



**HIGHFIELDS  
CHURCH**

# **Church Handbook**

**Updated October 2010**

# **HIGHFIELDS CHURCH**

## **HIGHFIELDS CHURCH MEMBERS HANDBOOK**

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## Part 1- Principles of the Church Constitution

This is a summary of the church constitution. The full version is submitted to the Charity Commission.

- 1.1 The Church is established under a Constitution dated ..... 2009, which contains the main legal provisions governing the Church, its purpose and Basis of Faith, its powers and the use of any property owned by the Church. For ease of reference the Basis of Faith is set out in Appendix 1. The Constitution appoints the Elders as the Managing Trustees.
- 1.2 The Constitution contains provision for the meetings of the Elders meeting as the Managing Trustees. These provisions are the minimum requirements for their meetings. They stipulate the following:
  - 1.2.1 There shall be not less than [3] Trustees/Elders
  - 1.2.2 The Chairman of their meetings shall be appointed by the Elders and shall have a casting vote.
  - 1.2.3 They shall meet not less than [4] times a year as Trustees.
  - 1.2.4 A quorum shall consist of at least one half of the Elders/Trustees.
  - 1.2.5 Written minutes of their meetings shall be maintained.
  - 1.2.6 The Pastor, Assistant Pastor and Church Administrator, if any, may be remunerated from church funds provided those paid are not more than one half of the number of Elders/Trustees, but they must not be present in the Elders/Trustees' meetings whenever their salary or financial benefits are discussed.
  - 1.2.7 Subject to 1.2.6 above no Elder/Trustee shall receive any financial benefit from the church funds in connection with his service as an Elder/Trustee, other than the reimbursement of expenses incurred in carrying out his duties as an Officer or reimbursement of costs of the purchase of goods or services supplied to or for the Church.
  - 1.2.8 Legal rules calling for the disqualification of Trustees and therefore Elders.
- 1.3 The Constitution also contains provisions for its amendment.

## Part 2

### VISION STATEMENT

Vision in Christian ministry begins and ends with what God has said. So our vision as a Church is shaped by Scripture. Scripture's vision is of the glory of God 's name spreading among the nations through the gospel of Christ. Reach, build, send !

Therefore the local Church, which exists to glorify God by the preaching of the gospel, needs to be missional, intentional and relational.

Our Vision at Highfields is to be missional. We exist to proclaim Christ in every way possible, to as many people as possible, by every means possible. Geographically to Cardiff and the ends of the earth; evangelistically through word and deed ; strategically as God has sovereignly shaped Highfields in terms of location and gifting.

Our Vision is to be intentional. In other words because we are strategically aware, we know who we are and how we are being called to use our particular contribution to mission. We are deliberate in the sense that we understand that we are called to a discipling mission. This will involve focused training and individual equipping.

Our Vision is to be relational. All that we do is driven by a commitment to people made by God, broken by the Fall and redeemed in Christ. Therefore our intentional task is to reach , pastor and disciple people. Helping them to grow in the body of Christ, encouraging the use of their gifts and equipping them for mission in the world.

Every Church group, activity and programme in Highfields should be able to see itself as part of this overall vision to reach, build and send. This will insure that the life of the Church is accountable to that vision and driven by it to the glory of God.

Every person who belongs to Highfields should be able to see how they fit into the development of the Vision.

Every decision in Highfields should be shaped by a commitment to this Vision. So that for example the calling and sending of people into cross cultural missions, the planting of new congregations, the restructuring of Small Group Ministries is understood as a thoughtful , prayerful and planned response to the Vision for the glory of God's name through the gospel of Christ.

This vision can be expressed through the following values.

### VALUES

1. We value the Word of God as the primary and definitive means by which the voice of God is heard and the life of the Church is guided. It is through the public preaching and teaching and personal study of God's Word that the believer and Church mature.
2. We value the Spirit of God through whom the Church is empowered and the believer equipped with gifts for service in the body of Christ. A commitment to corporate and personal prayer is a significant expression of our life in Christ by His Spirit.
- 3 . We value each person as uniquely precious to God and part of the family of the

Church through faith in Christ. We will always seek to maintain our unity in Christ and to recognize with respect all those who share with us the one hope of the gospel.

