

ABBEY WOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

Handbook

We certify this to be the Church Handbook adopted by the members of Abbey Wood Community Church at a meeting of the members held on the 5th January 2022.

Chairman:



.....

.Administrator



.....

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

Date of Revision

Signature of Chair

Signature of Administrator

1. Introduction

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

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 5th January 2022 and registered by the Charity Commission on 17th March 2022.

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 our 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 one of the Elders/Pastors.

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

Additional to our Basis of Faith, our Church has a 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. Ethical Statements

These statements set out our Church's teaching on ethical matters and explain how our Basis of Faith is worked out practically in day-to-day life.

[Appendix C](#) contains our Ethical Statements.

6. Becoming a member of our Church

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

This is a way of showing 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 and the local community.

- 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 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.
- Church Members are to live in a way that is consistent with our Ethical Statements.

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

7. Being a Church Member

Membership is for those who are willing to commit to and serve our church family and the mission of our church as partners in the Gospel. (Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.) They have a particular role in decision-making within our Church, including approving changes to the Constitution or the Handbook and appointing Elders/Pastors. The Elders/Pastors will also aim to consult with the Church Members on the activities of the Church more generally, such as the ways the Church should carry out its mission and its

activities and priorities, the creation of new staff roles and/or appointing of staff, and identifying ways of using the Church's resources to further the Kingdom of God.

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

8. 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/Pastors. 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)

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

Elders/Pastors

As charity trustees, these individuals have certain legal duties and responsibilities under the law in England and Wales¹.

[Appendix E](#) explains how these Church Officers are appointed and how their roles may come to an end.

9. 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 contrary to 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

¹ These legal duties are explained in the Charity Commission's guidance [CC3 – The Essential Trustee](#).

tempt others to stumble if their behaviour is not challenged by the Church 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 F](#) explains how church discipline is carried out.

10. 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 and take decisions about new activities and ideas, and to pray and praise God together.

[Appendix G](#) explains how often Church Members' Meetings are held and how decisions are made.

11. Other provisions relating to the day to day running of the Church

[Appendix H](#) 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. These include:

Applications for Baptism
Church safeguarding and other policies

12. Changing this Church Handbook

[Appendix I](#) 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

Baptism

Baptism is a command of the Lord Jesus Christ to all those who believe in Him (Matthew 28:19). This Church teaches, preaches and practises believers' baptism. The normal mode of baptism is full immersion in water, but the Elders/Pastors may agree an alternative where appropriate.

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.

Marriage

Our Basis of Faith sets out that the Bible is the final authority for all matters of belief and practice. The Church upholds that the teaching of the Bible is that marriage is between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Ephesians 5:31-33) and that all sexual practices outside of marriage between a man and a woman are sinful and wrong. This includes homosexual practices (Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) regardless of whether or not homosexual marriage is permitted by the laws of England and Wales.

As a member of the FIEC, this 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>).

Women in Ministry

This Church's position is that men and women have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, church leadership, and elsewhere. The Bible teaches that although women are precluded from the role of Elder/Pastor, they are of equal status to men and have other important ministries.

This Church holds 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>).

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 – Ethical Statements

Marriage

In line with our Basis of Faith and / Doctrinal Distinctives it is important that the Church and Church Members in no way condone, promote, assist or encourage adulterous or extra-marital sexual practices, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

Gender

In accordance with our Doctrinal Distinctives and the FIEC Statement on Women in Ministry, we recognise that God created us male and female and calls us to live according to our gender identity, which is inseparable from our biological sex determined at conception. Our gender may not be changed or reassigned.

Appendix D – 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).
- Are committed to living in accordance with the Ethical Statements of the Church (in Appendix C).
- 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 submit themselves to the leadership of the Elders of the Church as they follow Scripture.
- Have regularly attended for more than 3 months.
- Fully accept the responsibilities and obligations of Church Membership (outlined in paragraph 3 below).

2. Categories of Membership

2.1 Full Members

Anyone aged sixteen years or above, who fulfils the other membership criteria, may become a Full Member of the Church. References to 'Church Members' in the Constitution and this Church Handbook mean Full Members unless stated otherwise.

2.2 Associate Members

2.2.1 The Elders/Pastors may give someone the status of Associate Member.

2.2.2 Associate Members may attend Church Members' meetings but are not allowed to vote.

- 2.2.3 Associate Membership of the Church shall be open to those persons who:
- a. are temporarily living in Abbey Wood or the surrounding area and have formal Membership of another church elsewhere;
 - b. have been in Church Membership at Abbey Wood Community Church but have now moved away and may remain as an Associate Member for a year while they find a suitable fellowship; or
 - c. are ministry partners with membership elsewhere at their primary supporting church;
 - d. and who have confirmed in writing (or other means permitted by the Elders/Pastors) their whole-hearted agreement to the Basis of Faith.
- 2.2.4 Individuals who are no longer capable of managing and administering their own affairs because of mental disorder, illness or injury may also be transferred from the register of Full Members to become an Associate Member.

