

CHURCH RULES & CONSTITUTION



Pier Avenue Baptist Church

Clacton-on-Sea, Essex

Registered Charity No. 1135764

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is divided into four parts:

- The **first** is a guide to the responsibility of Church Members reminding us of our personal responsibility and the way we should live, both in terms of witness and service and in being obedient to the Lord's will.
- The **second** part is the Articles of Faith of the Church which reminds us of the biblical basis of our beliefs.
- The **third** part is the actual Church Rules which refer to the conduct of our meetings, the election of Officers, calling of a Minister etc.
- The **fourth** part is the Church Constitution as accepted by the Charity Commission.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS

1. To seek to discover and obey Christ's will in every part of our lives.
2. To endeavour with Christ's help, to live lives which are true to the Christian principles of honesty, purity, and love.
3. To be concerned to serve others in whatever way Christian love requires of us, and to witness to them by word and deed so that they too may be brought to faith in Christ.
4. To spend some time each day in prayer and Bible reading.
5. To give first importance each Sunday to worship at Church; to join regularly in the observance of the Lord's Supper; to join whenever possible with others in prayer and study of God's word.
6. To take some part in the work of the Church, according to our calling, gifts, and opportunities.
7. To play our part in the government and administration of our Church, being present, whenever possible, at Church meetings and being loyal to Church decisions.
8. To do all we can to encourage love and fellowship among members of our Church and congregation, and all Christians everywhere.
9. To set aside and give regularly, for the work of Christ's kingdom in our Church, the money we believe God would have us give.
10. To do all we can to help the work of mission at home and overseas.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

This Church is witness to:

1. The Divine Authority, Inspiration and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures and the need for the Holy Spirit's leading in order to attain a true and spiritual understanding of them. (*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21*)
2. The Unity of the Godhead and the Divine co-equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13-14*)
3. The reality of sin, the need of repentance toward God and the new birth by Holy Spirit and the justification of the sinner solely by faith through the atoning merits of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Romans 3:23, 5:12, 8:7, 1 Corinthians 2:14*)
4. The essential deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Incarnation through a Virgin Birth, His real and perfect manhood, His substitutionary death for sinners, His Resurrection His Ascension, His present intercession for His people at the right hand of God the Father, His future personal return.
5. The Resurrection of the body, the judgement of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 15:20-22, Revelation 20:11-15*)
6. The Ordinances of Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper (*Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41-42, Luke 22:14-20*)

CHURCH RULES

1. THE CHURCH

- a. The Church shall be known as Pier Avenue Baptist Church, Clacton on Sea, Essex. It shall be affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and shall consist of those individuals who have become members as described in Section 2. Membership:
- b. Purpose: The principal purpose of the Church shall be to advance the Christian faith.
- c. Charity Status: The Church is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission.
- d. Local Managing Trustees: These are the Minister(s), Church Secretary, Church Treasurer, Elders and Deacons as appointed by the Church from time to time.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- a. The membership of the Church shall consist of those who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have been baptised in the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- b. A candidate for Membership shall be visited by two members appointed by the Diaconate to confirm his or her eligibility for Church Membership and if the report be satisfactory, the candidate will be received by election at the next Church Business Meeting and shall receive the right hand of fellowship at the next Communion service at which the new member can be present. The date of effective Church Membership shall be from the Church Business Meeting.
- c. Members may be admitted to fellowship by transfer from other Churches if they have complied with Rule (a).

3. ORDINANCES

- a. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper will normally be observed on the first Sunday of each month, to which all Christian believers are invited.
- b. The Ordinance of Believers' Baptism shall be administered as required. Admission to Baptism shall be at the discretion of the Minister and Deacons. Members of other Communion who desire Believers' Baptism shall also be baptised at the discretion of the Minister and Deacons.

4. CHURCH OFFICERS

The Minister

- a. The Minister(s) shall be eligible for appointment according to the Rules and Preface above and will maintain an evangelical and Bible based ministry and the Ordinance of Believers' Baptism. He or she will normally be an accredited or probationer Minister recognised by the Baptist Union.
- b. The call to the Pastorate shall be decided upon at a Special Church Meeting duly convened for this purpose. The voting will be by secret ballot and at least two-thirds of the votes cast must be in favour of the appointment.
- c. The stipend and other conditions of service shall not be less than the minimum level recommended by the Baptist Union. Three months' notice in writing will be given on either side to terminate the Pastorate.

