

The Constitution of the Wesleyan Reform Union
as approved by Conference 2011

A Statement of Faith & Practice

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Confession of Faith

(Approved by Conference 1970, Amended by Conference 2008)

"One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8)

WE BELIEVE

1. That there is one true and living God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Creator of heaven and earth; Him alone we worship and adore.
2. That the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, as originally given, are of divine inspiration and infallible, supreme in authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
3. That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and are thereby subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
4. That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and that He is truly God and truly Man, Jesus Christ our Lord.
5. That the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself as the substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. He was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven to be our Advocate and Mediator, and that He will personally return in power and glory.
6. That the Holy Spirit is a divine Person both equal to, and of one substance with the Father and the Son, that His work is necessary to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting him repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, and He also indwells every believer as his Sanctifier, thus placing His seal upon him as a child of God.
7. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.
8. In the priesthood of all believers, and that we being members one of another are one body in Christ Jesus having equality of spiritual opportunities as the sacred right of all.
9. That the Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, and that only Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted

by the Lord Jesus Christ as such, maintaining that the proper subjects for Baptism are believers and children to be brought up within the fellowship of Christ's Church.

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Wesleyan Reform Union Constitution

1. The aims of the Wesleyan Reform Union are to extend God's love and encourage closer fellowship among the Churches of the Union, to promote unity of action in ways which best serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to encourage and equip churches in mission and discipleship in their local communities.
2. The connexional principle is fundamental to our witness in the wider Church. At the same time each Church and Circuit has full autonomy, being responsible for all decisions affecting its internal affairs. In order to maintain both of these principles in balance it is essential that Churches and Circuits aim to promote the principles and interests of the Union as a whole, especially with regard to policies recommended by the Annual Conference, while exercising their individual freedom and authority.
3. The Wesleyan Reform Union shall comprise the Circuits and Churches which have expressed a desire to accept its principles of faith and order and conform to its system of government. They are received on to the official list of Wesleyan Reform Churches by vote of Conference and share the rights and privileges of the Connexion.
4. The legislative assembly is an Annual Conference normally held in June, as determined by majority vote at the previous Conference except when special circumstances make it necessary for the General Committee to amend the date. The Annual Conference is composed of delegates appointed by their Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, the serving General Committee plus two additional representatives of the Women of Action and the Trustees. After the calling of the Conference Roll delegates will have the full voting powers. Any special additions or co-options must be approved by the delegates present at Conference.
5. Business of the Union during the year between the Annual Conference will be carried out by a Half-yearly meeting, normally held in November, and a General Committee elected at each Annual Conference. Meetings of either of these bodies will be held at least quarterly between the Annual Conference.

6. Membership figures for eligibility for numbers of delegates to Conference, Half Yearly Meetings and nominations for General Committee, are based on those approved by the preceding Conference.

7. Circuits, and individual Churches may send delegates to Conference according to the following scale:
 - 1 to 39 members - 1 delegate
 - 40 to 75 members - 2 delegates
 - 75 to 149 members - 3 delegates
 - 150 to 224 members - 4 delegates
 - 225 to 299 members - 5 delegates
 - 300 members and over – 6 delegates

8. Each Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, may be represented at the Half-Yearly Meetings according to the following scale:
 - Up to 75 members - 1 delegate
 - Over 75 members - 2 delegatesAll delegates have full voting powers.

9. A General Committee will be elected by ballot at each Annual Conference to carry out the business of the Connexion during the ensuing year. It will consist of twenty delegates nominated by a Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, plus the following ex-officio members: President, Past President, Treasurer, General Secretary, Guardian Representatives (not exceeding four in number), and one representative appointed by each of the following departments: Home Missions, Overseas Missions, Christian Ethics & Social Action, Young People's Department, Local Preachers' Fellowship, and the President (or other elected representative) and one other member of the Women of Action.

Circuits, or individual Churches which are not members of a Circuit, may nominate anyone who is currently in membership of the Wesleyan Reform

Union and has been a member of a Wesleyan Reform Church for at least three years, according to the following scale:

1 to 74 members - 1 nomination

75 to 149 members – 2 nominations

150 (and over) members – 3 nominations

Should there be twenty or fewer nominations, Conference may elect without a ballot.

10. Sectional Committees, managed by the Annual Conference and the General Committee, will be responsible for the following areas and work to written terms of reference agreed by the General Committee:-

- Management
- Home Missions
- Overseas Missions
- Ministerial
- Young People's Department
- Christian Ethics and Social Action
- Local Preachers Fellowship

The General Committee will perform a refining and approving role to the Sectional Committees monitoring their function in accordance with the terms of reference. Membership of the Sectional Committees will be elected by Conference with nominations invited from the General Committee or the relevant committee.

11. The General Committee will exercise a management function in respect of the General Secretary, and through this office, of Headquarters Administrative Staff. It will prepare and review from time to time contracts of employment and job descriptions, and will pursue good personnel and industrial relations practices. It will keep salary and benefits packages under regular and systematic review. The General Committee will appoint persons to carry out staff appraisals. The appraisers will report to the Management Committee, which will in then make any necessary recommendations to the General Committee.