4. We value the Mission of the Church as a community which is called to reach the nations with the gospel and to demonstrate that good news in acts of compassion.
5. We value a life of discipleship in which corporate holiness and personal godliness is encouraged in accordance with God's Word and in dependence on God's Spirit.
6. We value grace in which in our relationships with one another we reflect the kindness and love of God our Saviour.
7. We value the role of Small Groups in the life of the Church as the primary context for pastoral care and spiritual encouragement.
8. We value the personal involvement of all who belong to the Church through their commitment of time, money and support.

## **Aims and Objectives**

In line with the beliefs of the Church set out in our basis of faith we aim

1. To glorify God by promoting the worship of God and proclaiming the gospel of God
2. To equip the Christian to serve God in a life of Mission
3. To reach the nations with the good news of Christ through word and deed
4. To identify, send and support mission partners
5. To provide pastoral care and bible teaching through small groups
6. To co operate with other like minded churches in gospel partnership
7. To plant strategically new congregations and help renew existing churches
8. To carry out such charitable activities which shall advance the Christian faith in the community, nation and world
9. To exercise a concern for creation by the effective stewardship of our resources

## **Part 3 – Church practices and policies**

3.1.1 There are a number of documents which set out the practices of Highfields Church in key areas of church life. The areas covered include :

- Marriage and Divorce
- Sexual Ethics
- Women in Ministry
- Christian Stewardship
- Child Protection
- Health and Safety

Copies of these policies are available to church members on request.

3.2.1 Employment practices are set out in an employment handbook which is supplied to employees on commencement of their employment with the church.

## **Part 4- Rules for the Internal Running of the Church**

### **4.1 Members and Membership**

- 4.1.1 Members of the Church shall be those persons who have affirmed their belief in the Almighty and Eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They declare their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and in the Holy Spirit as their Sanctifier, Teacher and Comforter. They affirm their acceptance of the Word of God as their rule in all matters of faith and conduct. They declare that that they will identify themselves with the Church at Highfields, sincerely, deliberately and of their own free will and promise to always seek to be a faithful member of the Body of Christ. This includes those whose Membership has been approved and has not been suspended or terminated, all in accordance with the provisions of this Rule 4.5.
- 4.1.2 Membership brings with it certain privileges and responsibilities. The privileges are identified as membership of the local Body of Christ in all its work and worship, to be able to partake in discussing the way in which the local church should move forward and fulfil its Biblical role in the local community and the benefit of Pastoral care. Each of these privileges brings with it the additional responsibilities to participate in the work of the Church and its activities, to regularly attend meetings, to pray for each other, and to share in the financial needs of the Church; all to be done within the confidentiality of Church membership.

#### **Admission to Membership**

- 4.1.3 A person may apply to the Elders to become a Member of the Church. They will be interviewed by at least 2 elders as to their profession of faith and agreement with the declaration of faith as outlined in Rule 4.1.1. The interviewing Elders will then make a recommendation to the full Eldership. Members will publicly affirm their acceptance of the declaration as per 4.1.1.
- 4.1.5 The Elders shall maintain a register of all Church Members.

#### **Suspension from Membership**

- 4.1.6 A Member may be suspended from Membership where the disciplinary procedure set out in Rule 4.6 has been followed.
- 4.1.7 While a Member is suspended he or she will have no right to vote at any Church Meeting.

#### **Termination of Membership**

- 4.1.8 A Member may voluntarily resign by submitting in writing a letter to that effect to the Church Secretary.
- 4.1.9 A Member may be removed from Membership by the application of the disciplinary procedure set out in Rule 4.6.
- 4.1.10 A Member may be removed from Membership where they voluntarily leave the church by moving away from the area or join another church.
- 4.1.11 A Member shall be removed from Membership where they are unable to confirm their agreement to the summary of the Basis of Faith as contained in Rule 4.1.1.

## 4.2 Church Leadership Structure

### 4.2.1 Elders

The duly elected Elders as set out below are the Managing Trustees as laid down in the Constitution. The Elders are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Church, the Church discipline, the administration of the Charity and its funds in accordance with the constitution. They shall determine the structure, purpose, and direction of the church. All Elders must be members of the church and be in agreement with the Basis of Faith as set out in Appendix 1.

