



# The Church Handbook

Charity Registration Number: 1187499

Registered Office: Bethel Baptist Church, Heol Miskin, PONTYCLUN, CF72 9AJ

# The Church Handbook

of

Bethel Baptist Church, Pontyclun

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## **1. Introduction**

This Church Handbook is a basic outline of the structures, procedures, and governance followed by the Members of Bethel Baptist Church and those they have entrusted to serve and guide them. It serves as a guide to those actively involved and is designed to make these ministry structures transparent.

This Handbook is subject to the Constitution and must not contradict it; but can be used to explain it more clearly.

We believe that this Church belongs to Christ and that we as the Body of Christ have a responsibility and an obligation to discern the mind of Christ so that we can follow His Ways in all things. Each member is an essential part of this Body and this discernment.

## **2. The Purpose of the Church**

The primary purpose of Bethel Baptist Church is to promote the Christian faith and to both exercise and encourage the development of Christian belief and behaviour as a community of disciples and disciple-makers.

Our purpose is best summarised by *“Love God, Love Others.”*

## **3. The Core Values of the Church**

- Lost people matter to God and must matter to us.
- The church should be Biblically based and aim to be culturally relevant.
- Followers of Christ should live their lives in a way that is consistent with the Bible.
- Each member will be encouraged to discover and use their Spiritual Gifts.
- Loving relationships should be in every aspect of church life.
- Small groups are an essential part of church life for spiritual growth, discipleship and relationship building.
- Excellence honours God and we will aim to achieve it.
- Full devotion to Christ and His cause is normal.
- The church must be a unified body led by the Holy Spirit.

## **4. Key Beliefs of the Church**

At Bethel we have adopted The Baptist Union of Great Britain Declaration of Principle as our key beliefs:

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

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

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

We further believe in:

- God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Almighty, Perfect, Holy, gracious, merciful and compassionate.
- The Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, totally human and absolutely divine. We believe in His virgin birth, His perfect life and teaching, His death on the cross in our place, His bodily resurrection and His ascension into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father until He comes again for His Church.
- The Holy Spirit who brings conviction of sin, who initiates new birth, who leads us in discipleship, who enables us in worship, empowers us in ministry and witness and who is essential in our lives.
- We believe the Bible to be the Word of God, divinely inspired. It is our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.
- We believe that all humankind is sinful by nature as a result of the fall of Adam and that all people are guilty of sin in the sight of our Holy God. We believe that salvation from sin is available to all through faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the Universal Church as the body of which Jesus Christ is the head.
- We believe in the ordinances of baptism and of the Lord's Supper as both instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the priesthood of all believers, sharing in ministry using their God-given gifts, giving personal witness to the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ and taking part in the continuing mission of Jesus Christ.
- We believe Christian marriage is between one man and one woman.

#### **5. The Actions of the Church shall include:**

- regular public worship, prayer, Bible study, preaching and teaching
- full immersion baptism
- the Communion of the Lord's Supper
- evangelism and mission, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- the teaching, encouragement, welcome and inclusion of all people
- nurture and growth of Christian disciples
- education and training for Christian and community service

- giving and encouraging pastoral care
- supporting and encouraging charitable social action in the United Kingdom and abroad
- encouraging relationships with and supporting other Churches and Christians

## **6. Holding or Custodian Trustees**

This is the Baptist Union Corporation Ltd. (BUC) which exercises the legal trusteeship of the lands and buildings of the Church on behalf of the Church Members' Meeting. They are known as either "Holding" or "Custodian" Trustees. As long as the Church meets then the BUC will only act on the instructions of the Church Members' Meetings.

## **7. Managing Trustees**

These are members of the Church who have been elected by the Church Members' Meeting to serve the Church in key leadership positions. They do not rule over the church but are accountable to the body of members which meets together as the Church Members' Meeting and are subject to the decisions of those Meetings.

The present arrangement of the Managing Trustees is:

- The Senior Pastor
- The Volunteer members of the Core Team

Volunteer members of the Core Team are elected by the Church Members' Meeting for a period of up to three years and may be reappointed for a further two terms after which a sabbatical is recommended.

