

## Constitution & Articles of Faith

# **BRIDGNORTH BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1. CHURCH NAME, STATUS, PURPOSE, ACTIVITIES & AFFILIATIONS**
- 2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**
- 3. CHURCH MEETINGS**
- 4. CHARITY TRUSTEES**
- 5. MINISTERS/PASTORS**
- 6. OTHER CHURCH APPOINTMENTS**
- 7. FINANCE, RECORD KEEPING & ACCOUNTING**
- 8. CONSTITUTION**
- 9. CLOSURE**
- 10. APPENDICES & SCHEDULES**

#### APPENDIX 1

##### **BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE**

#### APPENDIX 2

##### **BRIDGNORTH BAPTIST CHURCH ARTICLES OF FAITH**

#### APPENDIX 3

##### **BELIEFS & SERVICES**

#### SCHEDULES OF PROCEDURES

- 1. APPOINTMENT OF CHURCH MEMBERS**
- 2. CONVENING A CHURCH MEETING**
- 3. VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**
- 4. APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF CHARITY TRUSTEES**
- 5. APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF MINISTERS/PASTORS**

# **1. CHURCH NAME, STATUS, PURPOSE, ACTIVITIES & AFFILIATIONS**

## **1.1 Church Name & Status**

The Church Members of the charitable unincorporated association governed by this Constitution known as **Bridgnorth Baptist Church** or such other name as shall subsequently be adopted by decision of the Church Members' Meeting and with the consent of the Charity Commission.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The principal purpose of the Church is the advancement of the Christian faith. The Church may also advance education and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and/or other parts of the world.

## **1.3 Activities**

In fulfilling the Purpose the Church will engage in a range of Activities either on its own or with others that will vary from time to time with Activities being initiated, expanded, or closed, as appropriate.

The Activities may include but are not restricted to:

- Regular public worship, prayer, Bible study, preaching and teaching and observing Communion
- Promoting Believer's Baptism as a Biblical principle and encouraging committed worshippers at the Church to be baptised
- The provision of education, training and discipleship including equipping and supporting Church Members and those regularly worshipping at the Church to fulfil their Christian service
- Providing pastoral support and care including practical and financial support where appropriate in the United Kingdom and abroad
- Engaging in evangelistic and mission activities and supporting those involved in these activities locally, nationally and internationally
- Encouraging fellowship with other Christians wherever possible
- Expressing God's love to the community and meeting practical needs through charitable social action in the United Kingdom and abroad
- Raising finance to fund the Purpose and Activities of the Church including the raising of loans, grants, donations and gifts

Notwithstanding the appointment of persons to accept responsibility for any of the Activities all individuals, organisations, groups, and committees operating within the life of the Church, and their leaders, shall be accountable to the Charity Trustees and also through any specific direction of the Church Members' Meeting.

## **1.4 Beliefs & Services**

APPENDIX 3 outlines details of beliefs and specific activities/services regarding:

- Believers' Baptism
- Observing Communion
- Dedication of Infants
- Marriage Services
- Use of the church premises

## **1.5 Affiliations**

The Church is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Heart of England Baptist Association and subscribes to the Union's Declaration of Principle as detailed in APPENDIX 1.

The Church may be affiliated to other Christian organisations and bodies approved by the Church Meeting. All such affiliations shall be consistent with the Church's Articles of Faith as detailed in APPENDIX 2.

The Church will promote, encourage and support those organisations of which it is a member or to which it is affiliated through prayer, financial contribution and, as appropriate, through the provision of personnel.

## **2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **2.1 General Overview**

It is anticipated that those who regularly worship at the Church will wish to assist in the achievement of the Purpose and take part in the Activities including corporate worship, administration and decision-making responsibilities.

Whilst the Charity Trustees are responsible for administering and overseeing the overall direction and vision of the Church, the active involvement of those who regularly worship is encouraged, as this supports "Body ministry" where ***"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"*** (1Peter 4: 10).

### **2.2 Responsibilities of Church Members**

- To regularly attend worship, prayer, Communion and other Church activities. It is recognised that on occasions family and work responsibilities, illness and frailty due to old age will sometimes prevent attendance. Where prolonged unexplained absence occurs, the Charity Trustees will request a meeting with the Member(s) concerned to ascertain the reasons.
- To assist the Church in the achievement of its Purpose and Activities by physically attending, supporting and, as appropriate, contributing financially to the effective resourcing of the various activities of the Church. Church Members are encouraged to seek God's guidance, faithfully and prayerfully, on their financial involvement in the ministry based on the Biblical principles of tithes and offerings, although membership is not conditional upon such giving.
- To receive teaching and spiritual/pastoral guidance from those appointed to leadership positions who will seek the Holy Spirit's leading when counselling and advising those requesting their assistance.
- To attend Church Members' Meetings and contribute to decision-making as required. This is an important aspect of Church Membership where together we seek wisdom and guidance and agree matters relating to policy and vision, being prayerfully led by the Holy Spirit under the Lordship of Christ.
- To be actively involved in personal prayer and Bible study seeking to develop and grow Christ-like attitudes and behaviours and to uphold Christian beliefs and values

## **2.3 Becoming a Church Member**

Church Membership will be extended to those who:

- Declare their faith in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- Have repented of their sin and accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and seek to live their lives under the Lordship of Christ following the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit;
- Declare their faith in Jesus Christ through the act of Believers' Baptism;
- Accept the authority of the Bible and seek to honour God in the whole of their lives;
- Accept the Church Constitution and Articles of Faith and acknowledge their responsibilities as a Church Member as outlined in this Constitution;
- Willingly accept guidance and pastoral instruction from those whom the Church has appointed as leaders.

