

Quest Constitution

Approved at SGM 10/07/98, amended 16/07/00

DEFINITION

Throughout this Constitution, a *year*, except where qualified as a *calendar year*, shall be understood as the period between one Annual General Meeting and the next.

1 NAME AND PURPOSE

- (a) The association shall be known as Quest.
- (b) Its purpose is to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ so as to sustain and increase Christian belief among homosexual men and women by:
 - (i) associating lay men and women who are seeking ways of reconciling the full practice of their Catholic faith with the full expression of their homosexual natures in loving Christian relationships, and providing opportunities for them to meet together for worship, discussion and study;
 - (ii) establishing and extending a dialogue between homosexual Catholics and members of the clergy through which the insights and experiences of each may gradually be interwoven and so achieve better mutual understanding both of the moral teachings of the Church and of the characteristics of its homosexual members;
 - (iii) seeking wider opportunities, in the Catholic press and elsewhere, to promote fuller and more public discussion of the spiritual, moral, psychological and physiological issues involved; and
 - (iv) providing a point of contact for any homosexual Catholic in need of reassurance and support, so that he or she may both gain from and contribute to the purpose of Quest.

2 MEMBERSHIP

- (a) Membership shall be open to anyone who supports the purpose of Quest, upon payment of an annual subscription, due on a date to be determined by the Committee, the amount of which shall be determined at the Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting.
- (b) Members who have paid or renewed their subscription shall be entitled to receive a copy of Quest national publications and to attend all general meetings of Quest.
- (c) No member shall be expelled from the association unless by a resolution of the Committee carried by a two-thirds majority of its total membership. A member so expelled shall have the right of appeal to a Special General Meeting, whose decision shall be final.

3 THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- (a) An Annual General Meeting shall be held in each calendar year. At least sixty days beforehand, the Committee shall send to each member a preliminary notice of the meeting. If a member wishes to bring forward any business at this meeting, he or she shall give notice to the Secretary in writing of such intention at least forty-two days before the date of the meeting; providing that any two members may respectively propose and second in writing an emergency motion at any time before the beginning of business at the meeting.
- (b) At least fourteen days before the Annual General Meeting, the Committee shall send to each member a notice stating the place, time and agenda of the meeting. Such notice shall include in full any motions or constitutional amendments that may have been submitted.
- (c) The agenda of the Annual General Meeting shall include:
 - (i) reports from the Chair and the Secretary of the work of the Committee during the previous year;
 - (ii) a report from the Treasurer of the finances of the group during the previous year;
 - (iii) election of a Committee.
- (d) If any emergency motion shall have been submitted, then the first item of business shall be to decide whether the motion be added to the agenda, the proposer or seconder being required to show to the satisfaction of the meeting, first, that the normal forty-two days' notice could not have been given of this motion and, second, that it would be to the detriment of the Association if the motion were left undecided until a subsequent General Meeting. If the emergency motion be added to the agenda of the Annual General Meeting, then it shall lie within the discretion of the chair to decide at what stage of the business it shall be taken.

4 SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS

- (a) A Special General Meeting shall be called on the requisition in writing of at least twenty-five members, within the calendar month following that in which their requisition is received by the Secretary. If more than one requisition shall have been received, the Committee may call a single meeting for which the business brought forward in the several requisitions shall comprise the agenda; provided that the order of items on the agenda shall be that in which the requisitions were received.
- (b) The Committee may call a Special General Meeting, and shall do so upon appeal in writing, and within one month of such appeal, by a member expelled from the association by the Committee in accordance with the provisions of Title 2, §(c).
- (c) At least fourteen days before a Special General Meeting, the Committee shall send to each member a notice stating the place, time and agenda of the meeting. Such notice shall include in full any motions or constitutional amendments that may have been submitted.
- (d) A Special General Meeting, once called, may not be cancelled; provided that the Committee may, for a serious reason, postpone it to a specified date not more

than one month later than the original date. In this event, every member shall be informed at least two weeks beforehand of the new date, place and time.

(e) The business that may be transacted at a Special General Meeting shall be limited to that of which intimation has been given in the notice convening the meeting, and no "Any Other Business" item may be included.

(f) The Chair shall take the chair at a Special General Meeting or, in his or her absence, the Deputy Chair; provided that, notwithstanding the provisions of §(e) of this Title, a member may propose as the first item of business that another member of the association be elected to take the chair.

