## **29. The spirit of Christ**

Set out above are the tried and tested arrangements that prevail in most Christadelphian ecclesias. Generally they work well and enable the spirit of the 1st Century ecclesia to be found in the 21st Century ecclesial world. However, no amount of guidance or rule-making will create a successful ecclesia if the spirit of Christ is missing.

In order for the teaching of Christ to be in the hearts and minds of each member of the ecclesia, an attitude has to be developed by prayerful Bible reading (Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17). When every mind is influenced by the word of God the ecclesia “may grow up in all things into him who is the head – Christ” (Ephesians 4:15,16). When jealousy and strife are allowed to fester, failure is certain (1 Corinthians 11:17-19,30).

The system of daily readings known as “The Bible Companion” has been used by Christadelphians for well over a hundred years. In many ecclesias every new member is given a copy along with a summary of the Commandments of Christ. Making the daily Bible readings a priority helps in seeking “first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33) and in recognising that the Scriptures are “able (powerful) to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). In addition, it is a privilege and joy to be in fellowship (sharing) with thousands of brothers and sisters in Christ worldwide who are reading the same portions of the Bible each day. Ensuring that all arrangements and relationships in the ecclesias are influenced by the wisdom of the Father and His Son will create the right climate for ecclesial life to flourish (Acts 20:32). The aim should be to walk together in agreement (Amos 3:3). Jesus’ prayer for his disciples will then be a reality (John 17:17-23).

What ecclesial life is about is summed up in the following verses:

“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

(Ephesians 4:1-6)

“Finally, brethren ... be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

(2 Corinthians 13:11)

# **Appendix 1 – Statement of Faith and Commandments of Christ**

## **The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF)**

### **A Statement of the Faith forming our Basis of Fellowship**

The Foundation – That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Nehemiah 9:30; John 10:35).

### **Truth to be Received**

- 1 – That the only true God is He who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by angelic visitation and vision, and to Moses at the flaming bush (unconsumed) and at Sinai, and who manifested Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the supreme self-existent Deity, the One Father, dwelling in unapproachable light, yet everywhere present by His Spirit, which is a unity with His person in heaven. He hath, out of His own underived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that in them is (Isaiah 40:13-25; 43:10-12; 44:6-8; 45:5; 46:9,10; Job 38, 39 and 40; Deuteronomy 6:1-4; Mark 12:29-32; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 26:13; Psalm 124:8; 146:6; 148:5; Isaiah 40:25-27; Jeremiah 10:12,13; 27:5; 32:17-25; 51:15; Acts 14:15; 17:24; 1 Chronicles 29:11-14; Psalm 62:11; 145:3; Isaiah 26:4; 40:26; Job 9:4; 36:5; Psalm 92:5; 104:24; 147:4,5; Isaiah 28:29; Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Job 28:24; 34:21; Psalm 33:13,14; 44:21; 94:9; 139:7-12; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:24; 32:19; Amos 9:2,3; Acts 17:27,28; Psalm 123:1; 1 Kings 8:30-39,43,49; Matthew 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:15,16; 1:17).
- 2 – That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism (Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 2:22-24,36; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 3:16,17; Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; John 3:34; 7:16; 8:26-28; 14:10-24).
- 3 – That the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on the earth was necessitated by the position and state into which the human race had been brought by the circumstances connected with the first man (1 Corinthians 15:21,22; Romans 5:12-19; Genesis 3:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

- 4 – That the first man was Adam, whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life, “very good” in kind and condition, and placed him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience (Genesis 2:7; 18:27; Job 4:19; 33:6; 1 Corinthians 15:46-49; Genesis 2:17).
- 5 – That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken – a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity (Genesis 3:15-19,22,23; 2 Corinthians 1:9; Romans 7:24; 2 Corinthians 5:2-4; Romans 7:18-23; Galatians 5:16,17; Romans 6:12; 7:21; John 3:6; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4).
- 6 – That God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration which, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals (Revelation 21:4; John 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 2:25; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:2; Romans 3:26; John 1:29).
- 7 – That He inaugurated this plan by making promises to Adam, Abraham, and David, and afterwards elaborated it in greater detail through the prophets (Genesis 3:15; 21:18; Psalm 89:34-37; 33:5; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 25:7-9; 51:1-8; Jeremiah 23:5).
- 8 – That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him (1 Corinthians 15:45; Hebrews 2:14-16; Romans 1:3; Hebrews 5:8,9; 1:9; Romans 5:19-21; Galatians 4:4,5; Romans 8:3,4; Hebrews 2:15; 9:26; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Romans 6:10; 6:9; Acts 13:34-37; Revelation 1:18; John 5:21,22,26,27; 14:3; Revelation 2:7; 3:21; Matthew 25:21; Hebrews 5:9; Mark 16:16; Acts 13:38,39; Romans 3:22; Psalm 2:6-9; Daniel 7:13,14; Revelation 11:15; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 14:9; Ephesians 1:9,10).
- 9 – That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof, and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Romans 1:3,4; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14-17; 4:15).