In exceptional circumstances the Charity Trustees, at their discretion, may recommend to a Church Members' Meeting that a person who has become a regular and committed worshipper, but who previously attended a different Church denomination and has not been baptised by immersion, be accepted as a Church Member.

The Charity Trustees will encourage all those seeking to become a Church Member to give prayerful consideration to being baptised.

Those adults who are regular worshippers at the Church who are baptised by immersion will normally be encouraged to become Church Members unless the criteria above cannot be fulfilled.

Where a person under the age of 18 years who is a regular worshipper is baptised at the Church they will normally be proposed for Church Membership on attainment of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **2.4 Process for appointing Church Members:**

The process for appointing Church Members is set out in SCHEDULE 1 of this Constitution.

On regular occasions meetings and/or special teaching courses outlining the requirements of Church Membership and Baptism will be provided.

## **2.5 The Church Membership List:**

A List of the current Church Members shall be maintained by the Charity Trustees incorporating routine changes due to additions or deletions as a result of death, transfer to another church, resignation, or a resolution by a Church Meeting.

Where a person formally resigns from Church Membership or becomes a member of another church, their name will be removed from the List of Members of this Church.

All such additions or deletions will be reported to Church Members' Meetings as necessary.

## **2.6 Removal or Termination of Church Membership**

The Charity Trustees will address with Church Members who are considered to be undertaking activities which are deemed to be:

- Incompatible with the Purposes of the Church, or
- Disruptive to the effective running of the Church, or
- Incompatible with Biblical principles and values.

This will be undertaken with a spirit of gentleness and humility, attempting reconciliation where disputes arise between Church Members in accordance with scriptural precedents (e.g. Matthew 18:15-17).

In such circumstances where the conduct of Church Member(s) cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the Charity Trustees, they may recommend to a Church Members' Meeting that membership be terminated.

The Church Member(s) concerned shall be permitted to attend the Church Members' Meeting and correct any factual errors and offer any explanation of the circumstances before the Church Members' Meeting prayerfully and carefully resolves whether to remove a Church Member from the Church Membership List.

A review of the Membership List will be undertaken by the Charity Trustees at least once every 5 years and recommendations made to a Church Members' Meeting.

Those Church Members attending may resolve to make any appropriate deletions or request that the Charity Trustees approach the Member(s) concerned to discuss whether they wish to remain as Member(s) of the Church.

### **3. CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETINGS**

The Church Members' Meeting is the corporate gathering of those who have committed themselves to the achievement of the Purpose and where decisions affecting the Activities are determined under the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a spirit of co-operation, love and mutual accountability.

The Church Members' Meeting is the final decision-making authority relating to the Activities except for those matters which require approval by the Holding Trustees (the local Baptist Association).

Charity Trustees, including Minister(s)/Pastors, and other leaders or employees of the Church are subject to decisions and resolutions made at a Church Members' Meeting.

#### **3.1 Authority of the Church Members' Meeting**

The Church Members' Meeting shall have reserved authority in:

- The appointment and removal of a Minister/Pastor;
- The appointment and removal of Charity Trustees and/or any other recognised Church Leaders;
- Decisions related to church property including (without limitation) any purchase, sale, lease, mortgage, or redevelopment of property;
- The administration of the Church Membership list;
- The closure of the Church.

Any decisions taken in relation to property must comply with the requirements of statute law and any specific property trusts under which the land and buildings are used and occupied by the Church.

#### **3.2 Types of Church Members' Meeting**

There are two types of Church Members' Meeting – Ordinary Church Members' Meetings and Special Church Members' Meetings.

#### **3.3 Ordinary Church Members' Meetings**

Ordinary Church Members' Meetings will be held at regular intervals throughout the year (normally at least quarterly) as determined by the Charity Trustees.

Matters considered will include routine matters associated with the life of the Church such as:

- Applications and revisions to the Church Membership List;
- The appointment of Charity Trustees and/or other Activity leaders;



- The appointment of a salaried employee of the Church or person contracted to work on behalf of the Church;
- The receipt of financial reports and the approval of financial matters including budgets, income and expenditure;
- The consideration of proposals from the Charity Trustees or other Church Members for the development of the Church and the advancement of its Purpose through its Activities;
- The amendment of this or any subsequent Constitution in accordance with clause 9 of this Constitution.

### **3.4 Annual General Meeting**

One Ordinary Church Meeting each year will be the **Annual General Meeting of the Church** where:

- The Annual Accounts & Reports are received;
- Auditors or Independent Examiners are appointed;
- The vision and strategy of the Church, including any financial budgets and anticipated expenditure, is outlined.

### **3.5 Special Church Members' Meetings**

A Special Church Members' Meeting shall be held as required to consider important matters such as:

- The appointment of a Minister/Pastor;
- The dismissal of a Minister/Pastor or a Charity Trustee or other appointed Leader;
- The dismissal of a salaried employee of the Church or person contracted to work on behalf of the Church;
- The purchase, sale or raising of any loan, grant or mortgage on Church property or land, including any Manse or residential property occupied by a Minister/Pastor or other employee;
- The appointment of Holding Trustees or the adoption or variation of Trusts involving the Church;
- A proposal to amalgamate with another Church, to share Church buildings under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 or to close the Church;
- Any other matters of significance as deemed appropriate by the Charity Trustees.