The Elders are assisted by the Deacons, Ministry Leaders, Church Officers, Church Employees and members in various teams or committees. There are Standing Committees which are each accountable to the full Eldership. Each team or committee shall be under the oversight of one or more elders, and any recommendations relating to the objects of the Charity will need approval from the Elders.

### 4.2.2 Office of Elder held by employees:

The Pastors, Associate Pastors, and Assistant Pastors shall be ex-officio members of the body of Elders. That is, they are automatically Elders by virtue of their position as Pastor/ Assistant Pastor, despite the Pastor and Assistant Pastor being paid employees. They do not need to seek separate election to the role of Elder. The employee shall hold the office of Elder during their time in post. They will also be Managing Trustees of the charity.

### 4.2.3 Election of Elders:

The Election of Elders shall be carried out as follows:

Instruction shall be given to Church members concerning the biblical qualifications of an Elder. In addition potential elders, apart from those referred to in 4.2.2, should normally have been members of the church for at least 2 years. All Church members shall be invited to submit, by hand or post, their nomination of member(s) of the Church for the office of Elder, having been given at least two weeks notification to do so. The Elders will consider all nominations received to ensure the nominees are members and suitable for office. The existing Elders will then seek confirmation from the nominees of their willingness to stand before submitting the names of those deemed suitable and willing to stand to the Church to vote upon by postal ballot. Members will be given 3 weeks to return ballot papers.

To be chosen as an Elder, each nominee must receive at least two-thirds of the positive votes of the Church members voting. Those persons duly confirmed by the Church through voting, will be invited to accept the office. Those persons duly chosen as Elders shall be recognised at an Ordination Service. Elders shall also be appointed as Managing Trustees.

Elders, apart from Staff Elders, shall be elected for a period of 7 years, or as long as they continue as members of the church, or until they resign, or until they are removed from office, whichever is the earlier. An election or re-election of Elders shall be held at least every seven years. On expiry of the term of office, Elders shall be eligible for re-election.

Minutes of Elders meetings will be kept and voting at Elders meetings is by show of hands. Such meetings are quorate if half the Elders are present.

#### 4.2.4a Appointment of Pastors/ Associate or Assistant Pastors

They will have particular responsibility for preaching and teaching the Word of God. As with the other Elders they will need to be in agreement with the Basis of Faith set out in Appendix 1. They will be elected by members of the church voting on a Special Resolution as nominated by the Elders. Their appointment will require two-thirds of the votes cast in their favour. They shall be received into membership on taking up their appointment.

#### 4.2.4b Appointment to other ministry roles

They will have particular responsibility either for preaching and teaching the Word of God to specified groups within the church, or for leadership in key administrative positions. They will need to be in agreement with the Basis of Faith set out in Appendix 1. They will be interviewed by a panel consisting of at least an Elder and a ministry leader (or deacon) or other appointed person relevant to the role they will perform. Their appointment will require two-thirds of the votes cast in their favour. They shall be received into membership on taking up their appointment.

#### 4.2.4c Appointment of Ministry Apprentices

Ministry Apprentices will be interviewed and recommended to the trustees for appointment to an existing vacancy without the need for a vote. They will need to be in agreement with the Basis of Faith set out in Appendix 1.

#### 4.2.5 Appointment of other employees

Appointment to other roles, such as those that support the church, for example in administration, cooking and building, cleaning and maintenance, will be made after an appropriate recruitment and selection process. The conclusion of this process will be an interview by a panel consisting of at least one elder and at least one other ministry leader or associate worker as appropriate. They will need to be in agreement with the Basis of Faith set out in Appendix 1. This panel will have the responsibility of recommending to the trustees the appointment of the person into these roles on behalf of the church.

#### 4.2.6 Temporary cover.

Exceptionally where an employee post has to be filled on a temporary basis, e.g. for sickness cover, a person can be appointed by the trustees without a vote by the church.