- 10 – That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh – yet was, during his natural life, of like nature with mortal man, being made of a woman, of the house and lineage of David, and therefore a sufferer, in the days of his flesh, from all the effects that came by Adam’s transgression, including the death that passed upon all men, which he shared by partaking of their physical nature (Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:17).
- 11 – That the message he delivered from God to his kinsmen the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of his divine sonship and Jewish kingship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through him, and accomplish all things written in the prophets (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; 5:20-48; John 10:36; 9:35; 11:27; 19:21; 1:49; Matthew 27:11-42; John 10:24,25; Matthew 19:28; 21:42,43; 23:38,39; 25:14-46; Luke 4:43; 13:27-30; 19:11-27; 22:28-30; Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).
- 12 – That for delivering this message, he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done – viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God, as a basis for the remission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam’s disobedient race, are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, his blood cleanseth from sin (Luke 19:47; 20:1-16; John 11:45-53; Acts 10:38,39; 13:26-29; 4:27,28; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 10:10; Acts 13:38; 1 John 1:7; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 3:18; 2:24; Hebrews 9:14; 7:27; 9:26-28; Galatians 1:4; Romans 3:25; 15:8; Galatians 3:21,22; 2:21; 4:4,5; Hebrews 9:15; Luke 22:20; 24:26,46,47; Matthew 26:28).
- 13 – That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the Truth (1 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 10:40; 13:30-37; 2:24-27).
- 14 – That he is a priest over his own house only, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned to disobedience. That he makes intercession for his erring brethren, if they confess and forsake their sins (Luke 24:51; Ephesians 1:20; Acts 5:31; 1

Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:1; Acts 15:14; 13:39; Hebrews 4:14,15; John 17:9; Hebrews 10:26; 1 John 2:1; Proverbs 28:13).

- 15 – That he sent forth apostles to proclaim salvation through him, as the only name given under heaven whereby men may be saved (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 26:16-18; 4:12).
- 16 – That the way to obtain this salvation is to believe the Gospel they preached, and to take on the name and service of Christ, by being thereupon immersed in water, and continuing patiently in the observance of all things he has commanded, none being recognised as his friends except those who do what he has commanded (Acts 13:48; 16:31; Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16; Acts 2:38,41; 10:47; 8:12; Galatians 3:27-29; Romans 6:3-5; 2:7; Matthew 28:20; John 15:14).
- 17 – That the Gospel consists of “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12; 19:8,10,20; 28:30,31).
- 18 – That the things of the kingdom of God are the facts testified concerning the kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next twelve paragraphs.
- 19 – That God will set up a kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ” (Daniel 2:44; 7:13,14; Revelation 11:15; Isaiah 32:1,6; 2:3,4; 11:9,10).
- 20 – That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles (Acts 3:20,21; Psalm 102:16,21; 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 1:9,11; Daniel 7:13).
- 21 – That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant (Micah 4:6-8; Amos 9:11,15; Ezekiel 37:21,22; Jeremiah 23:3,8; Genesis 13:14,17; Hebrews 11:8,9; Galatians 3:16; Leviticus 26:42; Micah 7:20).
- 22 – That this restoration of the kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God’s chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from “the desolation of many generations”; the building again of Jerusalem to become “the throne of the Lord” and the metropolis of the whole earth (Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 31:10; Zechariah 8:8; Ezekiel 36:34,36; Isaiah 51:3; 60:15; 62:4; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 4:7,8; Joel 3:17; Isaiah 24:23).