### **3.6 Convening a Church Members' Meeting**

The process and procedure for convening Church Members' Meetings is as set out in SCHEDULE 2 of this Constitution.

### **3.7 Attendance at Church Members' Meetings**

Members and where appropriate invited guests and/or if publicly invited other regular worshippers at the Church, may attend a Church Members' Meeting but only Church Members may vote or determine the resolutions of the Meeting.

### **3.8 Conduct of Church Members' Meetings**

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. The Church Members' Meeting will normally be chaired by a member of the Charity Trustees.

Attendance of 25% of the Church Membership will constitute a quorum and enable decisions to be made.

Where less than 25% of the Members attend, any matter on which a decision is required will be included in the Minutes of the Meeting and circulated to all Church Members with a timescale given for representations to be made to the Charity Trustees.

### **3.9 Confidentiality**

Matters discussed at a Church Members' Meeting will be regarded as confidential to Church Members and as such should not normally be discussed with persons who are not Church Members.

### **3.10 Seeking consensus**

It will be the normal practice to seek consensus at a Church Members' Meeting on all matters considered.

Before a resolution is passed, the person chairing the Meeting will ascertain whether there are any objections to proposals under consideration and determine whether a vote is required.

The process and procedure for voting is detailed in SCHEDULE 3 of this Constitution.

### **3.11 Minutes of Church Members' Meetings**

The business conducted at Church Members' Meetings and in particular any decisions of the Members shall be recorded in the Minutes for future reference.

The Minutes shall be written or printed and filed in a book or binder set aside for this purpose using materials of sufficient quality to ensure that they survive for many years and shall be kept in a safe place. In addition, but not as an alternative, the Minutes may be held in a secure electronic format for ease of transmission.

Each set of Minutes shall be approved by the Church Members attending the next Church Members' Meeting. Church Members shall have the opportunity to review the Minutes and to correct any errors of fact before a formal vote on the approval of the Minutes is taken. If the Minutes are approved the person chairing the Church Members' Meeting shall confirm the Members' acceptance of the Minutes by signing and dating them as a correct record of the preceding Meeting.

The signed Minutes shall be conclusive evidence of the decisions taken at the Church Members' Meeting to which they relate.

At each Church Members' Meeting there will be an opportunity for Members to outline any items they wish to discuss at the next or subsequent Meeting. Decisions will not normally be made on issues which are not on the Agenda.

## **4. CHARITY TRUSTEES**

### **4.1 Statutory & Other Requirements**

The statutory definition of Charity Trustees in Section 177 of the Charities Act 2011 is *“persons having the general control and management of the administration of a charity.”*

No person may serve as a Charity Trustee if they are disqualified.

A technical defect in the appointment of a Charity Trustee of which the Charity Trustees were unaware at the time does not invalidate decisions taken by the Charity Trustees.

The Charity Trustees shall always act in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and the general law.

### **4.2 Requirements & Responsibilities of Charity Trustees**

The Church Members' Meeting shall appoint an appropriate number of Charity Trustees responsible for the governance of the Church in order for the Purpose and Activities to be fulfilled.

Those appointed will have been Church Members for a period of at least twelve months. In the event that a Minister/Pastor is called from another Church, the twelve month period of Church Membership may be waived.

In this Church the Charity Trustees shall be:

- Any Minister/Pastor appointed by the Church, due to the nature of the role and responsibilities;
- Those Church Members recognised and appointed by the Church Members' Meeting who are charged with overseeing the strategic direction, vision, administration and management of the Church in accordance with resolutions determined by the Church Members' Meeting.

Charity Trustees will be required to:

- Ensure all Legal and Statutory requirements necessary to achieve the Purpose and Activities of the Church are maintained;
- Maintain appropriate and lawful financial controls and procedures.
- Ensure that suitable public liability and employer's liability insurance is in place
- Keep in an appropriate state of repair and insure to their full value against fire and other usual risks all the buildings and assets of the Charity (except those where the responsibility is of a third party where they shall use reasonable endeavours to ensure that the third party does so).

### **4.3 Appointment and Removal of Charity Trustees**

The appointment and removal of Charity Trustees will be undertaken in accordance with the procedures and provisions of SCHEDULE 4 of this Constitution.

### **4.4 Proceedings of Charity Trustees**

Worship including prayer and the reading of Scripture shall be key features of any meeting of the Charity Trustees whose leadership and administration of the Church shall be characterised as much by mutual accountability, service, and pastoral care, as strategic thinking and effective management.

The Charity Trustees shall determine when and how frequently they shall meet provided that they shall convene meetings of the whole group not less than once every three months.

A quorum for a full meeting of the Charity Trustees shall be not less than three persons or half of their number, whichever is the greater number.

Whilst acknowledging that the Charity Trustees are jointly responsible for the effective management of the Church, meetings of sub-groups as necessary and convenient may be held in addition to regular meetings of the whole group, provided reports of such sub-group meetings are made to the next full Charity Trustees Meeting.

For matters requiring a decision the Charity Trustees shall, so far as possible, seek consensus on all matters considered at their meetings but where this is not possible a vote shall be taken and the outcome recorded as the resolution of the Charity Trustees.

Each Charity Trustee shall have one vote to be exercised at the meeting.

Every issue may be determined by a simple majority of votes cast at a meeting of the Charity Trustees but if there is an equality of votes on any matter the resolution will be considered rejected and the matter shall be reconsidered and if appropriate resubmitted to a subsequent meeting for consideration.