12. The appointment of all Connexional Officers is the responsibility of the Annual Conference.
13. The President, as appointed by the Annual Conference, will preside at all meetings of the General Committee whenever possible, having full charge of such meetings, giving impartial guidance to business and having a casting vote when necessary. Should the President be absent, a Past President, in order of precedence, will act as Chairman. The President may exercise a right of office at any point after arrival at any General Committee Meeting.
14. In order to maintain the administration and meet the financial costs of the Connexion an assessment will be agreed by the Annual Conference and reviewed as necessary. All members of the Connexion are expected to support these assessments loyally.
15. The travelling expenses of members attending the General Committee Meetings will be met from the Union Expenses Fund, but any Circuit, which fails to pay its full assessment will be required to meet its own delegates' travelling expenses.
16. It is the responsibility of each Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, to give accurate and complete returns of its Church Statistics at the appointed time, together with any other information required by the Annual Conference.
17. Guardian Representatives (not exceeding four in number) will be appointed and will be ex-officio members of the General Committee. Guardian representatives and up to eight Trustees will be responsible for Connexional properties, deeds, legal and financial matters. Any vacancy will be filled by the appointment of the Annual Conference on the recommendation of the General Committee.

Guardian Representatives act as Trustees and, in addition to their duties as Trustees, monitor and advise on matters of founding principles, confession of faith and constitution and practice.

Trustees are responsible for the properties, assets, financial stability and solvency of the Union, compliance with charity law and delivering the objects set out in the constitution.

18. Any notice of motion which affects the Constitution of the Union and is to be debated at the Annual Conference must be brought to the Half-Yearly Meetings (or General Committee) held approximately six months preceding it. The notice must be given in writing to the General Secretary, following approval by a Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, or General Committee not later than two weeks preceding the relevant meeting. Amendments to a notice of motion submitted as set out above may be made following approval by another Circuit, or individual Church which is not a member of a Circuit, or General Committee may be submitted to the General Committee meeting held approximately three months before the Annual Conference. The amendment will be submitted to the Annual Conference alongside the original notice of motion (unless the body who submitted the original notice of motion withdraws it in favour of an amendment). No new notice of motion will be allowed unless it is submitted to the Half-Yearly Meetings (or General Committee) held six months preceding the Annual Conference.

On all matters affecting the constitution the decision will be taken by ballot, and two thirds of the total number of votes recorded are required for the motion to be accepted. All notices of motion become operative immediately they are accepted by the Annual Conference.

19. Any question affecting the identity of the Wesleyan Reform Union must be referred to all Churches and Circuits for their consideration. All decisions thereon are to be reached by referenda of Church members, the results of which are to be reported to the Annual Conference.

Church Membership & Practice

1. All Church Rules should be in accordance with the mind and spirit of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and true to the Church's doctrine and practice.
2. All those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and accept the obligation to serve Him in the life of the Church are welcome as full members of the Church.
3. In the Church
Members are committed to worship, Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, fellowship and service, prayer and Bible study, and responsible giving.
4. In the world
Members are committed to witnessing, working out their faith in daily life, offering personal service in the community, the Christian use of their resources, and the support of the Church in its total world mission.
5. It is urged that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be observed regularly.
6. It is vital that in every Church biblical teaching is provided so that people of all ages may have the opportunity to come to faith in Christ and be disciplined.
7. Each Church should have a Junior Membership Register for young people up to the age of eighteen years who sincerely express their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They will be entitled to be received into full membership at the age of eighteen years.
8. Names to be considered for membership should be submitted to the Minister, Church President or Leaders and by them to the Church. Those approved should be received into membership at the earliest opportunity at a service including or followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
9. Any Member who is persistently absent without a valid reason should be visited by the Minister, Leader, or such as shall be appointed, who should then submit the matter to the Church Meeting if the problem is not resolved.

10. A Membership Register should be kept to record names and addresses of all who are received into membership; date of admission; transfers; removals and cessations in membership.
11. When people move to another area every effort should be made to encourage them into fellowship with another Christian Church.
12. Members from other Churches, bringing satisfactory credentials, should be received into membership after a suitable time.
13. A Meeting of all Adult Members of the Church should be held as often as is necessary for the transaction of the affairs of the Church, such as:-
 - a) the spiritual state of the Church.
 - b) consideration of the Church's teaching, fellowship and outreach.
 - c) the admission of new members.
 - d) receiving official reports.
 - e) the consideration of any name suitable for recommendation as a suitable candidate for the preachers' plan.
 - f) acting as the final court in disputes among members. In no case should any dispute be brought into a Church Meeting until every possible step has been taken quietly and amicably to secure reconciliation in accordance with the rule of Christ.
(see Matthew 18:15-17).
14. The admission of members into the Church, the exercise of discipline, and exclusions from the Church, are rights vested solely in the hands of Church members, to be exercised by them directly or representatively. It is the duty of all members to be present at all meetings of the Church for the transaction of its general business.
15. There should be an Annual Church Meeting at a time most convenient to the majority of the Church Members, for fellowship, a review of the Church's progress during the year, and prayerful consideration of all aspects of Church life and service.