The Diaconate

- a. The Deacons shall be elected to their office by the Church and must have been members of the Church for six calendar months. They shall be elected by secret ballot and shall not be more than twelve in number.
- b. Nominations for the Diaconate shall be invited on the first three Sundays of October and handed to the Church Secretary, having been proposed and seconded by members. The list of nominations will be placed on the Church notice board at least 14 days prior to the date of election, which will be held at the November Church Meeting.

- c. Any church member unable to attend the election due to sickness, holiday or other good reason may apply to the Church Secretary for a 'postal voting paper' not later than fourteen days before the date of the election. This postal vote must be returned in the special envelope provided, to the Church Secretary at least three days before the election date.
- d. The successful candidates will be those receiving the highest number of votes, which must be not less than two thirds of the votes cast. Each member shall be entitled to cast a number of votes not exceeding the number of vacancies. Deacons shall be elected to serve for three years and may stand for re-election. In the event of a vacancy occurring during the year due to resignation, death etc. the next Church Meeting shall decide whether a by-election shall be held or the vacancy held until the next normal date for election. In any case, the person so elected will serve for the remaining period, which has been left vacant. If vacancies are not filled after the ballot by reason of a required percentage vote not having been obtained, the vacancy or vacancies will remain unfilled until the next normal election.
- e. **Life Deacons** – On retiring from the Diaconate after long and faithful service and upon the recommendation of the Diaconate, the Church may appoint such a person as a Life Deacon. Life Deacons are entitled to attend and take part in Deacons Meetings but are not eligible to vote.
- f. **Elders** – Upon the recommendation of the minister and Deacons and in order to help and to develop the spiritual work of the Church, and in close association with the Minister, Elders may be appointed from the Membership. They will be available to help in teaching, counselling, preaching or any other way and will be chosen with this in mind. The initial appointment will be by ballot with a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The appointment will be confirmed annually at the Annual Church Meeting and every three years a ballot will be held to confirm the appointment. If the person elected is not a

Deacon, they will be eligible to attend, take part and vote in Deacons Meetings.

- g. **Executive Officers** – Nominations for the offices of Secretary & Treasurer will be made by the Deacons from among the members of the Diaconate and recommended to the Church Meeting. These appointments will be confirmed at the next Church Meeting and thereafter confirmed together with the other appointments at the Annual Church Meeting.

Quorum – This shall be a minimum of half of the elected Deacons.

5. CHURCH MEETINGS

- a. The Church shall meet for Christian Fellowship and for the transaction of the business of the Church, normally bi-monthly.
- b. A Special Church Meeting may be called at the discretion of the Minister and a majority of the Deacons, or at the written request of ten members. Notice of such meeting shall be given at both services and the two preceding Sundays.
- c. The business shall be transacted under such rules as ordinarily govern the conduct of the public meetings.

6. GENERAL

- a. The Minister shall be ex-officio President of all Organisations and shall be invited to attend or send a deputy to all business meetings, both of the Church and its constituent Organisations.
- b. Meetings and services on Church premises shall be held with the permission of the Minister and Deacons, and upon such conditions as they may decide.
- c. The Appointment of all Church Officers and officers of all Organisations i.e., Leader, Secretary and Treasurer shall be confirmed annually at the Annual General Meeting and they must be Church Members.

- d. Treasurers of Organisations shall see that all accounts are properly kept and submitted to the Treasurer by the end of January for audit and inclusion in the Annual Church Reports.
- e. Reports from all Organisations must be given to the Church Secretary by the end of January for inclusion in the Annual Church Reports.

7. DISCIPLINE

The first sections of this booklet have indicated the type of life that we ought to lead as followers of Christ. Sadly, there are times when there may be a falling away, and in such Cases, the first concern is to encourage a return to fellowship and in every situation to show the love of Jesus. However, in certain circumstances, further measures may be thought necessary.

DIACONATE

Should a member of the Diaconate behave in such a way as to bring the Church, a fellow member of the Diaconate or the Church Fellowship, or the Name of Christ into disrepute, the remaining members of the Diaconate after prayerful discussion will have the power to suspend that person from membership of the Diaconate, and that decision will be taken to the next Church Meeting for ratification.

MEMBERSHIP

Should a member behave as outlined under the Diaconate heading above, then the Deacons will bring the matter to the Church Meeting, with a recommendation that the membership of that person shall be ended.

Should a member absent themselves from regular worship and the observance of the Lord's Supper, every effort will be made to find if there is an acceptable reason, and encouragement will be given to ensure his or her return. However, if the position continues over a considerable period and the Deacons do not feel there is any likelihood of a return to the Fellowship, then, after a suitable letter has been sent on behalf of the Church to that person by the Secretary, the Deacons will recommend to the Church Meeting that that person's membership will be ended.