Subject to clause 3.1 the Charity Trustees shall act in accordance with the specific directions of the Church Members' Meeting in relation to matters relating to Church property including any purchase, sale, lease, mortgage or redevelopment of church property.

As appropriate, leaders of various activities and ministries of the Church and guests may be invited to attend Charity Trustee Meetings to provide information and assist with the effective achievement of Church Activities.

#### **4.5 Minutes & Confidentiality**

Minutes shall be prepared of the proceedings at the meetings of the Charity Trustees including any appointments, the names of those present, the decisions taken, and where appropriate the reasons for the decisions.

Charity Trustees shall respect the confidentiality of their meetings and shall decide from time to time whether all or part of the Minutes shall be treated as confidential.

#### **4.6 Powers of Charity Trustees**

The Charity Trustees shall have specific power, subject to any general or specific directions of the Church Members' Meeting, to apply for and accept grants and to provide security in respect of obligations under grant agreements.

For the avoidance of doubt the Charity Trustees shall have power to borrow money, receive grants, give guarantees and or security for loans, and to make grants or loans of money towards the advancement of the Purpose of the Church. In the event of a charge over land and/or buildings being required this must be consistent with provisions in the trusts for the land and with statute law.

For the avoidance of doubt the Charity Trustees shall have power to make grants to other charities working elsewhere in the United Kingdom and/or other parts of the world.

#### **4.7 Application of Income & Capital**

The Charity Trustees must use the income and may use the capital where trusts permit it to be spent to promote the Purpose of the Church provided that the Charity Trustees may apply an appropriate reserves policy in accordance with the general law.

#### **4.8 Remuneration of Charity Trustees**

Subject to the provisions of Sections 185-187 Charities Act 2011 and with the exception only of appointed Minister(s)/Pastor(s) authorised by clause 5 of this Constitution, or permitted remuneration as detailed below, no Charity Trustee (or any person, firm or company 'connected' with the Charity Trustee as defined in Section 188 of the said Act) may be paid or receive any other direct or indirect benefit for being a Charity Trustee except the reimbursement of reasonable and proper expenses and other payments permitted by statute or specifically authorised by the Charity Commission.

Where it is proposed that a Charity Trustee (or person, firm or company, connected with the Charity Trustee) is to be employed or receive

remuneration or sell goods or services or any interest in land to the Church and where this gains the approval of the Church Members' Meeting then this shall be permitted only if:

- The Charity Trustee or any person connected with the Trustee who may benefit directly or indirectly from the proposed remuneration declares an interest in the proposal before discussion on the matter begins;
- Absents himself or herself (or in the case of any connected persons themselves) from any part of any Meeting at which the proposal is discussed and takes no part in any discussion of it and is not counted in determining whether any such Meeting is quorate;
- Does not vote on the proposal;
- The remaining Charity Trustees who do not stand to receive the proposed benefit are satisfied that it is in the interests of the Church to contract with or employ that Charity Trustee (or connected person) rather than another independent person and must record the reason for their decision in the Minutes;
- In reaching that decision the Charity Trustees must balance the advantage of contracting with or employing a Trustee against the disadvantage of doing so (especially the loss of the Trustee's services as a result of dealing with the Trustee's conflict of interest);
- The Charity Trustees authorising the proposed transaction comprise a majority of the Charity Trustees body and have not received any such benefit.

## **5. MINISTERS/PASTORS**

The Church Members' Meeting may determine to appoint one or more Ministers/Pastors or decide for a period not to have a Minister/Pastor.

Any Minister/Pastor appointed is expected to become a Member of the Church and shall accept the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle and the Articles of Faith of this Church.

The appointed Minister/Pastor shall be in relationship with the Baptist Union and the local Association and shall be supportive of the Church's relationships with other Baptist Churches, the Association and the Baptist Union.

The tasks fulfilled by Ministers/Pastors will vary depending on individual ability and gifting but they are normally expected to be involved in the Activities of the Church with an emphasis on the leading of worship and prayer, the teaching of the Christian faith and the pastoral care of individuals, working with the Charity Trustees, other leaders and Church Members in achieving the Church Purpose through its Activities in a covenant relationship based on Christian love and trust and mutual accountability.

### **5.1 Appointment of Ministers/Pastors**

Whilst the final decision in the appointment of a Minister/Pastor will rest with the Church Members' Meeting, the Charity Trustees will consult with the local Baptist Association and, where appropriate, follow the Baptist Union procedures before commencing any appointment process and follow, so far as practicable, the Baptist Union's procedures and recommended terms for the Settlement of Ministers.

The appointment of a Minister/Pastor shall be made in accordance with the process and procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 5 of this Constitution.

### **5.2 Remuneration of Ministers/Pastors**

Notwithstanding the status of a Minister/Pastor appointed by the Church is a Charity Trustee, they will be entitled to be paid an agreed and reasonable remuneration or stipend out of the funds of the Church.

Charity Trustees will propose suitable terms and conditions to a Church Members' Meeting for consideration and approval. This will include regular revisions as appropriate to meet cost of living increases and other factors.

### **5.3 Removal of a Minister/Pastor**

Removal of a Minister/Pastor will only be considered at a Special Church Members' Meeting in accordance with the process and procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 5 of this Constitution.



## **5.4 Pastoral Vacancies and the Appointment of a Moderator**

Should the Church not appoint a Minister/Pastor for a period, the Charity Trustees will appoint a Moderator (normally an existing Charity Trustee of the Church), acceptable to the local Association, to oversee the activities of the Church until a suitable appointment is made.