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 serve, lead and teach others, 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 We ask all Church Members to show their commitment to actively serving Christ as part of our Church, including by:
- a. Seeking to live a life that is consistent with the faith we profess in our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Bible's teaching. (Philippians 3:16; Hebrews 10:23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - b. Taking part in Sunday worship as well as prayer meetings, Bible studies and other meetings and events arranged by the Church, as individual circumstances allow. (Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 2:42, 20:7).
 - c. Regular private prayer, including for Church Members and the work and ministry of our Church, and personal Bible study. (2 Timothy 3:15-17, Philippians 4:6).
 - d. Sharing in the work of our Church, according to the individual calling, gifts and opportunities God has given you. (1 Corinthians 12-14).
 - e. Using opportunities to witness to those who don't regularly attend our Church, by what you say and the way you live. (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 15:58).

- f. Praying for the church leaders in their commitments and as they work together to build up the church of God, both locally and worldwide. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18).
- g. Regular financial giving to our Church and the Lord's work in general, including for mission, in accordance with your means. (Malachi 3:10, 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
- h. Showing Christian love and concern both to others in the church and for the wider community. (John 13:35, 1 Thessalonians 3:12).
- i. Attending and participating in Church 'business' meetings. Sharing views respectfully and openly and engaging in constructive discussion on matters raised at church meetings with the aim of reaching a common mind and unity of purpose. (1 Timothy 4:12, Philippians 2:1-2).

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."²

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:

4.2.1 Anyone interested in applying for membership of the Church should firstly speak to one of the Elders/Pastors.

4.2.2 They will then be asked to fill in a short application form and attend a "Becoming a Member" class.

4.2.3 Where a person applying for membership was previously a member of another church, the Elders/Pastors are likely to request a reference from the leaders of that church regarding the applicant's suitability for membership.

4.2.4 The Elders/Pastors 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.

² This is a statutory duty under s.220 Charities Act 2011 that each voting member of the CIO must comply with.

- How the applicant's life has changed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, since becoming a Christian.
- How the applicant sees themselves becoming involved at the Church.
- If the applicant agrees with the Church's Basis of Faith and is willing to accept the Doctrinal Distinctives and to live in accordance with the Church's Ethical Statements.
- If the applicant is willing to comply with the Church Constitution and this Church Handbook, including the duty of members.

4.2.5 Where the Elders/Pastors agree that an applicant meets the criteria for membership, the applicant will be approved as a Church Member and the other Church Members informed that the applicant has been admitted to membership.

4.3 New Members of the Church will be encouraged to attend all Church Members' meetings after being admitted to membership and Full Members will be entitled to vote on any matter.

4.4 The Church 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/Pastors through the Church Administrator. This provision shall apply to both Full Members and to Associate Members.

5.2 A Church Member will cease to be a member when he/she dies. This provision shall apply to both Full Members and to Associate Members.

5.3 The Elders/Pastors may transfer a Church Member from the register of Full Members to become an Associate Member if they have not attended the Church for a period of six months and have been notified in writing by the Church Administrator before the change is made. The Elders/Pastors may subsequently decide to transfer them back to the register of Full Members. This provision does not apply to a Full Member who is serving as a mission worker in another country.

5.4 If a Church Member wishes to transfer their membership to another church, then they should inform the Elders/Pastors. The Church Administrator may write to the church to provide a reference on behalf of the Elders/Pastors, if requested.

6 Removing an individual from Church Membership

6.1 The provisions of this paragraph 6 shall apply to both Full Members and to Associate Members.

- 6.2 A Church Member will be treated as having resigned from membership of the Church if they have not attended the Church for a period of one year (unless there are extenuating circumstances) and have been notified in writing by the Church Administrator that they will be removed from membership before the change is made. The Elders/Pastors may subsequently decide to admit them back into membership. This provision does not apply to a Church Member who is serving as a mission worker in another country.
- 6.3 A Church Member will be treated as having resigned from membership of the Church if they become a member of another church. There may be exceptions, at the discretion of the Elders/Pastors, as noted in paragraph 2.3.
- 6.4 If a Church Member moves out of the geographical area served by this Church, it will be assumed that they resign their membership, unless there are exceptional circumstances, agreed by the Elders/Pastors as noted in paragraphs 2.3 and 5.3.
- 6.5 A Church Member may be removed from membership by the application of the disciplinary procedure set out in appendix F.

Appendix E - 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 and live in accordance with our Ethical Statements.

2. Elders/Pastors

- 2.1. The Elders/Pastors are men who are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral oversight of our Church. Elders/Pastors are 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.
- 2.2. The decision to invite an individual to serve as Elder/Pastor in our Church is made by the Church Members, on the recommendation of the serving Elders/Pastors. A Church Meeting will be called for this purpose and at least 75% of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour for the individual to be appointed.
- 2.3. An Elder/Pastor will serve for a term of 5 years and may then be re-appointed. (Elders/Pastors who are employed by the Church will have a peer review every five years but will remain in office as an Elder/Pastor for so long as they are employed.) An Elder/Pastor can serve for a maximum of 10 years before taking a break of between three months and one year.
- 2.4. Elders/Pastors are nominated for re-appointment by the other Elders/Pastors and re-appointed by the Church Members. 50% of Church Members present and voting must vote in favour for the individual to be re-appointed
- 2.5. The Eldership/Pastoral team should also review its ministry at least every 5 years.
- 2.6. An Elder/Pastor may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the other Elders/Church Administrator.
- 2.7. An Elder/Pastor may be an employee of the Church with a contract of employment or may perform the role on a voluntary basis.
- 2.8. An Elder/Pastor may resign from employment by giving notice in writing in accordance with his contract of employment.