8. ALTERATION OF RULES

The foregoing Rules, a copy of which shall be given to each member, may only be altered at a special meeting called for that purpose.

(Church Rules)

Adopted 20th April 1994

Amended 26th January 2011

Amended 17th March 2024

CONSTITUTION FOR PIER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH, CLACTON-ON-SEA

1. THE CHURCH AND ITS NAME

The Church means members of the charitable unincorporated association governed by this constitution and known as Pier Avenue Baptist Church (or other such name as shall subsequently be adopted by decision of the Church Members' Meeting and with the consent of the Charity Commission)

2. PURPOSE

The principal purpose of the Church is the advancement of the Christian faith according to the principles of the Baptist denomination. The Church may also advance education and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and/or other parts of the world.

3. BELIEFS

As a Member of the Baptist Union the Church subscribes to the Union's Declaration of Principle:

"That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.

That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried and rose again on the third day'.

That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world."

4. ACTIVITIES

- 4.1 In fulfilling the Purpose the Church will engage in a range of Activities either on its own or with others that will vary from time to time with Activities being initiated, expanded, or closed, as appropriate.
- 4.2 The Activities may include but are not restricted to:
- Regular public worship, prayer, Bible study, preaching and teaching.
 - Baptism, as defined in the Union's Declaration of Principle.
 - The Communion of the Lord's Supper which shall normally be observed at least once a month.
 - Evangelism and mission, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
 - The teaching, encouragement, welcome and inclusion of young people.
 - Nurture and growth of Christian disciples.
 - Education and training for Christian and community service.
 - Giving and encouraging pastoral care.
 - Supporting and encouraging charitable social action in the United Kingdom and abroad.
 - Encouraging relationships with and supporting Baptists and other Christians.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the appointment of persons to accept responsibility for any of the Activities, all individual, organisations, groups and committees operating within the life of the Church, and their leaders, shall be accountable to the Charity Trustees and also through any specific direction of the Church Members' Meeting.

5. AFFILIATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 5.1 The Church is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (Baptist Union) and the Eastern Baptist Association (Association)
- 5.2 The Church will normally promote, encourage, support, and advance the work of the Baptist Union, the Association and BMS World Mission through prayer, through financial contributions and, where appropriate, by making personnel available from the membership of the Church. When it is able the Church will also support local Baptist and ecumenical gatherings.

6. BELONGING TO THE CHURCH

- 6.1 The responsibilities of membership normally include:
- Attending worship and participating in Church Activities.
 - Personal prayer and bible study.
 - Participation at the Communion of the Lord's Supper as a privilege and a priority.
 - Helping the Church whenever possible by using gifts and abilities to advance the Purpose of the church through its Activities.
 - Attending and participating in Church Members' Meetings.
 - Giving regular financial support of the Church in proportion to personal resources and circumstances.
 - Upholding Christian values.
- 6.2 If there are differences that lead to difficulties between members of the Church (and it is recognised that these sometimes arise) each member should try to resolve the situation with gentleness and humility following Christian and Biblical principles. It may be necessary for another wise and experienced member of this Church (or if invited a member of a neighbouring Church or representative of the Association) to act as mediator or friend to those seeking to achieve reconciliation.

7. JOINING AND BECOMING A CHURCH MEMBER

- 7.1 Baptism by immersion upon personal profession of faith is the normal mode of entry in membership of a Baptist church.
- 7.2 The church shall apply the following Baptismal qualification for Church Membership:
Open membership so that persons seeking membership who have not been baptised in the manner described in the Union's Declaration of Principle may at the discretion of the church Member's Meeting be accepted for full membership based on their own public profession of faith.
- 7.3 Church Membership is open to those who:
- Accept the Beliefs of the Church.
 - Meet the Church's qualification on Baptism.
 - Commit themselves to serving Christ within the Church and beyond.
 - Abide by the decisions of the Church Members' Meeting.
 - Acknowledge their responsibilities as Church Members.
 - Have their membership application accepted by the Church Members' Meeting.
- 7.4 A person wishing to become a Church Member shall apply in a manner determined by the Church Members' Meeting.
- 7.5 The Church Members' Meeting will consider and vote on the application for membership and if accepted the new member will normally be welcomed publicly

