



Paulsgrove Baptist Church  
Church Handbook

We certify this to be the Church Handbook adopted by the members of Paulsgrove Baptist Church at a meeting of the members held on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Chairman: David Aarons..... Secretary: Stephen Mountain.....

As amended in accordance with the provisions of this Church Handbook on:

Date of Revision

Signature of Chair

Signature of Secretary

## 1. Introduction

Welcome to Paulsgrove Baptist Church. This local church is one part of a much wider body of people who are the church of God, made up of people that recognise Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and who are united to Him by the Holy Spirit.

Paulsgrove Baptist Church's mission is:

“Growing Lifelong Disciples of Jesus Christ, by being a Christian, Caring, Community”

Our values are that in “Growing Lifelong Disciples of Jesus Christ” we are being transformed into the image of Christ as we trust and obey him (Matthew 28:16-20)

### **We are a Christian Church (Acts 2:42-47)**

1. The Bible as God's Word is our ultimate authority (v.42)
2. Christ crucified is our primary hope (v.42)
3. Our prayerfulness demonstrates our deep dependence on the Father (v.42)
4. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit enables us to live for God (v.43)

### **We are a Caring Church (Acts 2:42-47)**

5. Our humility creates unity and a common bond (v.44)
6. Our servant hearts follow Jesus' sacrificial example (v.44)
7. Our generosity looks to meet others' needs in Christ (v.45)

### **We are a Community Church (Acts 2:42-47)**

8. We are family, and are involved in each other's lives (v.42, 44, 46)
9. Our teamwork demonstrates our interdependence in serving Jesus (v.46)
10. We are outward-looking, seeking to reach others for Christ (v.46-47)

We come together as a group of people to help one another - as individuals and as a church - to grow in our Christian faith and to share this with other people: to enjoy being in God's presence and worshipping Him together, to share teaching from the Bible and personal stories of the amazing things Jesus has done, to encourage one another as we try and live out Jesus' teaching, and to show and tell other people who Jesus is.

When we meet together we learn more about God and Jesus through the Bible; pray together for people, our Church, our local community and the world; provide care and friendship to one another; and reach out to people who do not know Jesus or the importance of recognising who He is. (Acts 2:42, Matthew 28:20, Mark 16:15.)

## 2. Legal Structure

The legal structure of our Church is a 'charitable incorporated organisation' (a "CIO"). We have a Church Constitution which deals with the legal requirements we have to meet as a CIO. Any changes to our Constitution must be registered by the Charity Commission before they come into effect.

Our Constitution was adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and registered by the Charity Commission on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022. It was last amended on N/A.

This document is our Church Handbook. It sets out the internal workings of our Church and is based on our understanding of the Bible. It sits alongside our Constitution, and both

documents should be read together to understand how the Church operates. This Church Handbook must always be consistent with our Constitution – if it is inconsistent, the Constitution takes precedence.

If there is anything you are unsure about, please speak to the Pastor or one of the Elders.

### **3. Our Basis of Faith**

Our Basis of Faith sets out the core truths of the Gospel which we believe every true Christian should agree with. Under our Constitution, the charitable purposes of our Church and the activities we carry out must be consistent with our Basis of Faith.

[Appendix A](#) contains our Basis of Faith.

### **4. Doctrinal Distinctives**

Our Church has another statement of beliefs called 'Doctrinal Distinctives'. These set out our Church's position and teaching on certain specific matters, as we recognise that genuine Christian believers may take different views.

[Appendix B](#) contains our Doctrinal Distinctives.

### **5. Becoming a member of our Church**

If you are a Christian and you think of Paulsgrove Baptist Church as your 'spiritual home' then we hope you will demonstrate this formally by becoming a Church Member.

This is a way of showing to other people that you are committed to using your gifts and time to serve in our Church, to being served by other Church Members, and to serving together with them to show Jesus' love to others.

- We ask people to confirm that they agree with our Basis of Faith before they can become a Church Member.
- We ask people to confirm that they agree to act as partners in the Gospel. Members work in Gospel partnership together, to witness to the Gospel (good news of salvation in Jesus Christ) and to support each other in daily living as disciples of Jesus. This is a covenant partnership and is explained in the Partnership course which new members are required to attend. In the day to day life of the church, we call church members 'partners' to reflect the terminology used in Philippians 1 v5.
- We ask people to confirm that they accept our Doctrinal Distinctives as our Church's teaching on these matters. Church Members may hold and discuss a different personal view but are asked not to insist on their own view or to seek to override the Church's teaching on these matters.

[Appendix C](#) explains how you can become a Church Member.