- 2.9. If an Elder/Pastor no longer displays the qualities required of an Elder/Pastor and/or one or more of the reasons for church discipline contained in this Church Handbook apply, then the other Elders/Pastors may propose to a Church Meeting that the appointment of the Elder/Pastor be terminated. 75% of Church Members present and entitled to vote must vote in favour in order for the decision to be carried.

3. Church Administrator and Church Treasurer

- 3.1. The Elders/Pastors shall appoint from among themselves a Church Administrator and a Church Treasurer.

3.2. Church Administrator

The Church Administrator 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'/Pastors' meetings. The Church Administrator also maintains the register of members, which we must do under the terms of our Constitution.

3.3. 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.

4. Church staff

The Elders/Pastors may appoint Church staff as employees and/or paid office holders in consultation with Church Members. (Acts 6:1-7)

Appendix F – Church discipline

This appendix explains the reasons that our Church may need to exercise the action of suspending or withdrawing someone from membership 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 The provisions of Appendix F apply to both Full and Associate Members.
- 1.3 There may be individuals who regularly attend and take part in the life of our Church but who are not Church Members or Associate Members. The procedures set out below also 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 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 bring the name of the Lord Jesus, His Gospel and/or the Church into disrepute by committing ongoing and/or open sin for which they refuse to repent.
- 2.4. They are causing significant, unreasonable or persistent harm, division or dissension in the Church.
- 2.5. They are no longer willing to follow the leadership of the Elders/Pastors of the Church as they seek to follow Scripture.

3. Process for church discipline

- 3.1. Where a member of the Church believes they have been sinned against, we would encourage, if and where possible, to raise the issue with the person concerned. If they feel unable to do that, we recommend they involve another mature Church Member or an Elder/Pastor to help resolve the issue. If they are unable to resolve the matter between themselves they should inform and involve the Elders/Pastors. (Galatians 6:1-2 and Matthew 18:15-20)

- 3.2. The Elders/Pastors should 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.
- 3.3. Where the Elders/Pastors 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/Pastors will meet informally with the Church Member to discuss the matter and seek to resolve it, in line with Biblical principles.
- 3.4. The Elders/Pastors looking into the matter will report back to the other Elders/Pastors to decide what additional steps they should take and whether it is necessary to hold a formal disciplinary meeting.
- 3.5. During the process of looking into such a matter, the Elders/Pastors 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.

4. Process for removal from Church Membership

- 4.1. Before the Elders/Pastors propose removing someone from Church Membership they must carry out the following process:
 - 4.1.1. The Elders/Pastors 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/Pastors 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/Pastors 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/Pastors must take into account those representations when deciding whether to remove the Church Member from membership.
- 4.2. The Church Member will be informed of the decision of the Elders/Pastors by the Church Administrator 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/Pastors may still be required to report certain issues to the relevant secular authorities. In such cases, the Elders/Pastors 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/Pastors may also impose any of the following additional measures if they believe it is necessary for the protection of the rest of the Church and its witness:
 - 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/Pastors.

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

Appendix G - 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 Church 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 Church Administrator 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 one other Church Members' Meeting during the year in addition to the AGM.

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, not including any postal or proxy votes (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 includes proxy votes and postal or email votes where these have been permitted by the Elders/Pastors.

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, the Elders may decide that voting will take place by a secret ballot. A secret ballot can also be requested by 30% of the Church Members present at the meeting.

4.4 The Elders/Pastors can also decide to allow Church Members to vote by proxy and/or by an email or postal vote so that Church Members who cannot attend the Church Meeting can still vote. If this is used the Elders/Pastors will provide guidance about how votes can be submitted, and the procedures that must be followed so that they can ensure that only people who are Church Members and entitled to vote have submitted votes. If proxy, email or postal voting are allowed, these votes count in the same way as if the Church Member had been present and voting at the Church Meeting and will be included where this Church Handbook refers to decisions made "at a Church Members meeting." However, a proxy or postal vote will not count towards the quorum.

4.5 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.

	Decision	Majority required
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 appoint an Elder/Pastor (Handbook - Appendix E paragraph 2.2)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
6	To reappoint an Elder/Pastor (Handbook - Appendix E paragraph 2.4)	50% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
7	To remove an Elder/Pastor from office (Handbook - Appendix E paragraph 2.9)	75% of Church Members' voting at a Church Members' Meeting

Appendix H – Other provisions relating to the day to day running of our Church

Applications for baptism

Anyone interested in being baptised should first speak to one of the Elders/Pastors.

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

Church safeguarding and other policies

The Elders/Pastors 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 Church Administrator or Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

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

Appendix I – 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 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 28 of the Constitution.