5 THE COMMITTEE

(a) There shall be a Standing Committee of the association consisting of four officers (Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) together with not more than six other elected members. Every officer shall be a Catholic neither in Holy Orders nor a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life, as defined in the Code of Canon Law of 1983. Not more than two members of the committee may be in Holy Orders or members of an Institute of Consecrated Life. Not more than two members of the Committee may be Christians who are not Catholics.

(b) The Chair shall:

- (i) keep under review all Quest activities and ensure that they conform to the association's purpose;
- (ii) co-operate closely with the other officers regarding constitutional and policy matters and report to the Committee any action taken;
- (iii) normally take the chair at Committee meetings and General Meetings;
- (iv) be responsible for making public statements on behalf of Quest, and report any such action to the committee.

(c) The Deputy Chair shall:

- (i) act for the Chair in the latter's absence or in case of incapacity;
- (ii) perform any duties delegated to him or her by the Chair.

(d) The Secretary shall:

- (i) convene all meetings of the Committee, keep minutes of all General Meetings and Committee meetings, and issue all notices and keep the membership informed, through the appropriate Quest national publications, of the general proceedings, activities and decisions of the Committee;
- (ii) receive all correspondence addressed to Quest and communicate it to the Committee or the appropriate member thereof;
- (iii) keep a register of members in good standing, process applications for membership and advise convenors of local groups of new members in their area and changes in members' details;
- (iv) ensure that Quest complies with the Data Protection Act;
- (v) be responsible for distribution of Quest national publications; providing that arrangements for distribution may be delegated, with the approval of the committee.

- (e) The Treasurer shall:
 - (i) be responsible for the financial assets of the association, for receipts and payments on its behalf, and for keeping accounts, including such as are required by the Inland Revenue and the Charities Commission;
 - (ii) inform members of when their subscriptions are due;
 - (iii) submit an annual report and such other documentation as is required by the Charity Commission.
- (f) It shall be the duty of the committee:
 - (i) to meet regularly, at least four times in the year, with not more than four months elapsing between any two meetings;
 - (ii) to review, at its first meeting, any standing orders, job descriptions and other arrangements, appointments or procedures approved by previous committees and either confirm, terminate or amend them;
 - (iii) to arrange for General Meetings of the association;
 - (iv) to ensure that all resolutions of General Meetings are communicated to the proper persons, or otherwise duly enacted;
 - (v) to be responsible for Quest's national services;
 - (vi) to approve the minutes of all Committee meetings;
 - (vii) to appoint an examiner, who has not been a member of the Committee during the year in Question, to audit the association's accounts for the Annual General Meeting;
 - (viii) to submit such reports and information to the Inland Revenue and Charities Commission as they may require;
 - (ix) to appoint members to other duties as may be expedient for better consideration and despatch of business.
- (g) The committee may:
 - (i) draw up standing orders for the better conduct of its business;
 - (ii) appoint *ad hoc* sub-committees and working parties with specific terms of reference, which shall report to the Committee;
 - (iii) appoint individual members of Quest to perform specified functions;
 - (iv) make such regulations concerning local groups as it deems necessary, subject to the provisions of Title 8, §(a);
 - (v) set up trust funds as it deems appropriate.
- (h) Three members, one of whom shall be an officer, shall form a quorum for Committee meetings.
 - (i) The dates and places of Committee meetings shall be published to members of the association. Convenors of recognized Quest groups may attend committee meetings; other members of the association may attend at the discretion of the chair.
 - (j) Committee members may be paid all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by them in attending and returning from meetings of the Committee or Special General Meetings or in connection with the business of Quest. The Committee may, at its discretion, extend this provision to any other person.