8. THE MEMBERSHIP LIST

- 8.1 A list of the current Church Members shall be maintained by the Charity Trustees incorporating routine changes because of additions or deletions arising through death, transfer to another church, resignation, or a resolution by Church Members' Meeting.
- 8.2 Routine changes to the membership list shall be reported at the next convenient Church Members' Meeting.
- 8.3 In order to keep the membership list up to date the membership list shall be reviewed at least once every three years when the Church Members' Meeting may resolve to make any appropriate deletions.
- 8.4 At any time, in exceptional circumstances where the conduct of a Member is considered to be contrary to the Purpose and Beliefs of the Church and/or disruptive to the relationship between Members then the Charity Trustees may recommend to a Church Members' Meeting that the membership of that person be reviewed. The Church Members may, after considering the facts, terminate the membership of that person. The Church Member shall be allowed to hear what is said at the Church Members' Meeting, to correct any errors of fact and offer an explanation of the circumstances or reasons for their actions before withdrawing from the meeting so that the Church Members' Meeting may prayerfully and carefully consider whether they should resolve to remove that person's name from the list of Members.

9. CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETING

- 9.1 Church Members shall meet in a Church Members' Meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and under the Lordship of Christ to discern the mind of God in the affairs of the church.
- 9.2 The Church Members' Meeting shall have reserved authority in the appointment and removal of a Minister, the appointment and removal of Charity Trustees, decisions related to church property including (without limitation) any purchase, sale, lease, mortgage, or redevelopment of property, the administration of the membership list, and the closure of the Church.
- 9.3 Any decision taken under 9.2 in relation to property must comply with the requirements of statute law and any specific property trusts under which the land and buildings are used and occupied by the church.

10. ORDINARY & SPECIAL CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- 10.1 There are two types of formal Church Members' Meetings, Ordinary Church Members' Meetings and Special Church Members' Meetings.
- 10.2 Ordinary Church Members' Meetings shall be held at regular intervals on not less than four occasions in any calendar year and shall be an opportunity to consider and review routine matters associated with the life of the Church including issues related to church membership, the appointment and dismissal of the Charity Trustees, the approval of the budget, with opportunities for considering proposals from the Charity Trustees or other Church Members for the development of the Church and the advancement of its Purpose through its Activities.
- 10.3 One Ordinary Church Members' Meeting each year shall include the Annual Church Members' Meeting for the Church Members to receive annual account and reports, to appoint Auditors or Independent Examiners, and to consider proposals for the strategy and vision of the church in the coming year, with other appropriate matters.
- 10.4 A Special Church Members' Meeting shall be convened when necessary to consider the appointment or dismissal of a minister, matters relating to the purchase, sale, lease, mortgage or redevelopment of church property, the closure of the church, or matters considered by the Charity Trustees to be of sufficient importance to require the calling of a Special Members' Meeting.

11. CALLING CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- 11.1 Church Members' Meetings shall be convened by the Charity Trustees so as to be convenient for as many Church Members as is reasonable.
- 11.2 An Ordinary Church Members' Meeting shall be properly convened if as a minimum requirement the date, time and place for the meeting are publicised at the worship service or services on the previous Sunday (or other regular weekly meeting time when the Church gathers together) with an indication (if possible) of the matters to be considered.
- 11.3 A Special Church Members' Meeting shall be properly convened if as a minimum requirement the date, time and place for the meeting are publicised with as full an indication of the matters to be considered as possible, at the public worship service or services on the two previous

Sundays (or other regular weekly meeting time when the Church gathers together).

- 11.4 Additional meetings whether Special or Ordinary shall be convened by the Charity Trustees as necessary but they shall have specific responsibility to convene a Special Church Members' Meeting as soon as possible upon the receipt of a written request for a meeting signed by at least one tenth of the church membership or twelve Church Members, whichever is the less.
- 11.5 Members, invited guests and, if publicly invited, those who normally attend church events may attend a Church Members' Meeting but only Members may vote.

12. THE CONDUCT OF CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- 12.1 Worship including prayer and the reading of Scripture shall be a key feature of the Church Members' Meeting. The discussion of any matters affecting the life and activities of the Church shall be set in this context with the intention that, so far as possible, practical issues are not perceived as being separate from the spiritual aspects of the Church.
- 12.2 A quorum of 20% of the total number of Church Members shall apply to Church Members' Meetings.
- 12.3 The Church Members' Meeting shall appoint a person (who may or may not be a Minister of the Church) to Chair the Church Members' Meetings.
- 12.4 A resolution passed at either an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting or a Special Church Members' Meeting shall not be rescinded within one year, unless notice of the resolution for rescission is given at the Church Members' Meeting prior to that at which there is to be a vote on the resolution to rescind.