## **6. OTHER CHURCH APPOINTMENTS**

### **6.1 Other Leaders**

The Church Members' Meeting may also recognise and appoint other persons who have been Church Members for at least twelve months to support the Church Trustees in the achievement of the Purpose and Activities. This wider Leadership Team shall be subject to the decisions made by the Church Members' Meeting.

Responsibilities may include (but are not limited to):

- The implementation of the vision and direction of the Church Purpose and Activities;
- The provision of pastoral care;
- Church administration, including the insurance and maintenance of the Church building and fabric.

Normally members of this wider Leadership team will be appointed for a specific term not exceeding three years and will be eligible for re-appointment at the end of each term of office.

Where appropriate this wider Leadership Team may co-opt other voluntary leaders to assist with the achievement of the Purpose and Activities and to provide for succession planning in due course.

Details of those co-opted will be provided to the Church Members' Meeting as and when appropriate.

### **6.2 Salaried Appointments**

In order to achieve the Purpose and undertake the Activities of the Church, the Church Members' Meeting may determine to appoint:

- Other salaried full-time and/or part-time staff members;
- Contract the services of suitably qualified individuals or organisations.

In such cases the Charity Trustees shall submit a proposal outlining the reasons for the post to an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting together with:

- A detailed Job Description relating to the role and responsibilities;

- Terms and Conditions of the appointment including remuneration and length of notice required by both parties for the role;
- Confirmation of whether in view of the role concerned the person(s) appointed are required to be a Church Member;
- The procedures for the on-going management and supervision of the person(s) appointed including the process to be followed should termination of the position be required.

If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3.

The Charity Trustees shall be responsible for decisions delegated to staff members so appointed.

### **6.3 Salaries and Benefits**

The salaries and benefits of those financially supported by the Church will be reviewed at least annually by the Charity Trustees and recommendations made to an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting.

Where the salaries and benefits relate to a Charity Trustee, normally a Minister/Pastor, that person shall not contribute to the recommendation or decision.

Out of pocket expenses incurred by those involved in leading any aspect of Church activities will be made upon application to the Charity Trustees, who may delegate this task to a member of the wider Leadership Team or other person appointed with this responsibility. This would include items such as: printing and stationery; music and other reference books; training courses, garden plants/products/equipment etc.

### **6.4 Terms of Appointments & Contracts of Employment**

Ministers/Pastors and any others financially supported by the Church will receive a Terms of Appointment document specifying the term of office and renewal terms.

Other salaried staff will receive a Contract of Employment detailing responsibilities and the Job Description of the role.

Under normal circumstances a minimum period of three months' notice in writing will be required by either party to terminate the Contract.

### **6.5 Statutory Requirements**

Where necessary, appropriate investigations will be undertaken as required by law, e.g. in respect of Child Protection and Safeguarding, etc.

## **7. FINANCE, RECORD KEEPING & ACCOUNTING**

### **7.1 Accountability**

The Charity Trustees are jointly and severally responsible for the financial administration of the Church.

### **7.2 Financial Year**

The Church's financial year shall run from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December.

### **7.3 Financial Statements**

Summaries of Church Income and Expenditure will be presented at Ordinary Church Members' Meetings and from time to time in Church notices.

A statement of the Church Accounts (audited or independently examined as required by law) shall be received by the Annual General Meeting of the Church.

Financial statements of all Church organisations that form part of the Activities shall be presented to the Charity Trustees and incorporated into the Church's financial statements.

Financial Records, annual reports and statements of account relating to the Church for the previous six years must be available for inspection by any Charity Trustee.

The law requires Charity Trustees to make the Annual Report and Accounts available to any person who requests them. The Charity Trustees may make a reasonable charge to cover the administration costs of meeting this request.

## **8. CONSTITUTION**

A copy of this Constitution shall be made available to Church Members and to every applicant for membership with the intention that every Member shall be informed about the organisation of the Church and be enabled to participate in the life of the Church and in Church Members' Meetings.

Other documents and leaflets outlining the Purpose and Activities of the Church which are generally available shall be consistent with this Constitution.

### **8.1 Alterations and Amendments to the Constitution**

The Charity Trustees may propose any amendments or alterations to the Constitution by providing at least two months' notice in writing to Church Members.

The Constitution may only be altered or amended with the approval of the Church Members' Meeting. If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 70% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

The Charity Trustees shall request in writing the consent of the Holding Trustees to any proposed amendments to this Constitution that would affect properties held or occupied under the Baptist Trusts for Churches 2003 Deed executed by Bridgnorth Baptist Church.

Church Members may submit suggestions of amendments and alterations to the Charity Trustees who will prayerfully consider the matter and advise the Church Members concerned of their decision. Where the Charity Trustees agree to the amendment or alteration, it will be proposed to a Church Members' Meeting as described above.

If the Charity Trustees do not agree with the proposal received, the proposer(s) will be offered the opportunity to raise the matter at a Church Members' Meeting at which the Charity Trustees will advise Members of the reasons for their decision not to support the amendment.

If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 70% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

No amendment may be made to this Constitution that amends clause 9 or would have the effect of making the Charity cease to be a charity at law

## **9. CLOSURE**

If a Special Church Members' Meeting resolves to close the Church or cease to meet for worship for a period of at least six months, the Charity Trustees shall notify the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the local Baptist Association.

