

THE CONSTITUTION OF SOLA 5

Adopted 30 September 2005

1 INCORPORATION

- 1.1 By the adoption of this Constitution the Association is formed. This Constitution supersedes all previous rules and procedures.

2 NAME

- 2.1 The name of this Association is *Sola 5*, with the subtitle *An Association of God-centred evangelicals in Southern Africa*. Our name reflects our commitment to the biblical doctrines of the Reformation, encapsulated in the “five solas”: Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*); by grace alone (*sola gratia*); Christ alone (*solus Christus*); by faith alone (*sola fide*); glory to God alone (*solī Deo gloria*).

3 PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of the Association is to glorify God by:
 - a) establishing a God-centred, Christ-focussed and Scripture-based witness;
 - b) uniting and promoting fellowship among local churches and individual Christians in Southern Africa who have a passion for such a witness;
 - c) supporting and encouraging local churches and individual believers as they live out this wit-

ness in their own immediate spheres of influence;

- d) facilitating co-operation in projects which will promote the above aims in Southern Africa and elsewhere;
- e) nurturing the formation of local churches with these values where no such local church exists.

4 STANDARDS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 4.1 The ultimate standard of the Association is the Scripture (i.e. the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments). All issues and deliberations must be resolved by appealing to Scripture.

- 4.2 We believe that the Sola 5 Confession of Faith and the Core Values of Sola 5 are faithful interpretations and applications of Scripture; therefore the activities of the Association will be conducted within the framework of these documents.

- 4.3 The Confession of Faith and Core Values may be revised by the agreement of 80% (eighty percent) of the delegates representing member churches at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee (SC) at least ninety days before the Meeting; member churches must be

notified of such proposals at least sixty days before the Meeting.

5 MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The primary membership of the Association shall consist of local churches in Southern Africa who subscribe to the Confession of Faith, Core Values and Constitution of Sola 5.

- a) Churches (as defined in the Sola 5 Confession of Faith, section 7) seeking membership of the Association should submit an application to the SC, which will bring the application to the ABM for acceptance. Any church applying for membership should include a copy of its own constitution and statement of faith. Acceptance into membership shall be by at least three quarters (75%) majority of church delegates present.
- b) Provisional membership may be granted by the SC until the next ABM.
- c) Local churches may be members of other church associations in addition to Sola 5, provided such membership is consistent with the doctrine and values of Sola 5.
- d) Member churches are free to have their own confessions of faith in addition to that of the Association, provided such confessions of faith are consistent with the Sola 5 Confession of Faith.
- e) Each member church must renew its commitment to the Association in writing at each ABM. In the absence of such

renewal, membership will automatically lapse.

- f) A church's membership may be terminated by resignation.
- g) The Association may terminate the membership of a church which no longer meets the requirements of membership. In such a case, the SC may, after diligently seeking to resolve the issues, suspend membership until the next ABM, at which time the church delegates will make a final decision on the matter. A proposal for the removal of a church from membership must be presented to the member churches, with reasons, at least thirty days prior to the ABM. A majority of at least 75% (seventy-five percent) is necessary for the removal of a church from membership.

5.2 Individual residents of Southern Africa who do not belong to member churches and who subscribe to the Confession of Faith, Core Values and Constitution of Sola 5 may join the Association as associate members.

- a) The purpose of associate membership is to provide encouragement and teaching for believers who are not able to find a like-minded local church in their area; to give them the opportunity of participating in projects of the Association; and to facilitate the process of church planting.
- b) Associate members are welcome to participate in meetings of the Association, but may not vote.

- c) For associate members, the procedures for joining, renewing and terminating membership shall be the same as those for local churches.
- d) Associate members not belonging to any local church will be accepted into the membership of a member church for the purpose of shepherding and discipline.

6 MODUS OPERANDI

6.1 **Basis of trust.** The aim of the Association is to give expression to the God-given unity of the true Body of Christ. This unity is of an organic, relational nature. Therefore, our relationships and joint activities are upheld by mutual love, respect, trust, loyalty and integrity—rather than by an institutional or legal framework. This is understood to be the basis of all that the Association does.