## 6. Being a Church Member

Church Members have a particular role working with the Elders in Gospel partnership, seeking ways the Church should carry out its mission and its activities and priorities and identifying ways of using the Church's resources to further the Kingdom of God.

[Appendix C](#) explains more about what being a Church Member looks like in practice and how Church Membership may come to an end.

## 7. Leadership of our Church

Jesus Christ Himself is the leader of our Church. Through the Bible and the Holy Spirit, we are guided by Jesus' teaching – both by His words and the insight we are given into how He lived and treated people.

The Lord Jesus also gives us leaders, referred to in this local Church as Elders. As they themselves seek to follow Jesus they provide an example for others to follow, and the Bible encourages us to imitate the faith that they have. (Hebrews 13:7)

As our leaders watch over our Church, and are accountable to God, the Apostle Paul tells us to submit to the authority God has given them “so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

As Baptists, the Church believes in the priesthood of all believers: that God is equally accessible to all who accept Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, and that every Christian has equal potential to minister for God (1 Peter 2:9). Whilst some are specifically called to leadership roles to teach and preach, we believe that all members have been given gifts that can be used in the service of the Church. All members have equal decision-making authority through a members' meeting, whilst being guided by the spiritual authority of those called to leadership within the Church, so that they can serve our Church with joy (Hebrews 13:7 and 17).

The Church's Constitution states that the individuals who hold the following Church Officer roles are the charity trustees of our Church:  
Pastor and Elders.

As charity trustees, these individuals have certain legal duties and responsibilities under the law in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>.

[Appendix D](#) explains how these Church Officers are appointed and how their roles may come to an end. It also explains the other Church Officer roles we have in our Church, in addition to the roles of the Charity Trustees.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Charity Commission's guidance [CC3 – The Essential Trustee](#).

## **8. Church Discipline**

As a Church, we are part of the family of God. As with any family, the members of this Church may disagree with one another, or fall into a pattern of behaviour that does not reflect how Jesus has taught us to live. We recognise that we are all sinners and make mistakes and are grateful for God's forgiveness when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:8-9).

However, we also recognise that sometimes Church Members may refuse to be reconciled to each other when disputes arise, or to persist in behaviour that is dishonouring to God and the Bible's teaching. In these circumstances, we may sadly have to take the step of removing them from formal Church Membership. This is because such behaviour and lack of repentance may indicate that they are not truly part of the family of God. It can also tempt other Church Members and attendees to follow their example, particularly if their behaviour is left 'unchecked' by the leadership. (Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5)

Removing someone from Church Membership is not a decision that is taken lightly, but with the hope that it will prompt the individual to recognise their sin and turn back to Jesus, so that we can welcome them back into our Church with open arms.

[Appendix E](#) explains how church discipline is carried out.

## **9. Church Members' Meetings**

All Church Members are encouraged to attend Church Members' meetings whenever possible. These are valuable opportunities to share together the work of our Church and other organisations our Church supports, to discuss new activities and ideas, and to pray and praise God together.

[Appendix F](#) explains how often Church Members' Meetings are held and the role of members in making decisions affecting the work of the Church.

## **10. Other provisions relating to the day to day running of the Church**

[Appendix G](#) covers other matters relevant to how we run our Church on a day to day basis, that are not covered anywhere else in this Church Handbook. This includes:

Applications for baptism  
Church safeguarding and other policies  
Health and Safety

## **11. Changing this Church Handbook**

[Appendix H](#) sets out how this Church Handbook can be amended.

## **Appendix A – Basis of Faith**

### **1. God**

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

### **2. The Bible**

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

### **3. The Human Race**

All men and women, being created male and female in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

### **4. The Lord Jesus Christ**

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

### **5. Salvation**

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

### **6. The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

### **7. The Church**

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The

unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

#### **8. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into His Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

#### **9. Marriage**

Sexual intimacy is a gift from God and is to be enjoyed exclusively within the context of marriage. Marriage is, by definition, heterosexual and between one man and one woman. Marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and His Church.

#### **10. The Future**

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.



## **Appendix B – Doctrinal Distinctives**

### **The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper (or Communion) is a symbolic meal of thanksgiving established by the Lord Jesus in which we:

- Regularly remember His atoning work on the cross
- Acknowledge our sharing in the benefits of His death
- Have fellowship with the Lord Jesus and each other
- Are reminded of His love for us, which is to guide our relationships as the body of Christ
- Proclaim His death until His return.

At Paulsgrove Baptist Church we celebrate the Lord's Supper on the 4th Sunday of each month, and we do this a bit differently than most churches today. We're trying to recreate in some way the atmosphere and idea behind the Lord's Supper that we find in the pages of the New Testament.

