

1. OUR VISION

Our vision is to see God's kingdom grow through a healthy Church living as a wholesome community engaging in effective mission. Our desire is to glorify God in all that we do whilst creating a community that is: -

- 1.1 A worshipping community – engaging in worship and prayer that inspires and undergirds all that we are and do.
- 1.2 A sacrificial community – reflecting the generous, life-giving nature of God.
- 1.3 An inclusive community – transcending all barriers of gender, race, class, age & culture.
- 1.4 A missionary community – sharing Christ relevantly within and outside the church, demonstrating in words and actions God's gracious, forgiving and healing love.
- 1.5 A prophetic community – challenging the worldly concepts of power, wealth, status and security. Confronting evil and hypocrisy and seeking truth and justice.
- 1.6 A responsible community – seeking the maintenance, repair and renovation of our buildings, which are a place of worship and historic interest in Norwich, open to the public and committed to the protection of the environment.

2. OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

Our statement of faith affirms our belief in the following truths, which are shared by millions of Christians throughout the world: -

- 2.1 We believe in the one true and living God, eternally existing and revealed as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He created all things for His glory. He is a God of justice, love and mercy and calls us into relationship with Him to make us whole.
- 2.2 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is our supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and life, as revealed in the Bible – and that the Bible, being the inspired word of God, is entirely trustworthy.
- 2.3 We believe that man was created in the image of God, but that the whole of humanity has fallen from God's perfect plan and is deserving of God's perfect judgement.
- 2.4 We believe that the Lord, Jesus Christ, died on the cross, taking upon Himself the penalty for our sin. Only through His death and subsequent resurrection is the way open for us to experience, by personal faith in Him, eternal life and salvation from the guilt, power and eternal consequence of sin.
- 2.5 We believe that the Holy Spirit enables us to be born again by faith in Christ. He lives in us providing the power to become Christ-like in character and effective in God's service.
- 2.6 We believe that the universal Church is made up of all those who have turned to Christ as Saviour and Lord in repentance and personal faith. Through relationship with God, each Christian is given gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to serve Him and His Church in the world.
- 2.7 We believe that the local Church is the committed local gathering of God's people for the purpose of worship, fellowship, learning, mutual encouragement, service and outreach. The Church is the living expression of Christ's ministry in the community and each member is gifted to take part in that ministry.

- 2.8 We believe that Christ will return, personally and visibly, to this world in power and glory. He will judge the living and the dead and His kingdom will have no end.
- 2.9 We believe that Christ instituted the sacraments of Believers' Baptism and Holy Communion and that they are to be practised by his people.

3. OUR AFFILIATION

Our affiliation is to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Eastern Baptist Association. We are a self-governing Church under the guidance of God, discerned through the Church Meeting.

We are committed to supporting the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, Home Mission and other projects as agreed by the Church Meeting. From time to time the Church may decide to become associated with, or work with, other Christian Churches or organisations if in so doing the Church Meeting believes that we will further the Lord's work.

4. OUR MEMBERSHIP

Authority for all decision making rests, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, collectively with the Church Members present and voting at Church Meetings. Therefore we believe it right and proper to have a number of 'rules' regarding Church Membership:-

- 4.1 Membership is a personal and conscious decision willingly to join the local Church for the purpose of worship, fellowship, learning, mutual encouragement, service and outreach.
- 4.2 Membership is open to anyone who professes a personal and living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who accepts the principles in our Statement of Faith and who wants to work with the Church to fulfil our Vision.
- 4.3 We believe in the sacrament of Believer's Baptism and therefore expect that all members will have been baptised as a believer, normally through immersion.
- 4.4 If a Christian from another branch of the Christian tradition wishes to become a member we would deem it essential that they have made a public declaration of their faith through an appropriate initiation and/or confirmation process. We would also ask that they carefully consider Believers' Baptism.
- 4.5 Anyone wishing to be Baptised and to become a member should initially discuss their desire to do so with at least one of the Church's minister(s) or elders. Following this discussion two Church Members will be appointed to informally interview them.
- 4.6 The 'membership interview' is an opportunity to explore the candidate's Christian faith together with the Church's rules, Basis of Faith, Vision and the responsibilities that go alongside membership. Those interviewing a candidate should present a report at a subsequent Church Meeting recommending, or otherwise, the candidate for membership. The candidate will be accepted to join the Church if a majority of Church Members accept that recommendation.
- 4.7 Members wishing to transfer from other Churches, including Baptist Churches, should also apply for and be interviewed for Church Membership. If possible, our Church will contact the transferring Church informing them of the new membership application and seeking commendation.
- 4.8 Any member wishing to transfer membership from our Church to another is welcome to ask our Church for a letter of