#### 4.2.7 Deacons, Associate Workers and Ministry Leaders

The Elders may delegate the running of certain administrative and practical affairs of the church and ministries, as they see fit to Deacons, Associate workers, and Ministry Leaders. Deacons are responsible, as directed by the Elders, for the administration and practical matters of the church. They shall maintain and administer the church in terms of buildings, equipment, procedures and format. Ministry Leaders will primarily be involved in word, pastoral and prayer based ministries when and how directed by the Elders of the Church. Associate Workers are those appointed by the Elders to carry out specific roles as determined by the Elders. All Deacons, Associate Workers and Ministry Leaders must be members of the church and be in agreement with the Basis of Faith as set out in Appendix 1.

Requests by the Elders for the Deacons to undertake specific duties will be recorded in the minutes of the Elders meetings and requests provided to the Deacons. The Deacons shall record details and minutes of any meetings and copy these to the Elders.

In addition there will be regular meetings of the Elders with Deacons, Associate Workers and Ministry Leaders to discuss strategic issues for the church.

#### 4.2.8 Commendation of Deacons / Ministry Leaders / Associate Workers.

Normally Deacons and Ministry Leaders and Associate Workers will be appointed by the Elders to their roles and commended to the membership. Certain Deacon roles will however require election by the church members in accordance with 4.2.9. These roles are those connected with financial management such as covenant administrator, and missionary treasurer.

#### 4.2.9 Election of Deacons:

Where appropriate, i.e. posts connected with financial management, the election of Deacons shall be carried out as follows:

Instruction shall be given to Church members concerning the biblical qualifications of a Deacon. All Church members shall be invited to submit, by hand or post, their nomination of member(s) of the Church for this office, having been given at least two weeks notification so to do. The Elders will consider the nominations received to ensure that the nominees are members and suitable for office.

The Elders will then seek confirmation from the nominees of their willingness to stand. A list of approved nominations, who have confirmed their willingness to stand, will then be submitted to the Church to vote upon. Members will be given 3 weeks to return ballot papers. To be chosen, all nominees must receive the positive votes of at least one half of the Church members voting.

Those persons duly chosen for these offices by the Church through voting, will be invited to accept the office. If none of the persons nominated achieve the required positive votes a second ballot may be run and the list of nominations amended by the elders to include only those who received a higher number of positive votes in the first ballot.

These officers shall be elected for the period of 3 years, as long as they continue as members of the church, or until they resign, or until they are removed from office, whichever is the earlier. An election or re-election of Deacons shall be held at least every three years. On expiry of the term of office, Deacons shall be eligible for re-election.

### **4.3 Disciplinary Procedure**

#### **Removal from Office:**

4.3.1 If it is alleged that any Elder, Deacon, Ministry Leader, Associate Worker or Employee has ceased to conform with any of the doctrines contained in the Basis of Faith set out in the Appendix hereto or is suspected of dishonesty or immoral conduct or otherwise is deemed unsuitable to officiate, the Elders shall examine the person against whom such allegation has been made. The person shall be given opportunity to make representation to the Elders regarding the allegations. If the Elders find the allegation to be substantiated they shall invite the said person to resign from office and the matter shall be reported to the Church members.

If the said person refuses or neglects to resign within 14 days then a special meeting

of the Church members shall be called by the Elders who should report their findings to the Church. If the said person shall continue to refuse or neglect to resign his office then such office may be terminated by Ordinary Resolution of the Church members present when one half of those voting at the meeting confirm that the person shall be removed from office.

4.3.2 The procedure set out in this Rule 4.3.1 shall be followed where any Member is accused of dishonesty, immoral conduct, disunity, or failure to accept the membership affirmation of faith or any other action or behaviour that brings dishonour to the name of the Lord.

4.3.3 Where a Member has been absent from the services of public worship on Sundays for more than 12 months the Elders shall appoint two of their number to interview that person and if no valid reason, in their judgement, is given for the absence then they may recommend to the Elders that the person be suspended or removed from Membership.

4.3.4 Where a Member has been suspended the Elders shall ensure that they review the situation at least at three monthly intervals.

4.3.5 The Member concerned shall be entitled to make such representations as he or she wishes at any meeting of the Elders where his or her possible suspension or removal from Membership is discussed.

4.3.6 The Member shall be informed of the decision of the Elders and the register of Members amended accordingly where suspension or termination of Membership is to be applied.

#### **4.4 Annual General Meetings and Special Meetings:**

4.4.1 Church Meetings shall be duly convened if notice thereof is given on two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the date of the Church Meeting.

