



AECW CONSTITUTION

1. Name

The full name shall be Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales.

2. Nature and Aims

The AECW shall be composed of autonomous local churches whose aims shall be to promote the fullest possible co-operation in fellowship and witness between all churches which embrace the evangelical faith, and to provide means for uniting and Coordinating the witness and fellowship of such churches. In pursuit of this aim the freedom of each local church to choose its level of association with other local churches shall be preserved.

3. Membership

Evangelical churches which are in full agreement with the following statements pertaining to the doctrine, membership, government, ministry, task, sacraments and interchurch relationships of Christian churches, may apply to become member-churches of Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales. They agree:

3.1 Doctrine: That the following affirmation represents a minimal statement of scriptural truth which all such churches are required to confess:

We accept the Holy Scriptures, as originally given, as the infallible Word of God, of divine inspiration. Recognising them as our sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, we believe the doctrines taught therein. In particular we believe:

- i. in the only true and living God, the Holy Trinity of divine Persons in perfect unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of whom is co-equal and co-eternal, and sovereign in creation, providence and redemption.
- ii. in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, righteous, full of grace, mercy, compassion and love. In His infinite love He sent forth the Son, that the world through Him might be saved.
- iii. in the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, whose true humanity and full deity were mysteriously and really joined in the unity of His divine Person. We believe in His virgin birth, in His perfect life and teaching, in His substitutionary, atoning death on the cross, where He triumphed over Satan, sin and death, in His bodily resurrection and His ascension into heaven, where He now sits in glory at the right hand of God.
- iv. in the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, whose work is indispensable to regenerate the sinner, to lead him to repentance, to give him faith in Christ, to sanctify the believer in this present life and fit him to enjoy fellowship with God. For spiritual power and effectiveness His ministry is essential to the individual Christian and to the Church.
- v. that as a result of the Fall all men are sinful by nature. Sin pollutes and controls them, infects every part of their being, renders them guilty in the sight of a holy God and subject to the penalty which, in His wrath and condemnation, He has decreed against it.
- vi. that through faith (and only faith) in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death was a perfect oblation and satisfaction for our sins, the sinner is freely justified by God who, instead of reckoning to us our sins, reckons Christ's righteousness to our account. Salvation is therefore by grace and not by human merit.
- vii. that the Lord Jesus Christ will return personally, visibly and gloriously to this earth, to receive His saints to Himself and to be seen of all men. As the righteous Judge, He will divide all men into two, and only two, categories - the saved and the lost. Those whose faith is in Christ will be saved eternally, and will enter into the joy of their Lord, sharing with Him His inheritance in heaven. The unbelieving will be condemned by Him to hell, where eternally they will be punished for their sins under the righteous judgement of God.

Whilst full understanding of these doctrines is not to be required of candidates for church membership, they must be clearly affirmed in the official standards of such churches, to which all who teach therein or in their name must conform. Churches may in their official standards add to this statement, providing that such additions are not in any way inconsistent with the latter. They must not be associated with any Council of Churches whose doctrinal standards are sufficiently comprehensive to allow within its fellowship those who believe doctrines which conflict with, or in any way contradict, the plain meaning of this statement.

While churches whose doctrinal standards correspond to the above statement of belief may become member-churches of Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales, it is recognised that the doctrinal position of AECW with regard to the doctrines of grace is that broadly represented by the classical Reformed confessions of faith (e.g. Westminster Confession 1647, Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order 1658, Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, Confession of Faith of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists 1823).

3.2 Church membership: That as the Church belongs to the Triune God, whether it be on earth or in heaven, it is to consist of those and only those who, professing faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as Saviour, Lord and God, whose death in their place constitutes the only ground of their salvation, have forsaken their sin

and now seek to live a life of holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the duty of each church to examine with charity all candidates for membership, so as to ensure, as far as humanly possible, that such persons have in fact experienced the new birth which alone will enable them to make the above profession of faith sincerely.

3.3 Government and Ministry: That when God calls a church into being, by that act He pledges Himself to provide for it. Each congregation shall determine its own form of government and ministry in the light of its understanding of the New Testament and appoint its own officers.

3.4 Task: That the task of a local church is to glorify God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church which is His body. This it does by pursuing the following objectives:

(a) In worship, prayer and praise to adore Him, ever seeking to grow in the knowledge of Him, and in all matters to obey Him.

(b) To proclaim to the whole world the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

(c) To build up its members in holiness and conformity to the will of God, according to the Word of God.