commendation, which will normally be provided by the Church Secretary or Administrator.

- 4.9 Any member whose conduct is thought to be incompatible with their profession of faith or membership responsibilities will be visited by two members of the Church Council and lovingly counselled and, if appropriate, cautioned.
- 4.10 The minister(s) and elders will regularly review our membership roll and names of members who have either moved away, or no longer appear to wish to be part of the Church will be removed, but only after due notice and/or attempts to visit or contact the member. Removal of names will be agreed by a majority of Church Members present and voting at a Church Meeting.

5. OUR LEADERSHIP

Our Church leadership, otherwise known as the Church Council, will be comprised of the:

- o minister(s), including any associate or assistant
- o elders
- o deacons, including the church treasurer and church secretary.

All members of the Church Council must be Church Members, be men or women of mature faith, have been Baptised as believers and be at least 18 years old. In particular:-

- 5.1 Our minister(s) will be accredited by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and will be called into ministry by a Special Church Meeting, requiring the support of at least 80% of those present, entitled to vote and voting in a secret ballot.
- 5.2 Our elders and deacons will normally be appointed at the Church's Annual General Meeting – their nominations having been announced at the previous Church Meeting. Nominations will be proposed and seconded by at least two Church Members, and the candidate will have been consulted and indicated that they are willing to allow their nomination to proceed. In the case of our elders, the nominations should initially be brought to the minister(s) and existing elders prior to discussion with the nominee.
- 5.3 Elders and deacons must have been in Church Membership for at least one year and must obtain the support of at least 60% of those present and entitled to vote and voting in a secret ballot.
- 5.4 Paid employees of the Church, or their spouses, are not eligible to serve as deacons (who are the legal trustees of the Church).
- 5.5 Our elders and deacons will be appointed for a period of four years and, if re-nominated and re-elected, may serve for two periods in succession. They will not be eligible for renomination for at least one year following a second term in office.
- 5.6 The number of elders will vary according to the necessary duties and available gifts.
- 5.7 The number of deacons will not normally exceed nine. If more nominations than vacancies are proposed for election, those receiving the highest number of votes, so long as they receive more than 60% of those present, entitled to vote and voting in a secret ballot, will be appointed to fill the vacancies. Church Members will be entitled to cast one vote for each candidate.
- 5.8 The Church treasurer and secretary must be eligible to serve as deacons and if not already elected as deacon or elder will become deacons by virtue of their office. The treasurer and secretary will be appointed at the Church's Annual General

Meeting their nominations having been announced at the previous Church Meeting. Nominations will be proposed and seconded by at least two Church Members, or by recommendation of the Church Council. The appointment will be for a period of two years and must obtain the support of at least 60% of those present, entitled to vote and voting in a secret ballot.