6.2 **Annual Business Meeting.** Decisions regarding the policy and activities of the Association shall be made by representatives of the member churches at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM).

- a) The venue of the ABM should be chosen to facilitate participation from all the member churches.
- b) The first order of business at the ABM will be the renewal of commitment from members and the identification of those whose membership lapses. A quorum of 30% (thirty percent) will then be needed to conduct business, with the exception of making changes or additions to the Con-

fession or Core Values; for this business a quorum of 66% (sixty-six percent) will be required.

- c) Each member church attending the ABM shall have one vote, to be cast by its nominee (who must be a member, and preferably an elder, of that church). Member churches may send as many non-voting attendees as they wish.
- d) In all decisions, an understanding of the Lord's will should be sought through unity of heart and mind regarding the biblical teaching relevant to the issue at hand. Where complete unanimity is not possible or necessary, decisions shall be carried by a two-thirds majority of voting delegates—unless a different proportion is specified in this Constitution for the particular issue.
- e) The chairman of the Steering Committee shall preside at the ABM.

6.3 **Steering Committee.** For the sake of spiritual leadership and continuity, the Association will have a Steering Committee (SC).

- a) The SC will consist of five members (or more, if the ABM so decides), elected from officers of member churches, from the church delegates present at the ABM, or from the associate members. All members of the SC must subscribe to the Association's Confession of Faith and Core Values. It should be borne in mind that the SC's function is not to perpetuate an institution but to facilitate co-

- operation amongst local churches in the work of God's kingdom.
- b) The Co-ordinator of the Association (as provided for in §6.8)—if such an official exists—will be an *ex officio* member of the SC, but may not be its chairman.
 - c) Nominations for the SC may be made by any member church and must be seconded by another member church. Written nominations must be received by the SC at least six weeks prior to the ABM; member churches must be notified of these nominations at least four weeks prior to the ABM.
 - d) Members of the SC will be elected from the nominees by the ABM. They will serve for a term of not more than two years, with approximately half the members retiring at each ABM. Retiring members of the SC will be eligible for re-election.
 - e) After each ABM, the SC will appoint its own chairman, secretary and any other portfolio that may be necessary. No person may serve as chairman for more than two consecutive years.
 - f) The function of the SC will be to execute the decisions of the ABM, to provide spiritual leadership, and to co-ordinate the affairs and activities of the Association.
 - g) The SC will meet three times per year (or more if required).
 - h) The SC normally takes decisions by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, wider counsel should be sought.
- i) The SC has the right to co-opt, should one or more members need to step down. A co-opted member would step down at the next ABM.
- 6.4 **Activities.** In order to further its aims, the Association may engage in a variety of activities such as:
- a) conferences;
 - b) mutual teaching and edification through preaching, literature, media, personal visits, etc.;
 - c) joint projects in mission, training and care for the needy;
 - d) church planting;
 - e) publication of information via a web site, membership directories, etc.;
 - f) other activities for the propagation of the true gospel.
 - g) owning assets, which the steering committee will be responsible to administer.
- 6.5 **Execution of joint projects.** Joint projects should be executed in such a way as to 1) promote genuine co-operation and joint action in the Association; 2) respect the autonomy of the local church; 3) respect our mutual commitment to one another in the extension of God's kingdom; 4) facilitate the efficient and effective execution of projects within biblical parameters for church structures and activities.
- a) Where possible and appropriate, member churches may, on behalf of the Association, take responsibility for joint projects decided upon by the Association.
 - b) The ABM or SC may appoint committees in order to facilitate the activities of the Association. Where the SC has appointed a

committee, that appointment must be ratified at the following ABM.

6.6 Church Planting. Church planting is one of the most essential tasks in the extension of God's kingdom. Therefore, the Association wishes to promote the orderly establishment of biblical local churches.