(d) To give clear instruction to new converts, so that they will understand as soon as possible the meaning, importance and implications of the whole counsel of God.

(e) To administer the sacraments (or ordinances) of baptism and the Lord's Supper as instituted by our Lord.

(f) To show by deed as well as by word the compassion of Christ, thus furthering the will of God in the world.

(g) To preserve itself from error by bringing all its teaching and practice under the judgement of Scripture, and thus be enabled to pass on to mankind the faith once delivered to the saints.

(h) To promote the fullest possible co-operation in fellowship and witness with all churches and fellowships which embrace the evangelical faith.

3.5 Sacraments: That the Lord Jesus Christ when He was on earth instituted two sacraments to be observed by His church until His return in glory to the world, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. While each congregation shall determine its own mode of baptism, and its significance in relation to membership of the local church, it is mutually agreed that (a) its observance never automatically conveys regenerative grace; (b) its subjects shall be, as far as it is possible to ascertain, believers (in the case of believers' baptism), and the children of believers (in the case of infant baptism). With respect to the Lord's Supper, it is agreed that it is never to be considered a sacrifice for sin, nor is there ever any change in the substance of the bread and wine.

3.6 Inter-church relationships: Churches shall not be expected to identify publicly with other churches in any way that, in their judgement, will compromise their distinctive theological persuasion. Member churches are expected to respect the courtesies that ought to obtain in relations between evangelical churches with regard to disaffected members.

4. Applications for Membership

Applications shall be considered by the Coordinating Committee and the appropriate Church Cluster. Member churches are invited to comment on applications. On receipt of a positive recommendation from the Church Cluster, and taking into account responses received from member churches, the Coordinating Committee shall be authorised provisionally to accept such churches into membership, pending formal acceptance by the Assembly.

Churches which are associated with a doctrinally mixed denomination may apply to become member-churches of the AECW, provided that:

(a) the nature of their denominational involvement does not in practice involve them in theological compromise; and,

(b) if the church body with which they are connected is associated with any Council of Churches whose doctrinal standards are sufficiently comprehensive to allow within its fellowship those who believe doctrines which conflict with, or in any way contradict, the plain meaning of the AECW Doctrinal Belief, they officially declare their dissent.

5. Removal from Membership

After exhaustive attempts to restore relationships, churches defaulting from the aims and principles of AECW may be removed from membership at the discretion of and in consultation with the Church Cluster, the Coordinating Committee and the Annual Assembly.

6. Assembly

Representatives of member-churches shall meet together nationally at least once a year to consider matters relating to the churches. Each church shall be entitled to send up to three representatives, who shall normally be pastors or elders/deacons.

7. Church Clusters

To facilitate co-operation at a local level each member-church shall belong to a Church Cluster. The churches in each Cluster shall be free to decide the level of their co-operation together. They may seek help from churches outside their immediate area or the churches as a whole. Church Clusters may also agree to co-operate together at a regional level and shall be free to determine the form this co-operation shall take. Each Church Cluster shall appoint its Coordinator, and other officers as appropriate, who shall serve for a period of 3 years.

8. Ministry Teams

Ministry Teams shall be established to be proactive in promoting appropriate ministries and activities for the development of the work of AECW. The members of Ministry Teams shall normally be drawn from AECW churches. Churches will be asked to approve the appointment of any of their members serving on a Ministry Team. The Coordinating Committee shall have power to co-opt additional members, who are not in fellowship with an AECW church, to Ministry Teams. Each Ministry Team shall appoint its Team Leader who shall serve for a period of 3 years.

9. Coordinating Committee

The Assembly shall appoint its own officers (Chairman, Secretary, Financial Secretary) for a 3 year period. Such officers, together with the Coordinators of the Church Clusters and the Team Leaders of the Ministry Teams, shall constitute the Coordinating Committee.

Nominations from the churches for National Officers must be submitted to the Coordinating Committee at least 3 months before the Annual Assembly. Churches shall be informed of the nominations prior to the Annual Assembly. Member-church representatives present at the Assembly shall vote by ballot.

10. Appointed Representatives

The AECW may appoint 2 representatives to the Affinity Council to serve for a period of 3 years.

11. Finance

The AECW shall be supported by gifts from member-churches.

12. Constitutional Amendment

The Constitution shall only be amended by a two-thirds majority of the Annual Assembly. Notice of amendment must be given in writing to the Coordinating Committee at least three months in advance for communication to member-churches.