Jesus, at the Last Supper, took elements of the Jewish Passover meal to explain to his disciples that he would die for their sins on the cross – this is the best news that mankind can ever hear: being given a fresh start and drawn back into a relationship with God! Early Christians would meet regularly to eat the Lord's Supper together as a meal, and took the bread and wine, as Jesus told them to, as a way to celebrate his sacrifice, remember the importance of his death, and to encourage each other that he's coming back to take all believers with him to a perfect new creation.

And so, at PBC, our Lord's Suppers are seeking to reflect this New Testament practice. We meet around tables, eat some food together, discuss an aspect of what Jesus has achieved for us through the cross, sing praise to God, and share the bread and juice to celebrate and remember the cross. It's an open time, a family meal, where everyone is welcome, young and old, believer and enquirer, to explore and celebrate Jesus together.

Of course, eating the bread and drinking the juice is not the way someone becomes a Christian – that is only possible by faith in Jesus. Celebrating the Lord's Supper is a way for Christians to remember and keep the cross at the centre of their lives. If you don't yet know Jesus personally, being present and hearing more about Jesus' wonderful love that led him to the cross, may help you understand and hopefully come to that decision to put your faith in Jesus.

### **Leadership**

In our church, Elders have spiritual leadership of the Church and Church Members have decision-making authority on key matters in the life of the Church. Our Leadership Team is comprised of male Elders, and male and female Deacons (see 1 Tim 3:1-12; Acts 6:1-7; Rom 16:1). Our Church's position is that men and women have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, church leadership, and elsewhere. We hold to the Doctrinal Distinctives on Women in Ministry adopted by FIEC in their Statement on this issue. This is available on the FIEC website (<https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/women-in-ministry>).

## **Baptism**

We practice Believers Baptism, as a symbol of those who have repented of sin and put their trust in Jesus for salvation and new life (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 18:8). The normal mode of baptism is full immersion in water, but the elders may agree an alternative as appropriate. For parents of young children, we will often hold a time of thanksgiving and dedication, based on their commitment to pray for and bring their children up within the influence of Christ and the church.

## **The Holy Spirit**

Everyone who has repented of sin and turns to Jesus, receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), who makes us more like Christ, and empowers us to live for him. He gives gifts to Christians in order to build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12). PBC is a 'continuationist' church, in that all the gifts of the Spirit are available for believers today, though there are no modern-day prophets and apostles who communicate authoritative revelation in the way that Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles did. Whilst we wish to be led by the Spirit, we seek to show care and caution in how we biblically exercise spiritual gifts in a way that points to Christ and builds up the church – rather than elevating humans or seeking certain experiences.

## **Gender**

Human beings are created male and female in God's image (Genesis 1:27). The gender of masculine and feminine is a gift assigned by God in keeping with one's biological sex, and not by self-perception or preference. We respond with love and compassion to those who may be experiencing gender identity confusion, but we would not condone hormone treatment or surgery in order to conform with a perceived gender identity at odds with one's birth sex.

## **Sex, sexuality and marriage**

God has created men and women to complement each other in relationships. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God, to be enjoyed within the security of heterosexual marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). Any other form of sexual relationship, even long-term and stable is displeasing to God, and will result in being outside of the Kingdom, unless there is repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Lifelong heterosexual marriage is God's design and where the expression of sexual intimacy is to take place, and therefore we support and champion biblical marriage. Singleness is also a gift from God, and is not a second class option for Christians – and so we honour those who are single in our church (1 Corinthians 6:7). We will show love and compassion to all who struggle with sexual temptation, graciously pointing them to Jesus, and his love and goodness for the whole of life. As a member of the FIEC, our Church holds to the Doctrinal Distinctives on Same-Sex Marriage adopted by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) on this issue. This is available on the FIEC website (<https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>).

## **Gospel Unity**

As a member of the FIEC, this Church holds to the Doctrinal Distinctives on Gospel Unity adopted by the FIEC in their Statement on this issue. This is available on the FIEC website (<https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/gospel-unity>).

## **Appendix C – Church Membership**

This appendix sets out the provisions for Church Membership that are referred to in the Constitution.

### **1. Eligibility for Church Membership**

Membership of this local Church is open to all those who:

- Publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and are seeking to live as one of His disciples.
- Are in full agreement with the Church's Basis of Faith (in Appendix A).
- Are prepared to accept the Doctrinal Distinctives of the Church (in Appendix B).
- Have been baptised on confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Commit themselves to serve Christ with the other members of the Church.
- Agree to recognise the spiritual leadership of the Elders of the church.
- Agree to participate in the work of the Church and its activities, to attend meetings regularly, to pray for each other and to share in the financial needs of the Church. In particular, this will involve fully accepting the responsibilities and obligations of Church Membership (outlined in paragraph 3 below).