## **8. Church Membership**

Membership is open to believers who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; have been baptised as believers; and endeavour to follow Christ's teaching in their daily living. Application is made to the Church for entry into membership by:

- Believer's Baptism
- Transfer of Membership (from a Baptist Church - having previously been baptised as a Believer)
- Profession of Faith (having previously been baptised as a Believer)

Applications are brought to the Church Members' Meeting and if accepted by Transfer or Profession they become members from the date of that meeting. If by Baptism then membership begins with their Baptism.

## **9. Responsibilities of Members**

**We accept responsibility for our own Spiritual development:**

- By studying the Bible
- By spending time with God in prayer
- By meeting together regularly with other Christians

### **We accept responsibility for our partnership in Bethel:**

- By attending worship services
- By praying regularly for the church, its ministries, and leaders
- By attending and sharing our insights in Church Members' Meetings
- By contributing to the financial needs of the Church (by bringing God's tithes and our offerings)
- By participating and supporting the ministries of the church

### **We accept responsibility as Christ's Ambassadors in Society:**

- By living a life that honours Christ
- By sharing the Gospel with others

## **10. Church Members' Meetings**

The Church Members' Meeting is open to all Members over the age of 14 years. The primary purpose of the Church Members' Meeting is to seek God's Will for the mission and ministry of this Church. We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ and so we are looking to discern and follow the Mind of Christ for this, His church.

*"Worship including prayer and the reading of Scripture shall be a key feature of the Church Members' Meeting. The discussion of any matters affecting the life and activities of the Church shall be set in this context with the intention that, so far as possible, practical issues are not perceived as being separate from the spiritual aspects of the Church."*

By praying and discussing together we are asking God to reveal His plans and purposes. Votes are taken as part of this process, with Members over the age of 16 years being eligible to vote. On occasion the leadership of the Church may decide that the decision is not clear enough and could postpone the decision until another time.

The church members' meeting is usually held at least three times a year, one of which must be an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

There are two types of meeting – an "Ordinary" one and a "Special" one. A minimum number of Members (a quorum) is required for both: one third (33.3%) of the Membership. 7 days notice is required for all Special Members' Meetings and this is also our practice for Ordinary Members' Meetings.

Special Church Members' Meetings are convened for:

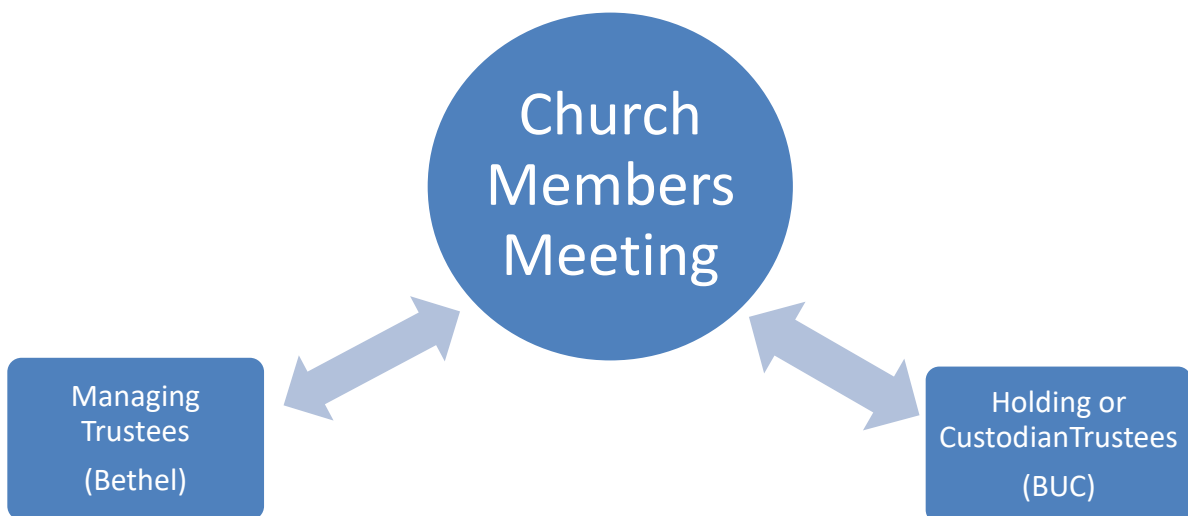
- the appointment or dismissal of a Pastor
- the dismissal of a Trustee
- matters relating to the purchase, sale, lease, mortgage or redevelopment of church property
- the closure of the church

- other serious matters considered by the Church Trustees to be of sufficient importance to require the calling of a Special Members' Meeting.