- 23 – That the governing body of the kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change, and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective “seed of Abraham”, in whom all nations will be blessed, and comprising “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets”, and all in their age of like faithfulness (Daniel 12:2; Luke 13:28; Revelation 11:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; John 5:28,29; 6:39,40; Luke 14:14; Matthew 24:34,46).
- 24 – That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it), dead and living – obedient and disobedient – will be summoned before his judgement seat “to be judged according to their works”; and “receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 2:5,6,16; 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 11:18).
- 25 – That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and “the second death”, and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as Joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything (Matthew 7:26; 8:12; 25:20; Daniel 12:2; Galatians 6:8; 5:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 10:26-28; 2 Peter 2:12; Revelation 21:8; Malachi 4:1; Psalm 37:30-38; Proverbs 10:25-29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; James 1:12; Romans 2:7; John 10:28; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:9,22,29; Revelation 5:9; Daniel 7:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 3:21; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; Psalm 49:7-9; Luke 22:29,30).
- 26 – That the kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth’s subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now (Revelation 20:4-8; 12:15; Isaiah 65:20; Ezekiel 44:22,25; 1 Corinthians 15:24,28).
- 27 – That a law will be established which shall go forth to the nations for their “instruction in righteousness”, resulting in the abolition of war to the ends of the earth; and the “filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Micah 4:2; Isaiah 42:4; 11:1-5; 2:4; Habakkuk 2:14).
- 28 – That the mission of the kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in

reality) at their close (1 Corinthians 15:25,26; Revelation 21:4; 20:12-15; Isaiah 25:6-8).

- 29 – That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgement, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalisation of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years (Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Corinthians 15:24).
- 30 – That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest Himself as the “all-in-all”; sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity (1 Corinthians 15:28).

### **Doctrines to be Rejected**

- 1 – That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration – or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed.
- 2 – That God is three persons.
- 3 – That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father.
- 4 – That Christ was born with a “free life”.
- 5 – That Christ’s nature was immaculate.
- 6 – That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.
- 7 – That man has an immortal soul.
- 8 – That man consciously exists in death.
- 9 – That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.
- 10 – That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.
- 11 – That the devil is a supernatural personal being.
- 12 – That the kingdom of God is “the church”.
- 13 – That the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely.
- 14 – That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years.
- 15 – That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for the judgement of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward.
- 16 – That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
- 17 – That the dead rise in an immortal state.
- 18 – That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.
- 19 – That the Law of Moses is binding on believers of the Gospel.

- 20 – That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty.
- 21 – That baby-sprinkling is a doctrine of scripture.
- 22 – That “heathens”, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.
- 23 – That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel.
- 24 – That the Gospel alone will save, without the obedience of Christ’s commandments.
- 25 – That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.
- 26 – That men are predestined to salvation unconditionally.
- 27 – That there is no sin in the flesh.
- 28 – That Joseph was the actual father of Jesus.
- 29 – That the earth will be destroyed.
- 30 – That baptism is not necessary to salvation.
- 31 – That a knowledge of the Truth is not necessary to make baptism valid.
- 32 – That some meats are to be refused on the score of uncleanness.
- 33 – That the English are the ten tribes of Israel, whose prosperity is a fulfilment of the promises made concerning Ephraim.
- 34 – That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful.
- 35 – That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables, take part in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion.

**The Commandments of Christ**

- 1 – Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you (Matthew 5:44).
- 2 – Resist not evil: if a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also (Matthew 5:39,40).
- 3 – Avenge not yourselves; rather give place unto wrath; and suffer yourselves to be defrauded (Romans 12:18,19; 1 Corinthians 6:7).
- 4 – If a man take away thy goods, ask them not again (Luke 6:29,30).
- 5 – Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace (Matthew 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:7).
- 6 – Labour not to be rich; be ready to every good work, give to those who ask; relieve the afflicted (1 Timothy 6:8; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16; James 1:27).
- 7 – Do not your alms before men: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth (Matthew 6:1-4).