The assets of the Church, after all liabilities and debts have been satisfied, shall be used for charitable purposes as decided by the Holding Trustees in accordance with the provisions of the Baptist Trusts for Churches 2003 Deed executed by Bridgnorth Baptist Church.

## **10. APPENDICES & SCHEDULES**

The following Appendices and Schedules form an integral part of this Constitution.

The Schedules outline the processes and procedures to be followed but may be amended by resolution of a Church Members' Meeting as appropriate.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE**

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in 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.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, the Son and the 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'.
3. 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.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **BRIDGNORTH BAPTIST CHURCH ARTICLES OF FAITH**

We believe the following:

1. There is one Eternal God who is revealed in 3 persons - the Father; the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. The Bible is the inspired Word of God to teach us God's ways and His character and how He wants us to relate to Him, other people and the whole of His creation.
3. That every one has sinned resulting in separation from God. Acceptance by God is possible only through believing personally that Jesus died for our sin and accepting His offer of forgiveness. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell believing, forgiven sinners who become members of God's family and so receive eternal life.
4. That Jesus is the Son of God; that He came to earth in human form, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, physically died on the cross, was raised to life and ascended back into heaven where He now intercedes on behalf of those who accept Him as their personal Saviour and Lord. That He will return in the future to receive those who have accepted Him who will live and reign with Him eternally.
5. That the Holy Spirit lives in all believers working in us to convict us of sin and to empower us with His gifts and character so that our lives are increasingly changed, enabling us to be effective representatives of God on earth and so become more like Him.

6. That those who refuse to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord reject the offer of eternal life but will endure judgment and eternal separation from God.
7. That we are called to be members of both the Universal Church – the Body of Christ, to which all believers belong, and the Local Church – the expression of Christ in a community which under the guidance of the Holy Spirit seeks to tangibly express the love of God to everyone, believers and those who do not yet believe.
8. That Christian Baptism is immersion in water in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit of those who have personally accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and who wish to publicly profess their allegiance to Him.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **BELIEFS & SERVICES**

#### **Believers' Baptism**

The Charity Trustees will encourage all Christians who regularly worship at the Church, especially those who wish to become Church Members to be baptised by immersion in water and continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

Candidates wishing to be baptised by immersion may be asked to receive preparatory teaching and should contact the Charity Trustees, at whose discretion a Baptism Service will be arranged.

#### **Communion**

Normally Communion (Breaking of Bread, The Lord's Supper) will be observed at least once a month and at such other times as considered appropriate by the Charity Trustees.

All those acknowledging Jesus as their personal Saviour will be invited to share Communion regardless of denominational allegiance.

It shall be left to parents' discretion whether their children participate in the taking of the bread and wine at a Communion Service.

#### **Dedication of Infants**

Requests for a public act of Thanksgiving and Dedication may be made to the Charity Trustees by believing parents, as and when appropriate.

#### **Marriage Services**

Application should be made to the Charity Trustees, at whose discretion a Wedding Service will be arranged.

### **Use of the Church Building:**

Meetings and Services on the Church premises not initiated by the Charity Trustees shall be held only with their prior permission, upon such conditions as they may decide.

## **SCHEDULE 1: APPOINTMENT OF CHURCH MEMBERS**

### **S1.1 Initial enquiries**

Regular worshippers at the Church wishing to be considered for Church Membership should initially discuss the matter with the Charity Trustees who will nominate two existing Church Members to visit the candidate and discuss with them the responsibilities and requirements of Membership and assess their suitability.

### **S1.2 Visitation & Consideration**

On receiving a satisfactory report from the visitors, the Church Trustees will inform Church Members in writing (usually as an Agenda item or via other written means) recommending the candidate for membership and those attending a Church Members' Meeting will be asked for approval.

Normally approval will be deemed acceptable unless other Church Members raise items which "stand in the way" of the proposal. If necessary a vote will be taken in accordance with SCHEDULE 3 of this Constitution.

New Church Members will be welcomed and affirmed, normally at the next convenient Communion Service.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. due to insufficient time for the visitors' meeting to have been undertaken) the Charity Trustees may propose to a Church Members' Meeting that the request for Membership be approved in principle subject to a satisfactory report being received. The Minutes of the Church Members' Meeting will record the agreement of Church Members to this proposal.

### **S1.3 Objections to Membership**

Where visitors are unable to recommend a request for Church Membership the person will be fully advised of the reasons and be invited to discuss the matter further with the Charity Trustees.

If, following a recommendation by the visitors, the Church Members' Meeting concludes that additional information is required or an objection is raised which prevents approval of the application to become a Church Member, the applicant will be offered the opportunity to address a subsequent Church Members' Meeting to correct any errors of fact and offer any evidence supporting their application for Church Membership before



withdrawing so that the Church Members may prayerfully and carefully consider the matter.

If appropriate a vote will be taken in accordance with the procedures in SCHEDULE 3.

## **SCHEDULE 2: CONVENING A CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETING**

### **S2.1 Ordinary Church Members' Meetings**

An Ordinary Church Members' Meeting will be convened by the Charity Trustees and normally an Agenda (and wherever possible salient Briefing Notes) made available at the Church for collection by Church Members or delivered (by mail or electronic methods) at least one week in advance of the Meeting.

The Agenda for an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting will normally include those items referred to in paragraph 3.3 of this Constitution.