### **2. Categories of Membership**

#### **2.1 Members**

Anyone aged eighteen years or above, who fulfils the other membership criteria, may become a Member of the Church. References to 'Church Members' in the Constitution and this Church Handbook mean Members in the context of this paragraph's definition.

### **3 Privileges and responsibilities of Church Members**

- 3.1 Being a Church Member brings both privileges and responsibilities. The privileges include being identified as part of this local Church of God, being able to take part in discussing and agreeing the way in which the Church should move forward and benefitting from the pastoral care of the Church leaders and other members.
- 3.2 When joining the membership at PBC, a person enters into a 'Gospel Partnership Covenant' with the leadership of the church. A covenant is a promise to commit ourselves to each other – reflecting the unwavering commitment of God to His people (Hosea 2:19-20; Ezekiel 37:26; Matthew 26:27-28). The covenant relationship is two-fold. First, the covenant of the Church leadership to its Gospel partners:

- a. We, as elders, covenant to live godly lives as an example for the church to follow (1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:1).
- b. We covenant to seek God's will for the direction of the church and to shepherd the flock under the authority of Jesus, the Great Shepherd (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- c. We covenant to teach the Scriptures for your growth and maturing in Christ, as well as guarding against false teaching (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:27-32).
- d. We covenant to pray for you (Acts 6:4, James 5:14), care for you (1 Timothy 5:1-16) and equip you to serve as disciples of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).
- e. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary, in order to restore the repentant and protect the purity of the church (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1; Titus 3:10).
- f. We covenant to preserve the group of 'partners' to include only those who are actively participating in the life of the church. If someone is no longer active, or cannot fulfil their covenant responsibilities, the elders – along with appropriate pastoral care – would need to remove the person as a formal 'partner'.

Secondly, the covenant of members to the church as Gospel partners:

- g. I have read and agree with the PBC statement of faith. I covenant to adhere to PBC's position on primary theological issues.
- h. I have read and understand the PBC Doctrinal Distinctives. I covenant to accept these as the position of PBC, even if I have some disagreement on secondary issues.
- i. I covenant to submit to the ultimate authority of Scripture when seeking answers on any issues (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- j. I covenant to honour the church leadership and work with them for the good of our church (Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- k. I covenant to preserve unity and peace with those in our Church, and deal with issues in a loving and biblical way (Ephesians 4:1-3; Matthew 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:15, 32).
- l. I covenant to growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ through Bible reading, prayer, church involvement and witnessing for Jesus (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:25) – and to be a disciple-maker of others, as the Spirit leads and equips (Matthew 28:19-20).
- m. I covenant, by God's grace, to live a holy life as worship to Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-14).

- n. I covenant to use my time, talents and treasure for the glory of God, and the benefit of the Church (1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
- o. I covenant to positively participate in Partner Meetings as much as I am able, to work alongside, pray and encourage the elders and other partners in fulfilling the vision and mission of our church (Acts 6:2-7; Acts 15:22).
- p. I covenant to submit to church discipline if I fall into serious sin, for my good and protection of the church (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 2:25-26), but also to confess my sins and seek restoration (1 John 1:6-10; James 5:16).
- q. I agree to talk with the elders if at any time I have issues to discuss, if I feel no longer able to commit to this covenant, or if I feel that God is calling me to serve him at another local church.

3.3 Each Full Member also has a legal duty, which is stated in our Constitution as follows:

“It is the duty of each member of the Church to exercise his or her powers as a Member of the Church in the way he or she decides in good faith would be most likely to further the purposes of the Church.”

#### **4 Applying to become a Church Member**

4.1 The first Church Members are the people named as the first charity trustees in the Constitution.

4.2 Anyone meeting the eligibility criteria outlined in paragraph 1 above is encouraged to become a Church Member. The procedure for applying for membership is as follows:

- a. Anyone interested in applying for membership of the Church should firstly speak to one of the Elders.
- b. They will then be asked to attend a Partnership course and fill in a short application form.
- c. Where a person applying for membership was previously a member of another church, the Elders are likely to request a reference from the leaders of that church regarding the applicant’s suitability for membership.
- d. The Elders will then consider whether the applicant is eligible for membership. This will normally involve arranging to meet with the applicant to discuss their application and any queries they may have. This includes to discuss:
  - How the applicant became a Christian and when they were baptised.