- 8 – Recompense to no man evil for evil: overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17).
- 9 – Bless them that curse you; let no cursing come out of your mouth (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14).
- 10 – Render not evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing (1 Peter 3:9).
- 11 – Pray for them that despitefully use you and afflict you (Matthew 5:44).
- 12 – Grudge not; judge not; complain not; condemn not (James 5:9; Matthew 7:1).
- 13 – Put away anger, wrath, bitterness, and all evil speaking (Ephesians 4:31; 1 Peter 2:1).
- 14 – Confess your faults one to another (James 5:16).
- 15 – Be not conformed to this world: love not the world (Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15).
- 16 – Deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off (Titus 2:12; Matthew 5:30).
- 17 – Servants, be faithful, even to bad masters (Ephesians 6:5-8).
- 18 – Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate (Romans 12:16).
- 19 – Owe no man anything (Romans 13:7,8).
- 20 – In case of sin (known or heard of), speak not of it to others, but tell the offending brother of the matter between thee and him alone, with a view to recovery (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1).
- 21 – Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (Matthew 22:37).
- 22 – Pray always; pray with brevity and simplicity; pray secretly (Luke 18:1; Matthew 6:7).
- 23 – In everything give thanks to God and recognise Him in all your ways (Ephesians 5:20; Proverbs 3:6).
- 24 – As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them (Matthew 7:12).
- 25 – Take Christ for an example and follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).
- 26 – Let Christ dwell in your heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17).
- 27 – Esteem Christ more highly than all earthly things: yea, than your own life (Luke 14:26).
- 28 – Confess Christ freely before men (Luke 12:8).

- 29 – Beware lest the care of life or the allurements of pleasure weaken his hold on your heart (Luke 21:34-36; Matthew 24:44).
- 30 – Love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:39).
- 31 – Exercise lordship over no one (Matthew 23:10-12).
- 32 – Seek not your own welfare only, nor bear your own burdens merely, but have regard to those of others (Philippians 2:4; Galatians 6:2).
- 33 – Let your light shine before men: hold forth the word of life. Do good to all men as ye have opportunity (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:16; Galatians 6:10).
- 34 – Be blameless and harmless, as the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15).
- 35 – Be gentle, meek, kind-hearted, compassionate, merciful, forgiving (2 Timothy 2:24; Titus 2:2; Ephesians 4:32).
- 36 – Be sober, grave, sincere, temperate (Philippians 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8).
- 37 – Speak the truth every man with his neighbour: put away all lying (Ephesians 4:25).
- 38 – Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men (Colossians 3:23).
- 39 – Be watchful, vigilant, brave, joyful, courteous and manly (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-10).
- 40 – Be clothed with humility: be patient toward all (Colossians 3.12; Romans 12:12).
- 41 – Follow peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14).
- 42 – Sympathise in the joys and sorrows of others (Romans 12:15).
- 43 – Follow after whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseful (Philippians 4:8).
- 44 – Refrain utterly from adultery, fornication, uncleanness, drunkenness, covetousness, wrath, strife, sedition, hatred, emulation, boasting, vainglory, envy, jesting, and foolish talking (Ephesians 5:3,4).
- 45 – Whatever you do, consider the effect of your action on the honour of God's Name among men. Do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 3:17).
- 46 – Reckon yourselves dead to all manner of sin. Henceforth live not to yourselves, but to him who died for you, and rose again (Romans 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:15).
- 47 – Be zealous of good works, always abounding in the work of the Lord, wearying not in well-doing (Titus 2.14, Galatians 6.9).
- 48 – Speak evil of no man (Titus 3:2).

- 49 – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16).
- 50 – Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt (Colossians 3:8; 4:6).
- 51 – Obey rulers; submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake (Titus 3:1).
- 52 – Be holy in all manner of conversation (1 Peter 1:15,16).
- 53 – Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Timothy 5:14).

## **Appendix 2 – A model Constitution**

### **DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR ECCLESIAS IN EASTERN EUROPE**

#### **Introductory notes**

Given the vast differences – in size, experience, composition and social and geographic circumstances – between ecclesias in East Europe, no single text can fit the needs of all. The following therefore is less a model than a template with variable elements so that it can be adapted to local circumstances. It is assumed that the linkman and/or sub-committees will work together with ecclesias in finalising their version of the draft. Our hope and prayer is that a consistent approach may help ecclesias in East Europe to grow in ways that have been tried and tested in the Christadelphian brotherhood worldwide, helping to promote unity in Christ.

### **DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR ECCLESIAS IN EASTERN EUROPE**

We are an ecclesia of brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus, bound together by a shared faith rooted in God’s revelation to us in the Bible. All our affairs are subject to His will, and we acknowledge that we can do nothing without Him. As individuals and as an ecclesia our aims are:

- to serve and honour the Father and Jesus Christ His Son in acts of worship
- to help and encourage each other on our walk to His kingdom
- to teach our children to know and love God
- to preach the Gospel of salvation to others

The following Constitution sets out the agreed framework for our life together and for the conduct of our affairs as we seek to fulfil these aims. We undertake to observe and to practise its provisions in both letter and spirit.