13. VOTING

- 13.1 Members shall, so far as possible, seek consensus on all matters considered at a Church Members' Meeting.
- 13.2 For matters requiring a decision a vote shall be taken and the outcome of the vote recorded as the resolution of the Members.

- 13.3 Each Member shall have one vote which they may use at the Church Members' Meetings after hearing about the issues and any comments or questions raised by other Members in advance of the vote, and if there are Associate Members, they may vote at the Church Members' Meeting as agreed by the Church Members' Meetings.
- 13.4 No proxy votes shall be allowed and no postal votes shall be valid save that the Church Members' Meeting may authorise postal voting for the election of individuals to roles or responsibilities within the church (except for decisions relating to a Minister) where the names of those nominated are known in advance of the meeting. The process for collecting and counting postal votes shall be determined by the Church Members' Meeting.
- 13.5 If any matters requires a decision affecting or involving individuals and any embarrassment might arise by a public vote then a secret ballot shall be held if requested and agreed by the Church Members' Meeting.
- 13.6 If a secret ballot is to be held two persons will be appointed as scrutineers to the ballot to count the votes. The person chairing the Church Members' Meeting shall announce the outcome without necessarily revealing the number of votes.
- 13.7 Except for the Appointment of Charity Trustees referred to in clause 15.12 a resolution at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting shall be carried if supported by a majority of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.
- 13.8 If there is an equality of votes on any matter at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting the resolution will be considered rejected and the matter shall be referred back to the submitter for review and if appropriate resubmission to a subsequent meeting for consideration.
- 13.9 A resolution at a Special Church Members' Meeting shall be carried if supported by at least two thirds of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.
- 13.10 The Church Members' Meeting or Charity Trustees may want a higher measure of support for a particular resolution but a higher proportion of votes for a resolution shall not override the arrangements in clauses 13.7 and 13.9 unless, before the vote is taken, the Church Members' Meeting passes a further or enabling resolution referring to that particular resolution and specifying the proportion of votes necessary to pass it.

- 13.11 Although Members of any age may attend and participate in a Church Members' Meeting the minimum age for voting will be determined by the Church Members' Meeting.

14. MINUTES

- 14.1 The business conducted at Church Members' Meetings and, in particular, any decision of the Members shall be recorded in the Minutes for future reference.
- 14.2 The Minutes shall be written or printed and filed in a book or binder set aside for this purpose using materials of sufficient quality that they survive for many years and shall be kept in a safe place.
- 14.3 Each set of Minutes shall be approved by the Church Members attending the next Church Members' Meeting. They shall have the opportunity to review the Minutes and to correct any errors of fact before formal vote on the approval of the Minutes is taken. If the Minutes are approved the person chairing the Church Members' Meeting shall confirm the Members' acceptance of the Minutes by signing and dating them as a correct record of the preceding meeting.
- 14.4 The signed Minutes shall be conclusive evidence of the decisions taken at the Church Members' Meeting to which they relate.

15. THE APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 15.1 The statutory definition of Charity Trustees in Section 97(1) of the Charities Act 1993 is "persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity".
- 15.2 The Church Members' Meeting shall appoint Charity Trustees to be responsible for the governance of the church and where there is a Minister that person is a Charity Trustee because of their role and responsibilities. Subject to any specific or general directions of the Church Members' Meeting and the provision of 9.2 the control, management and administration of the Church shall be by the Charity Trustees, save that the Charity Trustees are not required to do anything that would cause them to be in breach of this Constitution or any trustee duty placed upon them as a result of this role.

- 15.3 No person may serve as a Charity Trustee if they are disqualified.
- 15.4 Charity Trustees shall with the possible exception of any newly appointed Minister be chosen from among the Church Members with the maximum number of Charity Trustees being agreed from time to time by the Church Members' Meeting.
- 15.5 In this Church it shall be the Minister(s) if any and:
- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Deacons | Elders |
| Secretary | Treasurer |
- who together are the Charity Trustees of the Church at the time of adoption of this Constitution or the registration of the Charity with the Charity Commission.
- 15.6 The Church Members' Meeting shall arrange for the appointment of a Church Secretary and Church Treasurer (or equivalents) who shall by the nature of their responsibilities be Charity Trustees.
- 15.7 Any person qualified to be a full member (rather than an Associate member) of the Church shall be eligible for election as a Charity Trustee (unless disqualified by statute).
- 15.8 A close family member (spouse, parent, child, sibling) of a serving Charity shall be eligible for appointment as a Charity Trustee.
- 15.9 Charity Trustees shall serve so long as they have the support of the Church Members' Meeting and (except for those in ministerial office) shall be actively appointed and reappointed at least once every three years.
- 15.10 Charity Trustees (except for those in ministerial office) shall be appointed for an initial three year term with the opportunity to be nominated for reappointment at the end of each three year term.
- 15.11 The appointment of Charity Trustees shall be undertaken by processes that are public, clear, and open, so that all Church Members are enabled to consider prayerfully who should be appointed as Charity Trustees. The process shall ensure that notice is given of any forthcoming election so that Church Members may freely nominate prospective Charity Trustees whose names shall be submitted (after they have indicated a willingness to be appointed) for decision to the Church Members with the intention of ensuring that those appointed have a sufficient level of support them.