6 ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE

- (a) Only members of the association shall be eligible for election, appointment, co-option to or membership of the Committee.
- (b) The tenure of office of members of the Committee shall be one year.
- (c) Every candidate for membership of the Committee shall be nominated by two other members of the association, named as proposer and seconder respectively. No member of the association may nominate more than two candidates. Nominations shall be for Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer or for ordinary membership of the Committee.
- (d) Nominations in writing, signed by the nominators, shall be sent to the Secretary at least forty-two days before the election. The written consent of the nominee shall be obtained beforehand.
- (e) The Committee shall, in the final notice convening the Annual General Meeting, publish a list of nominees and their nominators.
- (f) If more than one member be nominated for Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, election shall be by secret postal ballot, by single transferable vote. If just one member be nominated, those members in favour of his or her election shall be asked to indicate by a show of hands, and he or she shall be deemed elected if they be a majority of the members present. If either no member be nominated for or no member be elected to any of these four offices, the Committee shall, at its first or second meeting, appoint one of its members thereto.
- (g) If more than six members be nominated for ordinary membership of the Committee, votes shall be cast for each member nominated, by secret postal ballot and by multiple transferable vote, each member being able to vote for at most six candidates. The six candidates receiving the greatest number of votes shall be deemed elected; provided that, if either more than two candidates either in Holy Orders or being members of an Institute of Consecrated Life, or more than two candidates being Christians who are not Catholics, would thereby be elected, only the two candidates in each case receiving the greatest number of votes shall be deemed elected and the votes cast for the remainder shall be re-allocated in accordance with the preferences expressed by the voters on their ballot papers.
- (h) If fewer than seven members be nominated for ordinary membership of the Committee, votes shall be cast severally for each member nominated, by show of hands. Each candidate who shall receive a majority of the votes of those members present shall be deemed elected.
- (i) When a postal ballot is held, each candidate may submit a statement, of not more than three hundred words, which shall be sent to members with their ballot papers.
- (j) In the event of a tie in any election under §§(f), (g) or (h) of this Title, the chair of the Annual General Meeting shall have an additional (casting) vote.
- (k) Membership of the Committee shall be vacated by any of its members who:
 - (i) resigns his or her office in writing to the Secretary; or
 - (ii) is prohibited by law from serving as the trustee of a charity; or

- (iii) is absent from three successive meetings of the Committee without special leave of absence from the Committee and it passes a resolution that the member has by reason of such absence vacated office; provided that any such member shall first be given an opportunity to make representation to the Committee; or
- (iv) becomes incapable, in the opinion of the Committee, on medical or psychological grounds of carrying out the duties of a Committee member; or
- (v) is removed from office by resolution of a General Meeting; or
- (vi) ceases to be a member of Quest.

(l) Any vacancy on the Committee arising from death, resignation or otherwise may be filled by appointment of the Committee from among the members of the association until the next Annual General Meeting; provided that, if the office of Chair falls vacant, it shall be assumed by the Deputy Chair until the next Annual General Meeting.

(m) The Committee may co-opt not more than three members of the association to exercise specified functions and shall determine the voting rights and periods of service of such persons.

7 PROCEDURE IN GENERAL MEETINGS

(a) At any General Meeting of the association the adjournment of the meeting may be proposed at any time from the chair. The motion shall be put forthwith and, if it be carried, the meeting shall be adjourned so soon as a resolution proposing a time for re-convening has been carried; providing that the meeting may be adjourned indefinitely.

(b) No discussion shall take place, or vote be taken, upon any proposition or amendment until it shall have been moved by one member and seconded by another. The mover of a proposition or amendment shall always have a right of reply at the close of the debate thereon.

(c) If any two members of the association give notice that one wishes to move and the other to second more than one proposition at a general meeting of the group, they may, at the discretion of the chair, move and second such propositions simultaneously, and the subsequent debate shall be upon all the propositions so moved. But if any subsequent amendment to any such proposition be moved and seconded, and the mover and seconder of the original proposition do not accept the amendment, then the debate shall forthwith be restricted to the amended proposition, and only when a vote upon it has been taken shall the debate upon the propositions remaining be resumed. When more than one proposition be moved simultaneously, the mover shall have the right of reply only once, to the debate upon the propositions taken together. Each proposition shall nevertheless be voted upon separately.

(d) Every vote in a General Meeting shall be taken immediately after the close of debate, if any, upon the proposition. Every Question shall be settled by a simple majority of those present and voting, with the chair having a second (or casting) vote in the case of a tie; provided that a two-thirds majority of those present and voting shall be required for any amendment of, addition to or deletion from this

constitution and for the removal of a member of the Committee. No alteration shall be made to Title 1, §(b) or to this paragraph without the consent of the Charity Commission and no alteration to this Constitution shall be made which would have the effect of causing Quest to cease to be a registered charity.

(e) Any change to this constitution enacted under the provisions of §(d) shall be subject to ratification by a simple majority of members voting in a secret postal ballot, which shall be held within ninety days of the meeting at which the change was enacted. Each change separately voted upon in the general meeting shall be separately proposed for ratification. The proposer of the change may submit a statement of not more than five hundred words giving the reasons for the change and, if the change was contested at the meeting, the committee shall obtain a corresponding statement from the appropriate member. These statements shall accompany the ballot papers. No change shall be put into practice until it has been ratified.

