

Church Rules

In the context of these rules, the term "the Church" means "Ashford Common Baptist Church" in Association with the London Baptist Association Ltd. and a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Membership

1. Membership is open to all who profess their faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who hold to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; who accept the authority of the Holy Scriptures and that interpretation of them usually called evangelical; who promise to serve Christ within His Church and are committed to the people, vision and mission of the Church. Those who have not been baptised as believers shall be asked to think earnestly and prayerfully about why they should not be baptised now.
2. Anyone wishing to be considered for membership shall apply to one of the leaders who shall arrange an interview by two Church members or members of the Leadership Team to enquire into the reality of the applicant's Christian faith and discipleship and describe the responsibilities of members. The Church meeting shall, upon hearing a report of the interview, be invited to accept or decline the application.
3. The Membership Roll shall be updated each year so that it reflects only those continuing in active commitment to Christ and the Church. The Leadership Team shall notify members considered inactive, and if possible visit them before bringing proposed revisions for acceptance at the Church Meeting.
4. Any change of address should be notified to a member of the Leadership Team. Members moving to another district are urged to seek fellowship as soon as possible with a Church there.
5. Members shall accept the authority of the Church Meeting and acknowledge their responsibilities as members. Members of the Leadership Team shall lovingly visit and if necessary humbly confront members whose actions seem in conflict with Christian discipleship, the aim being to help restore their relationship with God and with others. In the last instance they shall bring the matter to the Church Meeting.

Associate Membership

1. Members who wish to remain linked to the Church for a time but are not in Membership may become Associate Members, may attend Church Meetings, but not vote.
2. Associate membership will automatically cease at the second Annual General Meeting following designation as Associate Members unless the person is restored to full membership.

Leadership Team

1. The members of the Leadership Team are responsible for the spiritual direction, teaching, pastoral care and mission of the Church. They shall have been baptised as believers and shall affirm the Baptist Declaration of Principle. They must be members of the Church, shall normally have been in membership for at least one year and fully support the aims and direction of the Church.
2. The members of the Leadership Team will be selected to provide a balance of gifting. Potential leaders shall, after prayerful consideration by the existing Leadership Team, be proposed for confirmation at a Special Church Meeting.
3. There shall normally be a minimum of three persons in the Leadership Team. Where there are less than three the Church Meeting may appoint a Moderator in consultation with the Regional Minister. The team shall share 'equal responsibility', although one member chosen by the Team, and agreed (or dismissed) by the Church Meeting shall act humbly as 'first among equals'.
4. Members of the Leadership Team may, at the discretion of the Church Meeting, be supported financially by the Church at a rate determined at least annually. In such cases it is desirable that such person's name appears on the Baptist Union Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers. Such appointments shall be made under the guidance of the Regional Minister.
5. Unless subject to employment terms and conditions, appointment to the Leadership Team shall, unless re-appointed, automatically cease at the third Annual General Meeting after their appointment.

Stewards

1. Stewards are Members with responsibility for organising and managing specific activities within the life of the church and support the Leadership Team.
2. The number of Leaders and Stewards shall be limited to no more than 25% of the Membership (rounded up to the nearest multiple of 4)

3. Stewards are spiritually gifted Members appointed by a Special Church Meeting. Nominations for the roles may be made to the Leadership Team in advance; the Leadership Team shall then recommend nominees to the Church Meeting where, if there is more than one recommendation, an 'election' shall take place.
4. Stewards will generally carry out their role by ad hoc reference to the Leaders and the needs associated with the specific role.
5. Stewards should, where appropriate, enlist other suitably gifted Members in order to carry out their task, thereby helping to develop 'works of service' for the Members. Non-Members may also be enlisted, but only after consultation with one of the Leadership Team, especially in regards to Safeguarding issues.
6. Stewards shall, unless re-appointed, automatically come to the end of their appointment at the third Annual General Meeting after their appointment begins.

Trustees

1. The Leadership Team and Stewards are the Managing Trustees of the Church and shall meet from time to time in order to discharge their role.
2. Stewards not able or willing to act as Trustees may 'opt out' on appointment or at the Church Annual General Meeting. No Trustee shall be appointed if legally debarred from office.
3. Additional Trustees may be appointed by a Special Church Meeting called for that purpose.
4. Trustees may be reimbursed their expenses incurred as Trustees.

Activities

1. Church groups and activities shall operate under the guidance and authority of the Leadership Team and the Church Meeting. No activity connected with the Church shall be started without the endorsement of the Leadership Team and normally only after consultation with the Church Meeting.
2. The Leadership Team shall commission the overall leaders of activities who shall in turn develop their teams of workers in consultation with the Leadership Team.
3. Activities shall be reviewed annually and shall continue only while they are serving the vision and direction of the Church.
4. A named member of the Leadership Team shall act as a point of contact with the Leadership Team and shall have final authority within each group connected with the Church.