#### **1. Name**

We are a community of brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ meeting as the (*name*) Christadelphian ecclesia.

#### **2. Membership**

Membership of the ecclesia is open to all who believe the Gospel as taught in the Bible and as summarised in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF), who accept the precepts set out in the accompanying Commandments of Christ, and who have been baptised following a confession of their faith.

#### **3. Fellowship**

Members of the ecclesia are in fellowship with all who have been baptised following their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts.

#### **4. Meetings**

In accordance with the purposes for which it exists, the ecclesia shall meet each week, on the first day of the week, or at some more convenient alternative time, for the breaking of bread, worship and exhortation, and at other, appropriate times during the week, for Bible study and for the preaching of the Gospel.

#### **5. Ecclesial decisions**

Christ is the only head of our ecclesia; therefore, no member of the ecclesia has pre-eminence or authority over another. In principle, therefore, all decisions shall be taken by the ecclesia as a whole. The ecclesia will accept the arrangements preferred by the majority, but shall also take account of the views and wishes of the minority.

#### **6. Appointments**

To ensure the effective organisation of ecclesial activities, the ecclesia shall appoint a Secretary, normally a brother, to take responsibility for the organisation of meetings and the conduct of correspondence and other ecclesial affairs, and a Treasurer to look after the funds of the ecclesia. Where there are sufficient members, a Committee shall be appointed to share with the Secretary and Treasurer the conduct of the ecclesia's affairs. Other appointments may be made as appropriate. All such appointments shall be made through a vote of all the members, which shall be held every year.

The Secretary, the Treasurer and any others appointed by the members of the ecclesia shall be authorised to take day-to-day decisions on their behalf. However, these decisions are subject to endorsement by the ecclesia.

Regular meetings shall therefore be held not less than twice per year, to discuss the affairs of the meeting and to approve the decisions and actions of the Secretary, the Committee and the Treasurer. Due notice shall be given to all members of such meetings, which may proceed only if at least one half of the members are present.

#### **7. Ecclesial property**

All funds and property belonging to the ecclesia (excluding any which is legally the property of the Christadelphian Bible Mission or another similar body) shall legally be held by the Secretary and Treasurer / the Committee on behalf of the ecclesia. Such property shall be disposed of only at the direction of the members of the ecclesia by majority decision.

#### **8. Requests for baptism**

Requests for baptism and for consequent membership of the ecclesia shall be made through the Secretary, who will arrange for the applicant to be

interviewed, consulting the ecclesia. Following a satisfactory interview, the ecclesia shall be informed of the result, after which, provided there are no objections, the baptism shall take place in the presence of the ecclesia, as far as this is practically possible.

#### **9. Transfer of membership**

- a) Members transferring from other ecclesias will normally be welcomed on receipt of a letter of commendation from their former ecclesia and their acceptance of this Constitution.
- b) Members wishing to transfer to another ecclesia should inform the Secretary, requesting that a similar letter of commendation be forwarded to the ecclesia they have chosen.

#### **10. Cessation of membership**

- a) In the event of conflict concerning fundamental matters of belief or right practice, every effort shall be made to achieve reconciliation on a Biblical basis. If all such efforts have failed, the ecclesia may resolve that the membership of the brother or sister concerned shall cease. Such a decision shall be taken only after a ballot of all the members and with a two-thirds majority.
- b) Should a brother or sister express the intention to resign from fellowship, the ecclesia shall make every effort consistent with Biblical principles to restore the member to fellowship. Should such efforts fail, the ecclesia will respect the wishes of the brother or sister.
- c) A brother or sister now out of fellowship who asks to be re-admitted to fellowship shall be interviewed by the Secretary and another experienced member, consulting, if necessary, with representatives of the Christadelphian Bible Mission. They shall then recommend to the ecclesia whether the request for renewed fellowship shall be granted. If any other ecclesia was involved in the previous cessation of fellowship, that ecclesia shall be consulted before a decision is taken.

#### **11. Changes to this Constitution**

Changing circumstances may require changes to this Constitution. Proposals for changes shall be submitted to the Secretary, signed by four members of the ecclesia. The proposal shall be discussed at a meeting of the ecclesia and then submitted to a ballot of all the members. The support of two-thirds of the members shall be required for the proposal to be accepted.

*Approved by the CBM East Europe Committee, November 2005*