- How the applicant's life has changed, explaining their faith journey by the power of the Holy Spirit, since becoming a Christian.
  - How the applicant understands their role in being involved at the Church as a Gospel partner.
  - That the applicant agrees with the Church's Basis of Faith and is willing to accept the Doctrinal Distinctives.
  - That the applicant is willing to comply with the Church Constitution and this Church Handbook, including the duty of members.
- e. Where the Elders agree that an applicant meets the criteria for membership, the applicant will be informed that their name will be put forward to existing Members for addition to the Membership roll.
- f. Throughout this process current members are encouraged to support the proposed new member and to prayerfully talk about any questions that they may have with the new member.
- g. The application shall be approved if agreed by at least 51% of Church Members attending and voting at a Church Members' meeting. If approved, the new Member will be formally welcomed into Church Membership at the next Sunday the church shares the Lord's Supper. Applicants for membership are encouraged to again share their faith journey publicly as part of that process.
- 4.3 New Members of the Church will be expected to attend all Church Members' meetings after being admitted to membership and Full Members will be entitled to vote on any matter brought to such meetings.
- 4.4 The Pastor and his wife shall become Members on taking up his appointment provided the eligibility criteria in paragraph 1 is met.
- 4.5 The Administrator will maintain a written register of all Full Members.

## **5 Resigning or transferring Church Membership**

- 5.1 A Church Member may resign voluntarily by submitting a written letter or email to the Elders through the Administrator.
- 5.2 A Church Member will cease to be a member when he/she dies.
- 5.3 If a Church Member wishes to transfer their membership to another church, then they should inform the Elders. The Governance Elder / Deacon will usually write to the church to provide a reference on behalf of the Elders, if requested.

## **6 Removing an individual from Church Membership**

- 6.1 A Church Member will be treated as having resigned from membership of the Church if they have not attended the Church and/or taken part in the Lord's Supper for a period of six months and have been notified in writing by the Church Governance Elder /Deacon that they will be removed from membership before the change is made. Anyone who has been removed from the register of members under this provision may re-apply for membership in the normal way and will be welcomed back into Church membership if their application is approved. This provision does not apply to a Church Member who is serving as a mission worker in another country.
- 6.2 A Church Member will be treated as having resigned from membership of the Church if they become a member of another church.
- 6.3 If a Church Member moves out of the geographical area served by this Church, it will be assumed that they resign their membership.
- 6.4 A Church Member may be removed from membership by the application of the disciplinary procedure set out in appendix E.

## **Appendix D - Appointment of Church Officers**

This appendix sets out how the different Church Officer roles and other positions in our Church are appointed and how they may come to an end.

### **1. Charity Trustees**

- 1.1. The Constitution sets out which of the Church Officers are the Charity Trustees of our Church and the names of the first Charity Trustees.
- 1.2. The Charity Trustees must fully subscribe to our Church's Constitution and Church Handbook, the Basis of Faith and our Doctrinal Distinctives.

### **2. The Pastor(s)**

- 2.1. The Church may appoint a Pastor or Pastors, who is/are set apart for the teaching and preaching of the Bible and the pastoral leadership of our Church. They may already be a Church Member or may become a Church Member when they take up the role of Pastor.
- 2.2. The decision to invite an individual to serve as a Pastor in our Church is made by the Church Members, on the recommendation of the Elders. A Church Meeting will be called for this purpose and a majority of Church Members present and entitled to vote, must vote in favour for the individual to be appointed.
- 2.3. The Pastor(s) is an/are Elder(s) of our Church and references in this Church Handbook to Elders includes the Pastor(s). The Pastor will usually Chair meetings of Elders and Church Members providing they do not have a conflict of interest in an item to be discussed.
- 2.4. The Pastor will be a paid office holder of the Church with a memorandum of understanding, or an employee with a contract of employment.
- 2.5. The Pastor may resign from office by giving notice in writing in accordance with his memorandum of understanding.
- 2.6. The Elders may seek authority at a Church Meeting to terminate the appointment of a Pastor, subject to the requirements of employment law and the Constitution. 90% of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the authority to be granted. Where such authority is granted, the Elders must still act in accordance with the requirements of employment law and the Constitution.

### **3. Elders**

- 3.1. The Elders are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral oversight of our Church. Elders are men who the Holy Spirit has qualified to serve in this role, and who



demonstrate the gifting, character and conduct described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:2-3.