15.12 In this Church:

- 15.12.1 Nominations for the role of Charity Trustee other than a Minister shall be made to the Church Secretary (or equivalent) not later than three Sundays (or other regular weekly meeting time when the Church gathers together) before the Ordinary Church Members' Meeting at which the election is to be held. Nominations must be submitted in writing with the supporting signature of two other Church Members and the consent of the candidate. No person may nominate more candidates than there are places vacant. Requests for nominations shall be made at all services on the two Sundays (or other regular weekly meeting time when the Church gathers together) immediately before that Sunday when nominations must cease.
- 15.12.2 Voting shall be by secret ballot at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting. Church Members shall be asked to vote for those candidates whom they believe could serve the church well as Charity Trustees. They shall vote for no more candidates than there are vacancies. The scrutineers shall report in writing and in confidence to the person chairing the Church Members' Meeting the number of votes cast for each candidate. The number of candidates, being not more than the number of vacancies, receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared to be elected provided that each candidate so declared shall have received votes from at least 66% of those members voting.
- 15.12.3 In cases of unavoidable absence Church Members may exercise a postal vote where this is permitted under clause 13.4 provided that votes are returned before the commencement of the Church Members' Meeting at which the election is to be held.
- 15.13 A technical defect in the appointment of a Charity Trustee of which the Charity Trustees were unaware at the time does not invalidate decisions taken by the Charity Trustees.
- 15.14 A Special Church Members' Meeting may rescind the appointment of any Charity Trustee (except for those in ministerial office) at any time.
- 15.15 Where a Special Church Members' Meeting is considering the dismissal of a Charity Trustee (except for those in ministerial office) the Charity Trustee shall be allowed to hear what is said to the Church Members' Meeting and to correct any errors of fact and offer any explanation of the circumstances or reasons for their actions before withdrawing so that the Church Members' Meeting may prayerfully and carefully consider whether the appointment should be terminated.

16. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 16.1 The Charity Trustees shall be responsible for the governance of the Church and the fulfilment of the Purpose through its Activities acting according to the will of God as discerned by the Church Members' Meeting and subject to any specific or general directions of the Church Members' Meeting in relation to the matters set out in clause 9.2.
- 16.2 The Charity Trustees should keep in an appropriate state of repair and insure to their full value against fire and other usual risks all the buildings of the charity (except those where the responsibility is of a third party where they shall use reasonable endeavours to ensure that the third party does so). They must ensure that suitable public liability and employer's liability insurance is in place.

17. PROCEEDINGS OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 17.1 Worship including prayer and the reading of Scripture shall be key features of any meeting of the Charity Trustees whose leadership and administration of the Church shall be characterised as much by mutual accountability, service and pastoral care, as strategic thinking and effective management.
- 17.2 The Charity Trustees shall determine when and how frequently they shall meet provided that they shall convene meetings of the whole group not less than once every two months.
- 17.3 The Charity Trustees shall determine a quorum for their full meetings that shall not be less than two persons or half of their number whichever is the greater number.
- 17.4 Notwithstanding the joint and several responsibilities of all the Charity Trustees and in addition to regular meetings of the whole group they may meet in such sub-groups as are necessary and convenient. Reports of such subgroup meetings must be made to the next full Charity Trustees Meeting.
- 17.5 For matters requiring a Decision the Charity trustees shall, so far as possible, seek consensus on all matters considered at their meetings but where this is not possible a vote shall be taken and the outcome recorded as the resolution of the Charity Trustees.
- 17.6 Each Charity Trustee shall have one vote to be exercised at the meeting.