An Annual Church Meeting shall be held in May, or as soon as possible after that, of each year when the Elders shall present Reports to the Church of the various activities of the Church, together with a financial report for the previous financial year.

The Chairman of any Church Meeting shall be chosen by the Elders, and from among the Elders. Minutes of all Church Meetings shall be kept and presented for approval at the next Church Meeting. If members request a church meeting for a specific purpose, this shall be in writing by at least ten percent of the current membership to the Elders. The Elders are required to arrange this meeting within six weeks of receiving the request.

4.4.2 Voting procedures:

Church meetings are quorate if one fifth of church members are present. Voting at Church Meetings is normally undertaken by a show of hands. In such circumstances, each member present shall have one vote only. Voting for Special Resolutions in Church Meetings and Annual General meetings is carried out by secret written ballot,

#### 4.4.3 Special Resolutions

A Special Resolution shall be voted on by secret written ballot, by hand or by post, notification of the exact wording of the proposal having been given in writing to all members. The voting period shall be three weeks from the date of notification. A Special Resolution must be passed by two-thirds of the Church members voting. Resolutions shall be submitted in writing, for consideration by the Elders, at least four weeks prior to the Church Meeting.

### 4.5 Church Property

4.5.1 The Constitution governing the Church lays down the uses to which property owned or leased by the Church may be used. These uses are widely drawn. The Elders are required to ensure that no use of the property is outside the provisions of the Constitution.

### 4.6 Amendment of the Rules

4.6.1 Other than Rules 1.1 and 1.2 of Part 1, any Rule can be amended by the Managing Trustees under the authority of a resolution of the Members of the Church approving such a change by special resolution, provided that the proposed amendment shall not be such as would cause the Church to lose its charitable status. Rules 1.1 and 1.2 can only be amended where the provisions of the Constitution referred to in those Rules have been amended.

4.6.2 A majority of 66% of those Members voting in favour is required to approve a proposed amendment to any Rule excepting Rules 1.1 and 1.2 where the amendment will automatically follow the amendment of the Constitution without the need for a vote.

4.6.3 Notice of any proposed amendment together with the specific wording of the proposed change must be given in writing to all Church Members at least 3 weeks before the voting deadline. Failure to be able to give notice to individual Members because they are out of the country or away from the Church on holiday or for any other reason shall not constitute failure to give proper notice under this Rule.

4.6.4 No amendment may be made under this Rule to any provision of the Constitution, including the Basis of Faith, to any other trust deeds in relation to the Church property, or be such as would be contrary to any provision in the Constitution.

### 4.7 Closure of the Church

4.7.1 In the event of the Members of the Church resolving to close the Church the remaining Managing Trustees shall apply the funds to meet all outstanding liabilities. Sufficient funds must be retained to meet the insurance and maintenance costs for any property until such time as it is sold, or otherwise disposed of. The remaining funds shall be distributed in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

**BASIS OF FAITH**

The basis of Highfields Church shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity, as revealed in Holy Scripture, as set out below:

- a. There is one God in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- b. God is sovereign in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgement.
- c. The Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour.
- d. Since the fall, the whole of humankind is sinful and guilty, so that everyone is subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- e. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, is fully God; he was born of a virgin; his humanity is real and sinless; he died on the cross, was raised bodily from death and is now reigning over heaven and earth.
- f. Sinful human beings are redeemed from the guilt, penalty and power of sin only through the sacrificial death once and for all time of their representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only mediator between them and God.
- g. Those who believe in Christ are pardoned all their sins and accepted in God's sight only because of the righteousness of Christ credited to them; this justification is God's act of undeserved mercy, received solely by trust in him and not by their own efforts.
- h. The Holy Spirit alone makes the work of Christ effective to individual sinners, enabling them to turn to God from their sin and to trust in Jesus Christ.
- i. The Holy Spirit lives in all those he has regenerated. He makes them increasingly Christlike in character and behaviour and gives them power for their witness in the world.
- j. The one holy universal church is the Body of Christ, to which all true believers belong.
- k. The Lord Jesus Christ will return in person, to judge everyone, to execute God's just condemnation on those who have not repented and to receive the redeemed to eternal glory.