### **S2.2 Special Church Members' Meetings**

A Special Church Members' Meeting will be convened by the Charity Trustees providing an Agenda (and wherever possible salient Briefing Notes) made available at the Church for collection by Church Members or delivered (by mail or electronic methods) at least two weeks in advance of the Meeting.

The Agenda for a Special Church Members' Meeting will normally include those items referred to in paragraph 3.5 of this Constitution.

### **S2.3 Other Requirements**

A Special Church Members' Meeting may also be called at the request of a minimum of 10% of the Church Membership.

The request should be submitted to the Charity Trustees, in writing and signed by those requesting the Meeting, giving details of the matters to be discussed at least two weeks before notice is to be given to Church Members.

Provided due notice has been given, the Charity Trustees shall issue notice to Church Members that a Special Church Members' Meeting will be held.

A minimum of two weeks' notice must be given in writing and an Agenda submitted to Church Members to advise them of the reasons for the Meeting.

## **SCHEDULE 3: VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

Where a vote is required this will be undertaken in accordance with the following process and procedures.

Each Member shall have one vote which they may use at the Church Members' Meeting after hearing about the issues and any comments or questions raised by other Members in advance of the vote.

Votes may be cast by a show of hands or by the holding of a secret ballot as described under S3.2 of this Constitution.

Any Church Member with an interest in the outcome of the decision, or who has a close relative who is affected by the decision will not be permitted to vote on the proposal.

### **S3.1 Proxy and Postal Votes**

Proxy Votes will not be permitted – each Church Member shall vote on their own behalf.

Postal Votes will not normally be permitted unless previously authorised by a Church Members' Meeting in respect of the election of individuals to roles or responsibilities within the Church (except for decisions relating to a Minister/Pastor) where the names of those nominated are known in advance of the Church Members' Meeting.

### **S3.2 Secret Ballot**

If any matter requires a decision affecting or involving individuals and any embarrassment might arise by a public vote then a secret ballot shall be held if requested and agreed by the Church Members' Meeting. The decision to hold a secret ballot should be seen as being a last resort upholding the principle of *“walking together in the light”* (1John 1:7 and 1John 2:9-11).

If a secret ballot is to be held two Church Members, who shall be eligible to vote themselves, will be appointed as scrutineers to the ballot to count the votes.

The person chairing the Church Members' Meeting will announce the outcome including the numbers of votes cast for and against, and whether there were any abstentions.

### **S3.3 Majority required**

Except in the case of the appointment of a Charity Trustee (not a Minister/Pastor) – see Schedule 4.3 – a resolution at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting shall be carried if supported by a majority of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

If there is an equality of votes on any matter at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting the resolution will be considered rejected and the matter shall be referred back to the Charity Trustees for review and if appropriate resubmission to a subsequent meeting for consideration.

A resolution at a Special Church Members' Meeting shall be carried if supported by at least 70% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting, except in the appointment or dismissal of a Minister/Pastor where it shall be carried if supported by at least 80% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting (see Schedule 5). In the case of the removal of a Charity Trustee (not a Minister/Pastor) approval of 75% of Members attending and voting shall be required (S4.4)

In exceptional circumstances the Charity Trustees, or a minimum of 10% of Church Members attending a Special Church Members' Meeting, may request a higher measure of support for a particular resolution to be approved by the Church Members' Meeting.

A resolution detailing the reasons why a higher proportion of votes should be appropriate, specifying the proportion of votes necessary to approve the resolution, must be agreed by the Church Members' Meeting before any vote is taken.

### **S3.4 Recording Votes**

The Minutes of the Church Members' Meeting will confirm:

- Whether a vote was required in order to pass a resolution
- Whether any vote was held by show of hands or by secret ballot
- The number of votes cast for and against and any abstentions.

## **Schedule 4: APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF CHARITY TRUSTEES**

### **S4.1 Appointment Terms of Charity Trustees and/or other Leaders**

The appointment and affirmation of Charity Trustees and/or other Leadership roles shall be made by a Church Members' Meeting from those eligible to serve in accordance with Clause 4.1 and 4.2 of this Constitution.

A close family member (spouse, parent, child, sibling) of a serving Charity Trustee shall be eligible for appointment as a Charity Trustee or as a member of the wider Leadership Team.

At all times a majority of the Charity Trustees and other Leaders shall be persons who have been baptised in accordance with the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle (APPENDIX 1).

A Minister/Pastor appointed will serve for such period as determined by a Special Church Members' Meeting and agreed in the Terms of Appointment.

Charity Trustees and other Leaders (excepting Ministers/Pastors) shall be appointed for an initial three year term (or such other term as approved by an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting) with the opportunity to be nominated for reappointment at the end of each agreed term.

Charity Trustees and other Leaders shall serve so long as they have the support of the Church Members' Meeting and (with the exception of appointed Ministers/Pastors) shall be actively appointed and reappointed at least once every three years.

### **S4.2 Nomination Process**

Normally the Charity Trustees will present the names of those to be considered for appointment as Charity Trustees and/or Leaders to Church Members in writing at least four weeks before Church Members attending an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting will prayerfully consider the matter.

Nominations for the role of a Charity Trustee may also be submitted by Church Members to the Charity Trustees who will prayerfully consider the proposal. Such nominations should be made in writing, supported by the signature of at least two other Church Members together with the consent of the person nominated, to the Charity Trustees outlining the reasons why the proposal is being made.

The Charity Trustees will either:

- Agree to recommend the appointment and present the name of the nominated person before an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting in accordance with these procedures, or

- Advise the person nominated and those submitting the nomination of the reasons why they cannot support the proposal.

