

THE ECUMENICAL SOCIETY

OF

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Registered Charity No. 282748

CONSTITUTION

This Constitution includes amendments adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on March 8th 1997 and supersedes all previous Constitutions.

1. The Society shall be called the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
2. The Society, founded in 1967 by H Martin Gillett and others, exists to advance the study at various levels of the place of the Blessed Virgin in the Church under Christ, and of related theological questions; and in the light of such study to promote ecumenical devotion.
3. Membership is open to all who are willing to give active support to the aims of the Society, are acceptable to it, and agree to pay the subscription which shall be determined by a General Meeting.
4. Within the Society all Christian traditions shall be accorded equal respect Members shall not use its meetings for the purpose of inducing others to change from one communion to another.
5. There shall be an Annual General Meeting which will normally be held during the month of March, at which the Treasurer's Accounts will be published. Notice of the meeting will be posted or given to members at least 21 days beforehand. Notice of motions to be put before the AGM must reach the General Secretary (together with the names of proposer and seconder, both of whom must be members of the Society in good standing) by the preceding January 1st All members have the right to vote at the AGM if they have been members of the Society for at least six months and are not in arrears with their subscriptions. Voting rights are accorded to life, but not to honorary, members.
6. To meet an urgent need a Special General Meeting may be called at the discretion of the Council.
7. There shall be a Council of the Society which shall have responsibility for the affairs of the whole society. It shall consist of:
 - a) the officers mentioned in paragraph 9: patrons unable to attend in person shall be entitled to send instead one representative who is a member of the Society.

- b) one representative of each Branch, who shall be chosen by the Branch;
- c) not more than ten members of the Society elected by the AGM: nominations for election by the AGM with the names of proposer and seconder, both being members of the Society, and the consent of the nominee, should be sent to the General Secretary by February 1st preceding the AGM. Members of the Council are elected by the AGM for a term of six years, and may be re-elected an indefinite number of times:
- d) not more than four members of the Society whom the Council may co-opt for a year at a time:
- e) from time to time, in special circumstances, members of the Council who have given outstanding service to the Society may be appointed by the Council as ‘Councillors Emeriti’, to have voice without vote at Council meetings.

A quorum for the conduct of business at a meeting of the Council shall be ten members.

8. There shall be an Executive Committee of the Council which shall meet at the discretion of the General Secretary and whose members shall be Charity Trustees under the terms of the Charities Act 1992. The Executive Committee shall consist of:
- a) the Honorary Secretaries of the Society;
 - b) any two Council members elected at every Annual General Meeting.

The functions of the Executive Committee shall be:

- i) the preparation of Council Meetings;
 - ii) the implementation of Council decisions:
 - iii) the handling of matters arising between meetings of the Council including those matters judged to be the concern of the Council but which of necessity must be dealt with before the next meeting;
 - iv) the oversight and support of any specialist Committees of the Council (see paragraph 12).
9. The Officers shall be:

Patrons as nominated by the Council, to a number as determined by the Council;

no more than four **Moderators** who shall belong to different communions, one of whom shall normally take the Chair at meetings of the Council: if no Moderator can be present, a Patron may be invited to take the Chair;

an **Honorary General Secretary**;

an **Honorary Treasurer**;

such other Honorary Secretaries to deal with specific functions as the Council may from time to time determine.

These Officers are elected by the Council for a period of three years (reckoning from the AGM), and may be re-elected for an indefinite number of times. Their election or re-election must be put to the AGM for ratification. Appointments to fill vacancies occurring in the ranks of the Society's Office-holders as above, and Council-members as defined in paragraph 7(c), through death or retirement, shall be made by the Council and submitted to the next ensuing AGM for ratification. Such officers are appointed for -the remainder of their predecessor's term of office.

10. Branches may be established with -the approval of the Council. Each Branch elect their own officers and committees and are responsible for the management of their own affairs within the terms of the aims and purposes of the Society as a whole. A representative of the Council may attend meetings of Branch committees, but may not vote at them. Each Branch shall give the editor of the Society's Newsletter due notice of its meetings, so that engagements may -be suitably coordinated. No member has voting rights in more than one Branch.
11.
 - i) Members' Subscriptions in full shall be sent to the Hon Treasurer of the Society for the general purposes of the Society,
 - ii) The Treasurer shall deliver annually to the officers of the Society at least 21 days before each AGM independently examined accounts of the Society's finances, which shall be presented to the ensuing AGM. For this purpose the financial year of the Society shall run from November 1st until October 31st following.
 - iii) An independent examiner as defined by the Charities Act 1992 shall be appointed -by resolution at each Annual General Meeting. Should a casual vacancy occur between Annual General Meetings the Council may appoint another independent examiner to fill the vacancy. The expenses and fees of the independent examiner are a permissible charge on the funds of the Society.
 - iv) Cheques and bank authorizations shall be signed by any two of those persons so designated by the Council.
12. The Council shall be empowered to appoint Committees for any special purpose, permanent or temporary. The Hon General Secretary shall be a member of each Committee ex officio.
13. Once adopted by the General Meeting of the Society, this Constitution stands and may be altered only by proposition, duly put forward, proposed and seconded, by regular members at the Society, and agreed upon by a two-thirds majority of those entitled to vote, and voting at a General Meeting, due notice having been given in advance. In all other considerations at meetings of the Society and its branches resolutions regularly

proposed and seconded shall be determined by a simple majority of members present and voting. In the event of an equality of votes for and against, the person taking the chair at the meeting shall have a second or casting vote

14. The Society may be dissolved by a resolution passed by a majority of those present and voting at an Annual or Special Meeting of the Society. In the event of a resolution being proposed and adopted then it shall incorporate the appointment of not less than two Trustees to administer the remaining assets and liabilities of the Society and to realise any saleable property of the Society and apply the proceeds together with any cash and bank balances, after the payment of all debts and liabilities, to such organisations or projects as the Council in its absolute judgement shall have directed which most nearly reflect the aims of the Society. The accounts of the Trustees shall be subject to independent examination and shall be presented to the members within twelve months. The meeting shall stand adjourned until such independently examined accounts have been presented and adopted and all members of the Society shall be entitled to be informed of the arrangements for the adjourned meeting.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

- a) The activities of the Society include the organisation of talks, services, pilgrimages, visits, days of recollection and other meetings. An International Congress is held at intervals as directed by the Council.
- b) From time to time, as far as finances allow, the texts of various lectures and papers will be circulated for group study and for individual reading. Every subscribing member will be sent copies of such, commencing with the date of subscription, and of a Newsletter which is published about three times a year.
- c) Having regard to the first aim of the Society, an element of prayer forms part of every meeting. It has been found that use of the Society's Ecumenical Office provides a unifying factor, and that a period of reflection and silent prayer after meetings is usually appreciated. In addition, opportunities will be found for members who wish to participate in pilgrimages and visits to places of special significance.