The Church Meeting

1. Church Members shall meet together in a Church Meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of Christ to discern the mind of God in the affairs of the Church, and as such, shall be the final decision making authority for all matters resulting to the affairs of the Church.
2. A formally constituted meeting of Church Members shall be convened by the Leadership Team at least once every calendar quarter. Notice of its date and venue shall be given at each of the public worship services on the Sunday before the meeting at the latest, by which time the agenda shall be available to Members.

Special Church Meetings

1. A Special Meeting of Church Members shall be convened by the Leadership Team with at least two consecutive Sunday's notice given at public services to consider the following:
 - (i) The appointment or removal of a member of the Leadership Team.
 - (ii) The purchase, sale, erection or alteration of buildings or the sale, letting or mortgage of Church property.
 - (iii) Changes to Church rules.
 - (iv) The appointment of new Stewards or Trustees.
 - (v) Other matters of serious concern.
3. Additionally, a Special Church Meeting shall be held within twenty eight days of a written request signed by one-tenth of, or eight, Church Members, whichever is greater.
4. The purpose for the Special Church Meeting and the matters to be considered shall be stated when giving notice of the meeting. If the Leadership Team so decide, this notice may be in writing to members only. Non-receipt of the notice by any members shall not invalidate the proceedings of the Meeting.
5. The Annual General Meeting of the Church shall be convened in April or May each year. This shall include a report from the Leadership Team and a review of the Church accounts.

Procedure at Church Meetings

1. No meeting shall be considered to be convened if the attendance is less than one-third (rounded down) of the membership role.
2. The Chairperson of each meeting shall be a member of the Leadership Team or a Church member appointed by the

Leadership Team.

3. Minutes of decisions shall be kept.
4. A formal vote or ballot shall be taken when called by:
 - (i) the Chairperson, or
 - (ii) a majority of the Leadership Team, or
 - (iii) at least three members present.In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Meeting shall have a casting vote whether or not he or she has previously voted on the subject. At a Special Church Meeting, only members of the Church who are at least 16 years old are entitled to vote.
5. No previously adopted resolution may be revoked at a subsequent meeting unless notice of this intention is given in the agenda.
6. A resolution at the Church Meeting shall only be carried when more than half of the members actually voting at the meeting support it.
7. Except where stated elsewhere, a resolution at a Special Church Meeting shall only be carried when more than two-thirds of the members actually voting at the meeting support it.
8. A resolution at a Special Church Meeting to amend these rules or to appoint or remove a member of the Leadership Team shall only be carried when more than three-quarters of the members actually voting at the meeting support it

Church Accounts

1. The Church financial year shall be 1st April to 31st March. Stewardship of the Church finances shall be the responsibility of a named Trustee.
2. The Treasurer shall act in accordance with direction from the Leadership Team, but has authority to act within the confines of a budget which may be set from time to time. Deviation from agreed budgets shall only follow authorisation by the Church Meeting.
3. The Church accounts shall be maintained in accordance with regulatory and statutory requirements.
4. The Treasurer shall make an annual statement of Church accounts for adoption (subject to examination, or audit if need be) at the Annual General Meeting. They shall be submitted for independent examination or audit by a suitably experienced and independent person or persons appointed by the Church Meeting by 1st July each year. The results of the examination or audit shall be notified to a named member of the Leadership Team.
5. Where a Church group requires funds that are segregated from the Church funds, financial accounts shall be kept. Copies shall be presented to the Church Treasurer prior to the Annual General Meeting each year. The Church Treasurer, or any duly appointed person independent of the group, shall examine the accounts each year.
6. Banking transactions for the Church funds or for funds of Church groups shall be subject to the signature of two members approved by the Church Meeting.

Closure of Church

1. Should a resolution be agreed by a Special Church Meeting that the Church be dissolved, any funds remaining after the payment of all liabilities, expenses and after consideration of the needs of our Partners, for example the Elim Charitable Trust, shall be assigned to the London Baptist Association for the benefit of Christian work within 10 miles of Sunbury Cross.

Alterations to the Rules

1. The above rules may be altered or added to only at a Special Church Meeting.

These rules are effective 28th May 2015 and include changes due to the introduction of Stewards

Notes to the Church Rules

We intend to always seek God's ways in the way the church moves forward. We recognise that, at times, we may err from His ways, and therefore have set out the basis of how the Church will be formally constituted and governed. These notes supplement the rules and are intended to give more general guidance. In cases of ambiguity, the rules have precedence at all times.

These notes may be changed under the authority of a Church Meeting and do not need a Special Church Meeting.

Membership

Candidates for Baptism will be taught the basis of believer's Baptism and will be encouraged to join our Church as soon after their Baptism as possible. Those who prefer not to join us may still be Baptised at the discretion of the Leadership Team.