Wherever possible and where there is a clear agreement among the Members, they may reach a decision by consensus without a vote. Also, votes are taken by a show of hands, and a secret vote is taken by paper votes for certain matters.

Exceptions to the 'simple majority' include appointment and dismissal of Ministers and the election of Trustees which require 70% of votes cast.

If someone does not wish to be involved in a particular decision and is willing to accept any outcome, then that person may abstain from voting. They are counted as part of the quorum but are not counted for or against in number or in percentage form.



## 11. The Core Team

The Core Team is a group of leaders elected directly by the Church Members Meeting and who are accountable to it, to oversee the spiritual direction of the Church. This team is made up of the Pastors called to serve the church for an indefinite period and volunteer members who serve for a period of up to three years and may be reappointed for a further two terms after which a sabbatical is recommended.

## 12. Election of the Core Team and Heads of Ministries

The usual process for electing members to the Core Team or the Heads of Ministries is as follows:

Nomination:



## Core Team

Members may recommend names of other Church Members to the existing Core Team at any time, for their consideration. Following a process of prayer & discernment the Core Team may bring this suggested nomination to the Heads of Ministries. If they agree, then the existing Core Team make this nomination to the Church.

## Heads of Ministries

Ministry teams will work with the Core Team to select a Head of Ministry, with nominations brought to the other Heads of Ministry, and if agreed, nominated to the Church.

## The election

- Members are encouraged to pray before attending the meeting concerning the forthcoming election.
- Voting slips will be issued to Church Members at the meeting after the matter has been discussed and prayed over before Members cast their votes.
- Members wishing to abstain for whatever reason should not return their ballot papers. Their abstention is not included as a vote for or against and is excluded from the calculation of any percentage.
- Two tellers will be appointed by the Church Members meeting and will count the relevant ballot papers and return the result to the chair.
- Each nominee will require an affirmative vote of 70% of the returned papers to be elected to serve.

Heads of Ministry will serve for up to three years and may be reappointed for a further two terms after which a sabbatical is recommended.

## **13. Ministry Teams**

The ministries at Bethel only achieve their full potential with the support of volunteers. All Members are encouraged to use their spiritual gifts and natural talents to serve in the life of the Church.

## **14. Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS)**

Anyone wishing to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults in Bethel will need to have a current DBS check (formally CRB), before commencing with the work. There are several ways this can be achieved and liaison with our DBS checker is essential. DBS checks done by other organisations, but which have not been registered online, cannot be accepted and Bethel will need to carry out a further check.

## **15. Pastoral Care**

It is crucial as a Church that we try to mirror the actions of Jesus, which the Bible describes as compassionate, like that of a shepherd who loves, nurtures and protects his sheep. Pastoral care will partly take place in our Life Groups, through natural relationships and also identified in the Church networks by the Leaders, Members or friends of Bethel. The Pastoral Care Team will work closely with our Pastors to ensure that as best as they are able, they care effectively and sensitively for the needs of the congregation and those connected to Bethel.

The Pastoral care team is made up of a variety of people who represent a cross section of Bethel. We will do our very best to make sure that the most suitable person will visit or make contact with you and journey with you in that particular season of your life.

## **16. Finance**

The main source of income for the church comes from tithes and offerings given by Members and others who regularly attend. All of the income is managed by the Church itself and is used for supporting the purposes of the Church. Bethel tithes its income on a monthly basis and uses this to support other missions unconnected to Bethel. At the AGM a budget is approved. During the year at Ordinary Church Members Meetings, updates on the budget are presented. At the end of the financial year a detailed account of the Church finances is made available to all Members and an overview presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Church Members Meeting.

## **17. Policies**

The policies within the appendices have been approved by the Members of Bethel and form part of the governance of the Church. These policies will, overtime, be reviewed and further policies added as required.