(f) No resolution of a General Meeting shall be rescinded or varied unless notice of such proposed alteration shall have been given in the notice convening the meeting at which the change is proposed.

(g) No ballot of members of the association, save as provided elsewhere in this Constitution, may be taken without authorization by a General Meeting, nor may the result of a ballot be deemed to override any resolution carried at a General Meeting, except as provided in §(e) above, unless the meeting authorising the ballot shall have so decided.

(h) Twenty-five members, or twenty percent, of the total membership, whichever is the less, shall form a quorum for General Meetings. No business that is not cited in the agenda shall be taken unless two thirds of the members present agree that it shall be taken.

(i) If the meeting be inquorate, it shall nevertheless discuss the agenda and, where appropriate, vote thereon, but the final decision upon each item of business shall rest with the Committee, excepting only election of Committee members, which shall be deferred until the next General Meeting of the association which is quorate.

(j) General Meetings may instruct the Committee to appoint ad hoc committees and working parties. The Committee shall appoint one of its members as an ex officio member of each such committee or working party.

8 LOCAL AND OTHER RECOGNIZED GROUPS

(a) Individual members may form themselves into a group, by reason of geographical proximity, similar interests etc, and apply to the Committee for formal recognition. Such groups shall be subject to the following conditions:

(i) They must be committed to the purpose of Quest as stated in Title 1, §(b) of this Constitution, and must encourage their members to join Quest;

(ii) They must be open to anyone who is eligible to be a member of Quest; provided that they may exclude anyone whose behaviour is liable to be prejudicial to the good conduct of the group's business;

- (iii) Each group must have a Convenor who has been a member of Quest for at least one year, and agrees to his or her name and telephone number, or that of a contact, being given in Quest publications, and the group must contain at least two other members of Quest. So soon as a group elects or appoints a new Convenor or contact, the Secretary of Quest shall be informed and the approval of the Committee be sought;
- (iv) Members of Quest shall be notified of the name and telephone number of the Convenor or contact of any local group within whose area they may reside;
- (v) The group may use the name of Quest, e.g. 'Quest Blankshire', and its officers may use Quest headed writing-paper; provided that the paper shall always bear the following text: 'Quest Blankshire (or whatever may be the name of the group) is an independent local group recognized by Quest, and is not itself a registered charity';
- (vi) A copy of each programme, newsletter or programme issued by the group shall be sent to the Secretary of Quest or other member of the Committee designated by it for this purpose. In addition, each Convenor or contact must furnish an annual report of the activities of the group to the Secretary of Quest;
- (vii) The provisions of Title 9 of this Constitution shall apply to the names and addresses of members of the group and of any other Quest members with which they may be provided;
- (viii) Each group shall be responsible for its own finances and must be self-supporting. It may own and operate a bank or building society account in its own name. It shall keep financial records, which shall be open to inspection either by its members or by the committee of Quest. Quest does not claim ownership of any of its assets and does not accept responsibility for any of its liabilities. When appealing for funds, whether from its own members or other people, and whether by way of levy, contribution, fees or donation, it shall make clear that the appeal is for group funds and not for Quest, in the following terms: 'This levy/contribution/fee/donation goes to independent local group funds; it does not go to Quest and it does not make you a member of Quest'.

- (b) The Committee may at any time withdraw recognition of a previously recognized group and the group itself may also withdraw from recognized status. In either case, the group must forthwith cease to use the name of Quest.
- (c) The Committee shall provide the following services to recognized groups:
 - (i) publicity, through Quest publications and in other ways;
 - (ii) details of Quest members in the area served by the group;
 - (iii) headed writing-paper, for which a charge may be made;
 - (iv) support and help as needed from the Committee and any member thereof who may be given responsibility for liaison with local groups.

9 CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information held now or at any time in the future by Quest or by any person acting on behalf of Quest which includes names, addresses or other personal details of individuals who are or who have been at any time members of Quest or members of any affiliated organization, and which have been acquired by the association as a result of that individual's membership of the association or of an affiliated organization, shall be treated as having been acquired for the purpose of carrying on the work of Quest and shall be held subject to an implied undertaking to hold it in confidence.

10 DISSOLUTION

- (a) The association shall be dissolved if it shall be so decided by a general meeting, or if the number of members of the association shall fall below ten.
- (b) In the event of the dissolution of the association, after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, the assets remaining shall not be distributed amongst the members of the association, but shall be transferred in the furtherance of its objects to some other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to or compatible with any of the objects of the association as may be determined by a General Meeting at the time of or prior to the dissolution of the association.