- 5.9 Elders, alongside the minister(s), will be responsible to the Church for the pastoral oversight and teaching of the whole congregation. Deacons will be responsible to the Church for the administration of its practical affairs. Elders and deacons will normally meet separately and at least once every two months.
- 5.10 The Church Council will lead the Church in the discovering and implementing of God's will for the Church and will normally meet together at least once per quarter.
- 5.11 The Church Council and/or Diaconate will act for and on behalf of the Church between Church Meetings. They will be accountable to the Church Meeting, which will have the right to revoke any decisions that they may make. At least 50% of the deacons must be present at any Church Council or deacons meeting for it to be considered quorate.
- 5.12 In addition to the Church minister(s), the Church may appoint full and/or part-time employees to serve in any necessary role. Prior to any such appointment, the Church Meeting must approve both the role and the nominee, requiring at least 60% of those present, entitled to vote and voting in a ballot.
- 5.13 Any full and/or part time employee, including the minister(s), will receive a personal contract of employment, detailing Terms and Conditions. These contracts will be negotiated, and Terms and Conditions regularly reviewed on behalf of the Church Meeting by either the Church Council or if agreed, a group delegated by the Church Council or Church Meeting.

6. OUR ORGANISATION

In addition to the Church Council, our Church may have a number of organisations or committees furthering the work of the Church. These organisations may be fulfilling roles as diverse as, for example, children's work, luncheon clubs, evangelism, discipleship, stewarding at Church Services and managing the Church's finances. Each organisation and committee will:-

- 6.1 Be accountable to the Church Meeting.
 - 6.2 Normally be led by Church Members.
 - 6.3 Be led or chaired by a member appointed at a Church Meeting
 - 6.4 Take due care of all Church property, not removing property without permission from a member of the Church Council.
 - 6.5 Keep account of any finances and allow the Church treasurer access to any records for oversight and annual audit.
- Our finances, maintained by the Church treasurer, will be:-
- 6.6 Provided for solely by voluntary contribution.
 - 6.7 Placed in bank accounts held in the name of the Church.
 - 6.8 Audited annually as required by provisions of the Law relating to Charities and presented to the Church's Annual General Meeting.

7. OUR CHURCH MEETING

Our Church Meeting is the final authority for all decision making and therefore all Church Members will be called together at the Church Meeting to seek the will of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- 7.1 All Church organisations and committees, including the Church Council, will be accountable to the Church Meeting.
- 7.2 All Church Members will be invited and encouraged to attend the Church Meeting. Non-members may be invited to the Church Meeting but, on matters requiring a vote, will not be entitled to vote.
- 7.3 A Church Meeting will normally be held bi-monthly. Once each year an Annual General Meeting must take place – this meeting may be included as part of a Church Meeting.
- 7.4 Occasionally Special Church Meetings may be convened, possibly, but not necessarily, as part of an ordinary Church Meeting. These Special Church Meetings are required for the purposes of: a) appointing or dismissing a minister; b) major alterations, demolition or building of Church property; c) any alteration of the Church's Trust Deeds; d) alterations to these rules.
- 7.5 The minister(s), a majority of the Church Council or 20% of the Church Members, may convene a Special Church Meeting at any time.
- 7.6 A Church or Special Church Meeting will be publicly announced, together with its purpose or agenda, with at least two weeks notice. Motions to amend these Church rules must be made at a Church Meeting with a minimum of three months notice prior to any vote – for significant or major changes in rules at least six months notice should be given.
- 7.7 The Church's leadership will prepare the agenda for any Church or Special Church Meeting. Any Church Member can request items to be added to the agenda, providing at least two weeks' notice is given. Any major proposition likely to require a vote or secret ballot must have a least one month's written notice prior to addition to an agenda.
- 7.8 Church and Special Church Meetings will be chaired by a member of the Church Council, minuted and the minutes accepted as a true record at the subsequent Church Meeting.
- 7.9 Unless otherwise stated in these rules, if a vote is required then a two-thirds majority of those present, entitled to vote *and voting* will carry the motion. At least half of those entitled to vote must vote in favour of a motion for it to be carried.
With regards to committee meetings in which LTCS projects will be discussed and decisions made, the chairperson shall be entitled to a second or casting vote in the result of an equality of votes.
- 7.10 Where proposals to alter the Church's leadership, Trust Deeds or these rules are to be voted upon, the meeting will be considered quorate if at least half of the Church's members are present together with at least half the Church Council. For all other motions, at least one-third of the Church Members must be present to establish a quorum.



Our Vision
Our Basis of Faith
Our Church Rules