At such a meeting there should be:-

- a) a review of the past year within the Church including a brief report from all departments connected with the Church.
 - b) careful consideration of future prospects and responsibilities.
 - c) election of Officers for the ensuing year.
 - d) consideration of Home and Overseas Missions and Connexional matters.
 - e) presentation of the accounts for the year, and discussion of Church finances.
16. Notice of all Church Meetings should be published at each of the public services on the two previous Sundays, or objection can be made.
17. The greatest care should be taken to maintain Church premises as a place for worship, prayer, fellowship, biblical teaching and outreach. All questionable practices should be avoided.

Ministerial Statement

1. The following statement is intended as a guide to Churches and Circuits in connection with the employment of Ministers. Nothing herein contained should be read or construed as forming any contract or imposing any binding obligation or duty upon the Wesleyan Reform Union or any member of the Union or any Committee, Church or Circuit within the Wesleyan Reform Union.
2. The Churches and Circuits are strongly urged to adopt the principle and practice of pastoral oversight.
3. The maintenance of the separated ministry is the responsibility of the Church or Circuit which engages the Minister. Grouping of some Churches is recommended where one Church is unable to support a Minister alone.
4. Whenever a Church or Circuit decides to engage a Minister the use of the standard form of contract of service approved by Conference is recommended and the Code of Practice for Disciplinary Dismissal and Appeals Procedure should be adopted.
5. It is expected that, as members of the Wesleyan Reform Union the Church(es) pay at least the recommended minimum salary. Where they are unable to make such minimum payment they may approach the Management Committee for assistance.
6. We appeal to all Churches and Circuits to recommend as candidates for the ministry those who they believe to be called of God to this work. Such candidates must have been members of one of our Churches for a period of not less than three years.
7. Training will be given over a period of three years by our Union Tutor. The Ministerial Committee will conduct oral examinations in Theology for all candidates and will make a report of their progress to Conference annually. Half the cost of training will be met by Union Funds and half by the candidate.

8. We recognise that applications may be received from candidates not in membership with the Union. The Ministerial Committee will consider each case on an individual basis. In the event of applications being received from candidates who have been previously ordained by a Christian denomination,

or who have a recognised degree in Theology, they will not be required to complete our Theology course or the oral Theological Examination. However, such candidates will be required to write a 10,000 word dissertation covering all paragraphs of the Doctrinal Statement, and how it relates to their theological persuasion, subsequently discussing this with the Ministerial Committee during the probationary period of three years. Where such candidates are not ordained already in a recognised Christian denomination, a trial sermon shall be preached to the Ministerial Committee and proof given of ability to rightly interact with others.

9. Candidates will be required to undergo a medical examination, and to furnish a medical certificate along with their application. A satisfactory criminal records check will be required of every successful candidate.

10. Candidates will have an opportunity to join the Wesleyan Reform Union Ministers' Provident Society and a contribution will be made to a designated personal pension scheme subject to the conditions being met. It is to be understood by the candidate that this is not to be construed as forming part of any contract or imposing an obligation or duty upon the Wesleyan Reform Union or any member of the Union or any Committee, Church or Circuit within the Wesleyan Reform Union.

11. The Wesleyan Reform Union may in its discretion pay to any Minister who is without charge a sum not exceeding the minimum Ministerial stipend less any benefits received by a Minister under National Insurance or Social Security Schemes, provided that: -

- a) the Minister is on the full list of Ministers of the Wesleyan Reform Union.
- b) the Minister after due discussions and negotiations continues actively to undertake duties assigned or offered by the Union.
- c) the Minister applies to the Ministerial Committee of the Union.

- d) the Ministerial Committee of the Union having considered the application decides that on its individual merits the application is appropriate.

Such payment will be available only for a period in total not exceeding 9 months and in making any such payment nothing should be read or construed as forming any contract or imposing any binding obligation or duty upon the Wesleyan Reform Union or any member of the Union or any Committee within the Union.

12. Removal Expenses of Ministers.

- a) Where the charge is approved by the Ministerial Committee up to one half of the removal expenses may be paid when the Minister moves _____ to _____ a new Church/Circuit, provided the Minister was at least three years in his _____ previous charge. The Church or Circuit appointing the Minister should apply for this payment. No expenses will be paid when a Minister leaves the Wesleyan Reform Union to take an outside appointment.

- b) At retirement. The Minister himself should apply for the payment.

13. In its dealings with Churches, Circuits and Ministers the Ministerial Committee will recognise the fullest liberty of each, in accordance with the Constitution of the Union. It is expected that Ministers, Churches and Circuits will always refer to the Ministerial Committee before taking any steps which would affect future ministry.

14. The Ministerial Committee will at all times remain a confidential body.

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