In addition at the next Church Members' Meeting an Agenda item will include an opportunity for Church Members to consider the matter fully. The nominated person and/or those making the nomination will be entitled to make representations, outline their reasons for the proposal and correct any errors of fact. The Charity Trustees will be permitted to also explain their reasons for not supporting the proposal.

If appropriate a vote will be taken in accordance with the procedures in SCHEDULE 3.

#### **S4.3 Affirmation of Charity Trustees and/or other Leaders**

During the four week period between the written notification of the nomination of a Charity Trustee and/or other Leader and the Ordinary Church Members' Meeting which will consider the nomination, Church Members are encouraged to:

- Prayerfully consider the nomination and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance, and, if appropriate
- Ask any questions or seek confirmation on any issues which they may consider could stand in the way of the person nominated being appointed.

Prior to the Ordinary Church Members' Meeting any issues that require clarification should be referred to the Charity Trustees either orally or in writing. The Charity Trustees will discuss and pray with the persons concerned in order to resolve the issues.

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter, the Affirmation will be postponed and the matter brought to the attention of the Church Members' Meeting when those nominated and those who have raised an objection will be permitted to make statements and ask and answer questions raised.

After this meeting there will be a further four week period for reflection and/or further representations to take place. The Charity Trustees will then either reschedule a meeting for Affirmation or withdraw the nomination.

At the Ordinary Church Members' Meeting an opportunity will be given for Church Members to consider prayerfully again the matter before the nomination is proposed.

If there are no issues standing in the way of the proposal, Affirmation of the Charity Trustee will take place at an appropriate Communion Service.

If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 75% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

The Affirmation should be celebratory as the Charity Trustee/Leader is appointed, affirmed and anointed into their new ministry with thanksgiving.

#### **S4.4 Removal of a Charity Trustee/other Leader (not a Minister/Pastor)**

A Special Church Members' Meeting may rescind the appointment of any Charity Trustee/other Leader at any time.

The Charity Trustee/Leader shall be allowed to hear what is said to the Church Members' Meeting and to correct any errors of fact and offer any explanation of the circumstances or reasons for their actions before withdrawing so that the Church Members may prayerfully and carefully consider whether the appointment should be terminated.

If appropriate a vote will be taken in accordance with the procedures in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 75% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

## **Schedule 5: APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF MINISTERS/PASTORS**

### **S5.1 Appointment of a Minister/Pastor**

The Charity Trustees will prepare a Job Description together with Terms of Appointment (including remuneration and other terms) which will be presented at a Special Church Members' Meeting for consideration and approval.

The Job Description will outline the role, responsibilities and accountabilities of a Minister/Pastor together with any other specific attributes and giftings which are considered necessary for the appointment.

Applications will be sought for the role and where appropriate guidance will be sought from the local Association and others respected by the Charity Trustees who may be able to recommend suitable candidates.

The Charity Trustees may, if approved by the Church Members' Meeting, appoint a sub-group to consider applications from suitable candidates and prepare a short-list of those who they consider should be invited to be considered for the position.

Interviews, meetings with Church Members – either individually or collectively – plus opportunities to lead services and teach at services may be offered to those considered as potentially suitable, and references may be taken as necessary.

The Charity Trustees will make a recommendation to Church Members at a Special Church Members' Meeting at which a considered and prayerful decision will be made.

If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 80% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

A Celebratory Service of Affirmation and Induction of the new Minister/Pastor will be arranged as soon as practicable to which other local Church Leaders and representatives of the local Association will be invited to take part as the Minister/Pastor is appointed, affirmed and anointed into their new ministry with thanksgiving.

### **S5.2 Removal of a Minister/Pastor**

Should it be deemed necessary to consider the removal of a Minister/Pastor, the Charity Trustees will call a Special Church Members' Meeting specifically for this purpose.

During the period of time between the notification of the Special Church Members' Meeting and the date of the Meeting, the Charity Trustees may agree the suspension of the Minister/Pastor from active leadership of the Church. Suspension would normally only be taken where an allegation of serious misconduct or unlawful activity had been made and is designed to protect both the Minister/Pastor concerned and the Church.

The Minister/Pastor terms and conditions will not be affected during this period. Church Members will be notified in writing that this course of action is being taken.

It is anticipated that before any action of this nature is taken, strenuous efforts will be made by the Charity Trustees to mediate and attempt possible reconciliation. Appropriate legal advice and the involvement of the local Association will be sought prior to the calling of a Special Church Members' Meeting.

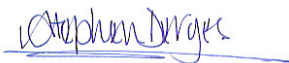
The Minister/Pastor shall be allowed to hear what is said to the Special Church Members' Meeting and to correct any errors of fact and offer any explanation of the circumstances or reasons for their actions before withdrawing so that the Church Members may prayerfully and carefully consider whether the appointment should be terminated.

If appropriate, a vote may be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in SCHEDULE 3. Where a vote is taken it shall be carried if supported by at least 80% of the Members present, entitled to vote and voting.

This Constitution, having been previously made available to Church Members for prayerful consideration, was accepted and approved unanimously by Church Members attending the Church Members' Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

Signed on behalf of the Church Members

Stephen G. Derges – Pastor



**Bridgnorth Baptist Church**  
West Castle Street | Bridgnorth | Shropshire | WV16 4AB  
[www.bridgnorthbaptist.co.uk](http://www.bridgnorthbaptist.co.uk)