We will normally encourage new members to participate in a "Membership Course" during which the distinctive nature of the Baptist denomination will be explored. Members joining us from other Baptist Churches may not benefit from such a "Course". We will normally seek a recommendation for those wishing to become Members by transfer from another church.

Should circumstances arise whereby a member's actions seems in conflict with Christian discipleship the desire will always be to follow Matthew 18:¹⁰⁻¹⁷.

Leadership Team

We recognise that scripture gives many indications of the early church having offices, and that many churches interpret these today in having a Minister, Elders and / or Deacons whilst others have Priests and Bishops. We recognise the final authority of the Church Meeting, but that some are called to lead the Church and are gifted accordingly by the Holy Spirit. We note that scripture indicates that different early churches had leadership arrangements that reflected the needs of the local situation.

In Ashford Common Baptist Church we set some of our Members aside as Leaders, expecting them to act as a Team to jointly discern God's will for us. We shall expect them to exercise their own gifts, and respect those of others inside and outside the Leadership Team. We believe that the conduct of a Leader is subject to scriptural guidelines, and that each Leader is accountable to God for his or her leadership. We therefore place greater emphasis on how leadership is exercised, than upon titles of officers.

We recognise that any Team needs a leader, and endorse one of our Leadership Team as its Leader, but shall expect that Leader to serve the Team and Church humbly before God. Where one of the Leadership Team is financially supported by the Church, we would expect that person to be the Leader, and in many respects the equivalent of a Baptist Minister or Lay Pastor in a Team Leadership setting. We do not preclude the Church financially supporting other workers.

Stewards

We have recognised that the Leadership Team members can be distracted from their spiritual roles and have introduced the role of "Steward", which is similar in nature to the classic role of 'Deacon' and akin to the Acts 6 example: *³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.*"

Stewards will be given defined roles, meet with one or more of the Leadership Team from time to time but generally carry out their role according to the needs associated with the specific role. Reference to one of the Leadership Team should be made as required.

Stewards should, where appropriate, enlist other Members in order to fulfil their own role, thereby helping to develop 'works of service' for the Members. Non-Members may also be enlisted, but only after consultation with one of the Leaders; (this is especially if Safeguarding issues are involved).

At first, it is considered that there be two Stewards, and we would not expect the total number of Stewards and Leadership Team to exceed 25% of the Membership.

- An Administrator - to be responsible for the classic roles of Church Secretary and Treasurer.
- A Catering Steward – to be responsible for and develop a support team for all aspects of Catering, including after church refreshments and special functions other than events where we go to a restaurant. (This is a new role for which no-one is currently 'in post'.)

Trustees

The Trustees will normally be the Members of the Leadership Team and such Stewards as are suited to the role. Training would be given as appropriate

Activities

The "named member of the Leadership Team" will be the primary focal point for the leader of any approved activity and will take a special interest in the work, liaising with the rest of the Leadership Team as appropriate.

Activities which involve children and young people will be operate in accordance with the Children and Young People's Policy, Principles and Practices document, which will be reviewed annually. Copies are available from the Co-ordinator, or a member of the Leadership Team.

At the time these notes were compiled, "Approved activities" are:

Discipleship Groups – to encourage Christian discipleship and fellowship

Sunday Club – to give age appropriate Christian teaching to children and Young People

In addition, we hold various limited duration outreach activities from time to time.

The Church Meeting

It is our desire that The Church Meeting be a time not of formal decision making, but of waiting upon God for His direction.

Our rules lay down the requirements for formal meetings, but we not preclude the seeking of God's will for us at other times. Our meetings will normally be open to all worshippers at Ashford Common Baptist Church, but non-members may be asked to leave if particularly sensitive issues arise.

Procedure at Church Meeting

Whenever possible, agreement will be by consensus. Where no consensus is clear, the matter may be deferred to another meeting, possibly with the appointment of a small working group to review the matter; alternatively a vote or ballot may be taken.

Because the essence of a Church Meeting is that we seek the mind of God together, we will not normally seek proxy votes at Church Meetings.

Church Accounts

By setting an annual budget we will not routinely review our finances in Church Meeting unless significant deviations occur or are planned.

We do not hold "fund raising" events. We believe that it is the responsibility of Church Members under the guidance of God to support the work of the Church financially and encourage Members to tithe. However, a Member's ability to contribute will never be a factor in determining eligibility for Membership.

Closure of the Church

Just as we believe that God has called us to establish Ashford Common Baptist Church, we recognise that the time may come when God wishes us to disband the Church. Should this be so, then we have established a means by which our residual funds should be used. We acknowledge the very special relationship held with the Elim Full Gospel Church (which comes within the remit of the Elim Charitable Trust) and expect consideration to be given to their needs before Ashford Common Baptist Church is closed. After such consideration, we would prefer the London Baptist Association in dealing with any residual funds to firstly seek ways by which the evangelical Christian witness in, or very close to, Ashford Common. We have based the rule upon a well known local landmark.