- 17.7 Every issue may be determined by a simple majority of votes cast at a meeting of the Charity Trustees but if there is an equal of its votes on any matter the resolution will be considered rejected and the matter shall be referred back to the submitter for review and if appropriate resubmission to a subsequent meeting for consideration.
- 17.8 The charity Trustees shall always act in accordance with the provision of this Constitution and the general law.
- 17.9 Subject to clause 9.3 the Charity Trustees shall act in accordance with the specific directions of the Church Members' Meeting in relation to matters relating to Church property including any purchase, sale, lease, mortgage, or redevelopment of church property.
- 17.10 Minutes shall be prepared of the proceedings at the meetings of the Charity Trustees including any appointments, the names of those present, the decisions taken, and where appropriate the reasons for the decisions and the Charity Trustees shall decide from time to time whether all or part of these minutes shall be treated as confidential.
- 17.11 Charity Trustees shall respect the confidentiality of their meeting.

18. POWERS OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 18.1 The Charity Trustees shall have specific power subject to any general or specific directions of the Church Members' Meeting to apply for and accept grants and to provide security in respect of obligations under grant agreements.
- 18.2 For the avoidance of doubt the Charity Trustees shall have power to borrow money, receive grants, give guarantees and or security for loans, and to make grants or loans of money towards the advancement of the Purpose. In the event of a charge over land and/or buildings being required, this must be consistent with provisions in the trusts for the land and with statute law.
- 18.3 For the avoidance of doubt the Charity Trustees shall have power to make grants to other charities working elsewhere in the United Kingdom and/or other parts of the world.

19. APPLICATION OF INCOME AND CAPITAL

- 19.1 The Charity Trustees must use the income and may use the capital where trusts permit it to be spent to promote the Purpose provided that the Charity Trustees may apply an appropriate reserves policy in accordance with the general law.

20. REMUNERATION OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 20.1 With the exception only of a Minister or Ministers as authorised by clause 23, or a remuneration permitted under clause 20.2 no Charity Trustee (or any person, firm or company connected with the Charity Trustee) may be paid or receive any other direct or indirect benefit for being a Charity Trustee except the reimbursement of reasonable and proper expenses and other payments permitted by statute or specifically authorised by the Charity Commission.
- 20.2 Where it is proposed that a Charity Trustee (or person, firm, or company, connected with the Charity Trustee) is to be employed or receive remuneration or sell goods or services or any interest in land to the Church where this gains the approval of the Church Members' Meeting then this shall be permitted only if:
- The Charity Trustee or any person connected with the Trustee who may benefit directly or indirectly from the proposed remunerations declares an interest in the proposal before discussion on the matter begins.
 - Absents him or herself (or in the case of any connected persons themselves) from any part of any meeting at which the proposal is discussed and takes no part in any discussion of it and is not counted in determining whether any such meeting is quorate.
 - Does not vote on the proposal.
 - The remaining Charity Trustees who do not stand to receive the proposed benefit are satisfied that it is in the interest of the Church to contract with or employ that Charity Trustee (or connected person) rather than another independent person and must record the reason for their decision in the minutes.

- In reaching that decision the Charity Trustees must balance the advantage of contracting with or employing a Trustee against the disadvantage of doing so (especially the loss of the Trustee's services as a result of dealing with the Trustee's conflict of interest).
- The Charity Trustees authorising the proposed transaction comprise a majority of the Charity Trustees body and have not received any such benefit.

21. MINISTERS

- 21.1 The Church may have a Minister or more than one Minister or no Minister. Where a Minister is appointed, it is expected that they will become a Member of the Church.
- 21.2 A minister of this Church shall accept the Beliefs being the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle.
- 21.3 Where the Church has a Minister she or he shall be in relationship with the Baptist Union and the Association normally expressed by being on the Baptist Union's Register of Covenanted Persons Accredited for Ministry.
- 21.4 The Minister, whether or not they are on the Register of Persons Accredited for Ministry, shall be supportive of the Church's relationship with other Baptist Churches, the Association, and the Baptist Union.
- 21.5 The tasks fulfilled by Ministers will vary depending on the individual ability and gifting, but a Minister is normally expected to be involved in the Activities of the Church with an emphasis on the leading of worship and prayer, the teaching of the Christian faith and the pastoral care of individuals. The Minister shall work with the Church towards achieving its Purpose through its Activities.
- 21.6 Notwithstanding any legal status afforded to a Minister by statute the Church recognises that the Minister and the Church are in a Covenant relationship based on Christian love and trust and mutual accountability. A Minister shall be in a relationship of mutual accountability with the other Charity Trustees and also with the Church Members.