- 3.2. Elders are nominated for appointment or re-appointment by the Church Members. A majority of Church Members present and voting must vote in favour for the individual to be appointed.
- 3.3. An Elder will serve for a term of three years and may then be re-appointed, apart from the Pastor(s) who will remain in office as an Elder for so long as they are the Pastor.
- 3.4. An Elder may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the other Elders.
- 3.5. If an Elder no longer displays the qualities required of an Elder and/or one or more of the reasons for church discipline contained in this Church Handbook apply, then the other Elders may propose to a Church Meeting that the appointment of the Elder be terminated. A majority of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the decision to be carried.

#### **4. Deacons**

- 4.1. The deacons have key leadership responsibilities for both the practical affairs and regular activities of our Church. These include areas of administration, care and outreach. Deacons are individuals who the Holy Spirit has qualified to serve in this role, and who demonstrate the gifting, character and conduct described in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- 4.2. Deacons are nominated for appointment or re-appointment by the Church Members. A majority of Church Members present and voting must vote in favour for the individual to be appointed.
- 4.3. A deacon will serve for a term of three years and may then be re-appointed.
- 4.4. A deacon may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the Elders.
- 4.5. If a deacon no longer displays the qualities required of a deacon and/or one or more of the reasons for church discipline contained in this Church Handbook apply, then the Elders may propose to a Church Meeting that the appointment of the deacon be terminated. A majority of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the decision to be carried.

#### **5. Governance Elder / Deacon and Church Treasurer**

- 5.1. The Elders and Deacons shall appoint from among themselves a Governance Elder or Deacon (as applicable), and a Church Treasurer.

## **5.2. Governance Elder / Deacon (as applicable)**

The Church Governance Elder / Deacon is responsible for overseeing the administration and 'corporate' governance of our Church. This includes the arrangements for Church Meetings (including preparing and sending notices, and taking minutes), making sure that the provisions of the Constitution and Church Handbook are followed, managing the documentation relating to employment of staff and/or paid office holders and taking minutes of Elders and Deacons' meetings. The Church Governance Elder / Deacon also maintains the register of members, which we must do under the terms of our Constitution.

## **5.3. Church Treasurer**

The Church Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the financial governance of the Church. This includes maintaining the accounts of the Church and supporting records and ensuring that the Charity Trustees have implemented suitable financial controls.

## **6. Other Church Officers**

6.1 The Church Members may nominate individuals for other Church Officer roles within the Church. A majority of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the decision to be carried. Only those individuals appointed to the Church Officer roles specified in the Constitution will be charity trustees.

6.2 Other than the Charity Trustees, those individuals who held Church Officer roles immediately before the transfer of assets and liabilities from the charitable unincorporated association to the CIO shall continue in office in the CIO with no requirement for re-appointment. This is unless the Church Members have agreed that they should not continue in office when this Church Handbook is first adopted, or the individuals resign from office or their appointment otherwise comes to an end in accordance with this Church Handbook.

## **7. Church staff**

The Elders may prayerfully recommend individuals to be engaged by the Church as employees and/or paid office holders. A majority of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the decision to be carried.

## **8. Interim trustees**

Whenever the Church is appointing an interim trustee in accordance with clause 12.4.3 of the Constitution, interim trustees are nominated for appointment or re-appointment by the Church Members. A majority of Church Members present and voting must vote in favour for the individual to be appointed.

## **Appendix E – Church discipline**

This appendix explains the reasons that our Church may need to exercise discipline and the procedure we will follow, which is based on the Bible's teaching.

### **1. Who church discipline applies to**

- 1.1 Clause 9.4 of the Constitution sets out certain steps that must be followed if a Church Member will be removed from membership as a result of church discipline and who is involved in the decision.
- 1.2 There may be individuals who regularly attend and take part in the life of our Church but who are not Church Members. The procedures set out below provide a guide to dealing with issues and disputes that may arise with individuals who are not Church Members.

### **2. Reasons for church discipline**

A Church Member may be subject to church discipline for any of the following reasons:

- 2.1. They err in doctrine so that they no longer affirm the Basis of Faith of the Church (see Appendix A).
- 2.2. They are no longer willing to accept the practices and doctrinal positions that are set out in the Church's Doctrinal Distinctives (see Appendix B).
- 2.3. They err in conduct by committing open sin which brings the Lord Jesus, His Gospel and/or the Church into disrepute.
- 2.4. They have consistently failed to fulfil the responsibilities and obligations of a member of the Church.
- 2.5. They refuse to repent of sin committed against another person or Church Member which has been drawn to their attention.
- 2.6. They have made false and malicious allegations against another person or Church Member.
- 2.7. They are causing significant and/or unreasonable and/or persistent division or dissension in the Church.
- 2.8. They are no longer willing to recognise the spiritual leadership of the Elders.