- a) Church planting should be conducted under the guidance and authority of a biblical local church which has its own established eldership.
- b) Before planting a new church, member churches of Sola 5 should consult with neighbouring member churches in order to promote trust and co-operation.
- c) Oversight of a new work should continue until the daughter church is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. This is the appropriate stage for the new church to seek membership of Sola 5 in its own right.

6.7 Recommended teaching elders. The Association will maintain a list of recommended teaching elders.

- a) In order to for a man's name to be placed on this list he should be recommended to the Association by a biblical local church (preferably a member church of Sola 5). The candidate will then be interviewed by a committee appointed for the purpose. If he is recognized by the committee to have the convictions, knowledge, gifts, manner of life, and calling necessary for exercising the office of teaching elder, his name shall be

placed on the list of recommended teaching elders—subject to the ratification of the ABM.

- b) In view of the fact that teaching elders have a tremendous influence on their churches (for good or bad), the aim of this list is to assist local churches in finding men who are divinely called and equipped—and who will thus be a blessing in the church. The list does not in any way prescribe to the churches. Recording a man's name on the list should not be confused with ordination, which is the appointment of a man to actual office in a local church.
- c) Men who have been recognized to have the gifts and graces necessary for teaching elders, but have not yet been ordained to ministry in a local church, shall be regarded as Candidates for ministry. The committee may, in the interests of love, concern and wisdom, recommend that a Candidate undergo a period of internship in an existing local church with an experienced teaching elder (pastor).
- d) The Association recognizes the need for mutual encouragement and accountability amongst pastors, as well as the particular need for inexperienced pastors to receive guidance and support.
- e) If a recommended teaching elder ceases to meet the biblical requirements for office, the Association may, on the recommendation of the committee, remove his name from the list of recommended teaching elders. Due consideration must always

be given to the weightiness of this matter in relation to the glory of God, the witness of his church and the reputation of the person concerned.

- f) The name of a recommended teaching elder who no longer holds office in a local church or other similar ministry will be retained on the list for a period of twelve months (or longer, at the discretion of the committee), after which it will be removed.
- 6.8 **Officials and assistants.** The Association may appoint officials or assistants on a part-time or full-time basis. When appointing such officials or assistants—as at all other times—it should be borne in mind that the aim of the Association is not to create an institution with authority over the churches, but to facilitate their co-operation for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.
- 6.9 **Cases of difficulty or difference.** The churches of the Association shall seek to assist each other in cases of difficulty or difference which threaten the peace of one or more churches. The guiding principle for these situations is expressed in §7.6 of the Confession of Faith.
- a) When involved in cases of difficulty or difference, member churches are encouraged to take the initiative in calling for the assistance of sister churches, especially those in membership with Sola 5.
 - b) If necessary, the Steering Committee may also take the initiative by organizing the appointment of a church council as envisaged in §7.6 of the Confession of Faith. This council will seek to effect reconciliation consistent with the truth of God’s Word. It shall provide counsel and publish its findings in an appropriate and sensitive way.
- c) While accepting the autonomy of the local church, member churches also humbly recognize their weakness and proneness to sin. They and their members are therefore willing to receive biblical counsel and admonishment.
- 6.10 **Mutual reception of church members.** The churches of the Association shall seek to co-operate with and assist other biblical churches—especially those belonging to Sola 5—in matters relating to membership and church discipline.
- a) Before receiving a person into church membership or open fellowship, member churches of Sola 5 should contact the elders of the applicant’s previous church. This is particularly important if the previous church is also a member church of Sola 5.
 - b) No member church of Sola 5 should receive into church membership or open fellowship persons who are under the discipline of another biblical church. If any differences exist between the two churches regarding the validity of such discipline, a concerted effort should be made to resolve them.

7 AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

7.1 This Constitution (with the exception of section 3) may be amended by a three-quarters (75%) majority of the delegates representing member churches at the ABM. Section 3 may not be amended at all.

7.2 Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee at least ninety days before the ABM; member churches must be notified of such proposals at least sixty days before the ABM.