22. THE APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF MINISTERS

- 22.1 When the Church is seeking to appoint a Minister it will normally consult the appropriate staff within the Association before commencing any appointment process and follow, so far as practicable, the Baptist Union's procedures and recommended terms for the settlement of Ministers.
- 22.2 A Minister will be appointed or removed by a resolution of the Church Members at a Special Church Members' Meeting at any time.
- 22.3 Where a Special Church Members' Meeting is considering the dismissal of a Minister, the Minister shall be allowed to hear what is said to the Church Members' Meeting and to correct any errors of fact and offer any explanation of the circumstances or reasons for their actions before withdrawing so that the Church Members' Meeting may prayerfully and carefully consider whether the appointment should be terminated.
- 22.4 The Church and the Minister shall normally agree 'terms and conditions of appointment' including termination procedures based on the standard terms of appointment published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

23. THE REMUNERATION OF MINISTERS

- 23.1 Notwithstanding the fact that any Minister or Ministers appointed by the Church are Charity Trustees they will be entitled to be paid an agreed and reasonable remuneration or stipend out of the funds of the Church.

24. PASTORAL VACANCIES AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A MODERATOR

- 24.1 When there is no appointed Minister the Church Members' meeting may appoint a person who is a Church Member or a member of another Baptist Church to be Moderator (but if they do not do so then the Association may make an appointment of a suitable person) who will hold this office until a new Minister is appointed or until they resign or are released or dismissed by the Church Members' Meeting.

25. FINANCE

- 25.1 The Charity Trustees are jointly and severally responsible for the financial administration of the Church.
- 25.2 Once in each year the Charity Trustees shall present a budget of subsequent years' projected income and expenditure at a convenient Church Members' Meeting.

26. RECORD KEEPING AND ACCOUNTING

- 26.1 The Church's annual Financial Year will run from 1 January to 31 December.
- 26.2 Financial statements of all Church organisations that form part of the Activities shall be presented to the Charity Trustees and incorporated into the Church's financial statements.
- 26.3 A statement of the Church Accounts (audited or independently examined as required by law) shall be received by a Church Members' Meeting.
- 26.4 Financial Records, annual reports and statements of accounts relating to the Church for the previous six years must be available for inspection by any Charity Trustee.
- 26.5 The law requires Charity Trustees to make the annual report and accounts available to any person who requests these. The Charity Trustees may make a reasonable charge to cover the administration costs of meeting this request.

27. CONSTITUTION

- 27.1 A copy of this Constitution will be made available to Church Members and to every applicant for membership with the intention that every Member shall be informed about the organisation of the Church and be enabled to participate in the life of the Church and in Church Members' Meetings.
- 27.2 No amendment may be made to this Constitution that would have the effect of making the Charity cease to be a charity at law.
- 27.3 Subject to clauses 27.4 and 27.5 this Constitution may be altered only by a resolution of a Special Church Members' Meeting.

- 27.4 No amendment may be made to clause 20.2 or 28.4 without the prior written permission of the Charity Commission.
- 27.5 Notwithstanding the provisions 27.3 and 27.4 a resolution of a Special Church Members' Meeting altering clauses, 2, 3, 5, 7.5, 8.1, 9.1, 9.2, 15.2, 15.11, 27.3 or 28.1 shall have no legal effect unless:
- a. at least 6 months before the Special Church Members' Meeting at which the resolution is considered, or such shorter period as may be agreed in writing by each of the bodies referred to in clause 5.1, the Church shall have given to those bodies written notice of the wording of the resolution, and
 - b. the Church has afforded to those bodies reasonable opportunities, if those bodies so require, for enabling representatives of those bodies to meet representatives of the Church to make representations to the Church Members' Meeting, and to consider with the Church whether the proposed resolution might be withdrawn, amended or replaced by a different resolution.

28. CLOSURE

- 28.1 If the Church resolves to close it shall notify the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Baptist Association.
- 28.2 If the Church shall resolve to close and shall cease to meet for worship for at least six months the assets of the Church, after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities (not being property assets subject to separate trusts) shall be applied for Christian charitable purposes as decided by a Special Church Members' Meeting or, failing decision in that way, as decided by the Association, and notified to the Union.
- 28.3 The Charity Trustees of Churches that are registered charities shall notify the Charity Commission of any closure or dissolution.
- 28.4 The property assets shall be dealt with by the holding Trustees in accordance with the property trusts.

*Rules & Constitution
(Combined Document)
Adopted 24th March 2010,
Amended 17th March 2024*