

Emmanuel Baptist Church Constitution

This Constitution were originally drawn up and agreed in 1935. It was revised by the church membership at Emmanuel Baptist Church and agreed by the Old Baptist Union in May 1996. A further revision was made and agreed in 2005

This most recent document was revised and agreed by church meeting in September 2013 and agreed by the Old Baptist Union in June 2014.

Emmanuel Baptist Church is a local expression of the universal Christian Church. As a gathered community of God's people, we meet to worship; pray; study and follow God's word; share our faith and serve the wider community.

Emmanuel Baptist Church was founded in 1905 and moved to Howard Road in 1921. In May 2013, the Church moved to its present building on Victoria Avenue. It is a member church of the Old Baptist Union, a small group of wholly evangelical Baptist Churches, established in 1830. The Church is also affiliated to the Southern Counties Baptist Association through which it is able to enjoy the fellowship and share the work of Baptists in the immediate locality. It is the policy of the Church to co - operate wherever possible with other Christians in Swanage in advancing Christ's Kingdom in the town.

Every church member should read carefully the Church's doctrinal basis and constitution. Copies are available on request from the Church Administrator.

Constitution

1. Membership

1. Any person who is professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, and, normally*, has been baptised as a believer, and shows evidence of having received the Holy Spirit, and feels that God has guided them to belong, worship and serve with this church, and is willing to accept its Articles of Faith and Constitution, is eligible to be received into membership.

**N.B This church will always teach the necessity and benefits of believers' baptism and lovingly try to persuade, but it also recognises that for a few the issue is a matter of personal history and conscience.*

2. All applications for membership will be considered by the Leadership Team before being placed before the Church Meeting for acceptance.
3. A person's name may be removed from the church roll at the request of that person, or if church attendance has been neglected for over a year and there has been no response to a letter, or if after discussion with the Minister(s) a person's conduct publicly continues to be incompatible with their Christian profession.

2. Meetings

1. An Ordinary Church Meeting of members will be held quarterly. One of these will be the AGM when the church accounts will be approved, reports from teams and departments received, and church appointments confirmed (other than Officers and Leaders who can be appointed at any Church Meeting). Members wishing to include items for the agenda should do so in writing fourteen days before the meeting. At least one month's notice should be given of such a meeting.
2. Sometimes a Special Church Meeting will be required when the issue is too urgent or important to wait for the next Ordinary Church Meeting. At least one week's notice shall be given of such a meeting.
3. The Leadership Team will meet regularly, chaired by the Minister or their representative.
4. Members shall, as far as possible, prayerfully seek consensus on most matters; nevertheless, a resolution shall be carried if supported by a majority, as detailed below:
 - For an Ordinary Church Meeting, and a Special Church Meeting, there should be an 80% majority vote. The quorum for such a meeting is 30% of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.
 - If a minister is to be appointed, an 80% majority vote where the quorum is 60%, is required.
 - Officers, Leaders and other paid staff require an 80% majority vote where the quorum is 30%.
 - No alterations shall be made to the Leadership Structure or to this constitution without an 80% majority vote where the quorum is 60%.

In each case the quorum is a percentage of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.

5. As stated above, our aim is to seek consensus; we gather together to discern the mind of Christ. Because of this corporate emphasis, postal voting and voting by proxy will not be accepted.

3. Minister

1. A minister shall be appointed by an 80% majority vote at a Church Meeting but only after having agreed the Articles of Faith and Constitution of the Church and having gained the unanimous approval of the Leadership Team. The quorum for such a Church Meeting shall be 60% of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.
2. During the appointment process a Moderator (a Baptist minister who knows the church and has its confidence) may be invited to take the chair at interviews and Church Meetings.
3. A minister's contract may be terminated at his or her own request, or by an 80% majority vote on a motion to that effect at a Church Meeting (quorum as above) with prior agreement of the Leadership Team.

4. Appointment of Officers & Leadership Team

1. Besides a Minister, the Church shall appoint members as Officers and Leaders. We believe Leadership is about serving. It is not about position or power, but about being actively engaged in leading a part of the life and activity of the Church. We are committed to fostering a team culture, emphasising that a team is much more than a meeting.
2. The Leadership Team normally consists of the Minister(s), Officers and other Leaders. Members of this team have equal status but different functions and responsibilities. Anyone leading a team or department within the Church, paid or unpaid, staff or volunteer, may be invited onto the Leadership Team with the approval of the Church Meeting.
3. Leaders will only be appointed if their lives meet the scriptural requirements of the office and they have been baptised as believers, and have been members of the church for over a year, and agree to uphold the Articles of Faith and Constitution.
4. Nominations for Officers and/or Leaders should be submitted to the Minister and other Officers/Leaders for approval and then placed before the membership at a Church Meeting. An 80% majority of the voting members shall ensure their election, after which they will be presented to the Church at a Sunday service and prayed for. The quorum needed to make such appointments shall be 30% of the membership, as defined in 2.4 above. All such appointments shall be made by secret ballot.
5. The number of Leaders may vary according to need, but should not normally exceed 10% of the membership.
6. Leaders shall serve for a term of three years, after which they may stand for re-election. At the end of the second three year term of office, they cannot be re-elected until a period of one year has expired.

7. It is recognised that there are a variety of leadership models that can serve the Church well. The names used to designate leaders and the structure of leadership might change from time to time depending on which structure best serves the Church at any given time. Changes to leadership structures will require the understanding and approval of the whole Church through a 60% majority of voting members and subject to the quorum defined in 2.4 above.

5. Other Appointments

All other appointments shall be affirmed annually by a decision of the Church Meeting.

6. Employment

All paid employees to receive salary and conditions commensurate with duties, normally comparable with employment in similar secular jobs, and reviewed annually.

7. Changes to Constitution

1. The Constitution shall be a “living document” that should be considered at regular intervals.
2. No alterations or amendments can be made to this constitution without an 80% majority vote at a Church Meeting, the quorum being 60% of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time. *(See 2.4 above)*

8. Trustees

For the purposes of The Charities Act 2011, the Minister(s), Officers and Leaders are presumed to be the Trustees of the Church and are accountable for decisions made in the course of the administration of the Church.

9. Land and Property

1. Land and/or property held in connection with the Church is to be held by the Trustees of Land & Property who need not be a part of the Leadership of the Church, but must be members of Emmanuel Baptist Church.
2. Land or property is held for the purposes of the Church. If land or property is sold then the proceeds are paid to the Church’s general or project fund as shall be decided by the Church.

10. Ultimate trust

If the Trustees decide that the Church needs to close, then the monies held by the Church should be distributed to other Christian Evangelistic work.