### **3. Process for church discipline**

- 3.1. The Elders must be informed as soon as possible where it is believed that any of the reasons set out in paragraph 2 above apply to a Church Member. Where a member

of the Church believes they have been sinned against, they should normally raise the issue first with the person concerned and only report it to the Elders if the two members concerned are unable to resolve the matter between themselves.

- 3.2. Where the Elders are informed, or they themselves believe that any of the reasons set out in paragraph 2 above apply to a Church Member, at least two of the Elders will meet informally with the Church Member to discuss the matter and seek to resolve it, in line with Biblical principles.
- 3.3. The Elders looking into the matter will report back to the Elders to decide whether it is necessary to hold a formal disciplinary meeting and what additional steps they should take, if any.
- 3.4. During the process of looking into such a matter, the Elders may decide that it is appropriate to temporarily limit the Church Member's involvement in church activities, while the issue is being reviewed and a clear conclusion reached. The Church Member concerned will be notified if this is the case, with clear reasons given and an explanation of what will happen next. The Church Member may continue to attend and vote at Church Members' meetings but may not be permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper.

#### **4. Process for removal from Church Membership**

- 4.1. Before the Elders propose removing someone from Church Membership they must carry out the following process:
  - 4.1.1. The Elders will have made all reasonable efforts to address the issue, as outlined in paragraph 3 above, so that the Church Member can continue in membership, if possible.
  - 4.1.2. If the Elders are formally considering whether or not to remove the Church Member from membership, they will write to the Church Member to explain why they are considering removing their membership.
  - 4.1.3. The Elders will give the Church Member 21 clear days' notice of a meeting at which they will formally consider whether to propose that the Church Member be removed from membership. The Church Member will be invited to make representations either at the meeting or in writing before the meeting. They can either make such representations themselves or ask a representative to do this for them.
  - 4.1.4. The Elders must take into account those representations when deciding whether to propose removal of the Church Member from membership.
- 4.2. The Elders may propose to a Church Meeting that a Church Member be removed from membership. 75% of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for Church Membership to be removed. The Church Member will be informed of the decision of the Church Members by the Elders and the register of Members will be amended, if required.

- 4.3. Anyone who has been removed as a Church Member may re-apply for membership in the normal way and will be welcomed back into Church Membership if their application is approved.

## **5. Additional disciplinary measures**

- 5.1. Even in cases where there has been genuine repentance, the Elders may still be required to report certain issues to the relevant secular authorities. In such cases, the Elders will give the individual concerned all the pastoral and practical support that is appropriate for someone who is genuinely repentant (whether or not they are still a Church Member).
- 5.2. If someone is removed from Church Membership, the Elders may also impose any of the following additional measures:
  - 5.2.1. A restriction from attending or taking part in any or all of the meetings of the Church, including meetings or activities that are normally open to the public.
  - 5.2.2. The remaining Church Members may be asked not to have any association with the person who has been removed from membership, in line with specific guidance from the Elders.

Any of these measures may be altered or removed later by the Elders.

## **Appendix F - Church Members' Meetings**

This Appendix explains when and how Church Members' Meetings will take place. In our Constitution these are called "General meetings of Members" and this means the same thing as "Church Members' Meetings".

### **1. Arrangements for Church Members' Meetings**

- 1.1 The Constitution sets out the arrangements our Church must follow for Church Members' Meetings, under the headings "Members' Decisions" and "General meetings of members" (clauses 10 and 11). These are summarised here but the provisions of the Constitution must be followed.
- 1.2 All Church Members will be given at least 14 clear days' advanced notice of Church Members' Meetings, in writing. Clause 11.3.3 of the Constitution sets out the information that we have to provide in the notice of a Church Members' Meeting. Copies of the agenda and minutes of the last Church Members' Meeting will be made available to Church Members by the Administrator.
- 1.3 Church Members' Meetings must be held in person unless there is an express provision in the Constitution or under legislation for general meetings to be held electronically.
- 1.4 If Church Members want to suggest an item to be discussed under 'any other business' they should inform the Governance Elder / Deacon at least 7 days before the meeting, so that it can be considered.

### **2. Frequency**

- 2.1 Under our Constitution we must have an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year and there is certain 'business' which has to be undertaken in that meeting, such as receiving our Church's annual accounts for the year before.
- 2.2 Our Church usually holds three other Church Members' Meetings during the year in addition to the AGM, so that there is one each quarter.

### **3. Quorum**

- 3.1 In order to make decisions at a Church Members' Meeting there have to be enough Church Members there to form a 'quorum'. Our Constitution says that our quorum is 40% of all current Church Members or 5 Church Members, whichever is higher. This means that a sufficient number of Church Members must be present in person (see 4.4 below).
- 3.2 If there are not enough Church Members present to form a quorum then the meeting will either be postponed or can go ahead, but if it goes ahead no decisions can be

made. The Constitution sets out what happens if a reconvened meeting that was postponed still does not have a quorum.

#### **4. Voting for decisions**

- 4.1 Most decisions at a Church Members' Meeting can be made by a simple majority of Church Members present and voting (i.e., 51% or more) and each Church Member has one vote. In these cases, votes will normally be made by a show of hands and no proxy or postal/email votes will be allowed.
- 4.2 There are some more significant decisions where the number of Church Members voting in favour must be higher; for example, for changes to the Constitution. These are set out in paragraph 5 below.
- 4.3 If a decision is significant or might be contentious, at their discretion the Elders may decide that voting will take place by a secret ballot. A secret ballot can also be requested by 75% of the Church Members present at the meeting.
- 4.4 The Constitution provides more detail about voting at Church Members meetings.

#### **5. Voting requirements for specific decisions**

- 5.1 The table below shows the decisions that must be approved by Church Members at a Church Members' Meeting under the Constitution or a specific section of the Church Handbook, including where a majority is required that is more than a simple majority. It also says what majority is required and where this is stated in the Constitution or Church Handbook. These are listed as "Type A decisions" in the table.
- 5.2 There are other decisions that Church Members must approve at a Church Members' meeting even though these are not specified in detail under the provisions of the Constitution or this Church Handbook. These are listed as "Type B decisions" in the table.

<b>Type A decisions</b>		
	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Majority required</b>
1	To allow a Church Members Meeting to proceed on short notice (Constitution - 11.3.2)	90% of all Church Members
2	To amend the Constitution (Constitution - 28.1)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
3	To amend the Basis of Faith (Constitution - 28.3)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
4	To wind up the Church (Constitution - 29)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
5	To approve an application for Church Membership (Handbook – appendix D paragraph 4.2(g))	51% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
6	To remove a person from church membership (Handbook – appendix E paragraph 4.2)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
7	To appoint a Pastor (Handbook – appendix D paragraph 2.2)	51% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
8	To remove a Pastor from office (Handbook - appendix D paragraph 2.6)	90% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
9	To appoint an Elder (Handbook – appendix D paragraph 3.2)	51% of Church Members' voting at a Church Members Meeting
10	To remove an Elder from office (Handbook - appendix D paragraph 3.5)	51% of Church Members' voting at a Church Members Meeting
11	To appoint a Deacon (Handbook – appendix D paragraph 4.2)	51% of Church Members' voting at a Church Members Meeting
12	To remove a Deacon from office (Handbook - appendix D paragraph 4.5)	51% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
<b>Type B decisions</b>		
	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Majority required</b>
13	To buy or sell land or buildings	90% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
14	To amalgamate or transfer the undertaking of the Church with another Church or organisation	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members Meeting
15	To formally establish a new CIO or other entity as a Church plant	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting



## **Appendix G – Other provisions relating to the day to day running of our Church**

### **Applications for baptism**

Anyone interested in being baptised should first speak to the Pastor.

The decision whether to baptise an individual will be taken by the Elders.

### **Church safeguarding and other policies**

The Elders shall operate a Church safeguarding policy and shall ensure that activities involving children and vulnerable adults are carried out in accordance with that policy. A copy of the Church's safeguarding policy is available from the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Each person overseeing Church activities involving children or vulnerable adults and every Elder shall provide to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator a current Disclosure and Barring Service certificate.

The Church also maintains a number of other policies listed below which are available by application to the Church Administrator.

### **Other matters specified by the church**

The following documents and policies will be kept under review by the Charity Trustees and do not require a decision of the Church Members to approve any amendments:

Room hire form  
Claim for Reimbursement  
Application for Payment

## **Appendix H – Amendments to the Church Handbook**

1. The Church Handbook can be changed if the proposed amendment is approved by the Church Members at a Church Members' Meeting. This is provided that the proposed amendment would not cause the Church to lose its charitable status or make the Church Handbook inconsistent with our Constitution.
2. A majority of 75% of those Church Members present and voting at a Church Members meeting is needed to approve an amendment to the Church Handbook.
3. Notice will be given to Church Members in advance if any changes are proposed to the Church Handbook. This will provide details of the proposed changes including the specific wording of the amendment(s).
4. Any changes to our Constitution must be made in accordance with clause 27 of the Constitution.