

Pilgrims Hatch Baptist Church

Members Handbook

Revised July 2007

WHY WE EXIST

Pilgrims Hatch Baptist Church exists to worship God and to help the people of Pilgrims Hatch and the surrounding to become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

We aim to be:

- A community that worships and prays together, living in God's goodness and love.
- A family, showing God's love in the way we live together.
- People who are learning from God's Word in the Bible, and becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.
- A group of people who actively serve the local community.
- People who demonstrate the love of God and who spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

- The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is completely reliable and is the one and only authority for Christian faith and practice.
- There is one true God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is eternal and is the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all things.
- All people are sinful and are guilty before God, and as a consequence face condemnation and eternal judgement if not redeemed through Christ.
- It was because of His love for us and to save us from God revealed Himself through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is fully man and fully God and is co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and lived a truly human life except that He did not sin. His life was perfect. At the time appointed by God He delivered Himself up to his enemies and was crucified. On the Cross He suffered punishment and death in our place as the only effective sacrifice for sin so that all who believe in Him might be forgiven and have eternal life.
- On the third day He rose bodily from the dead bearing marks of His sacrifice and appeared to many people. He ascended to the Father and ensured the eternal salvation of all believers.
- Christ is now with His Father in heaven. He will return one day to judge the world and to establish His kingdom with a new heaven and a new earth.
- Before ascending to the Father, Jesus Christ commanded His Church to continue His work on earth by seeking to make disciples of all nations until He returns.
- Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual through the grace of God, requiring repentance and the acceptance by faith of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

- The Holy Spirit enables God's people to live a holy life and gives spiritual gifts to Christians so that they may be equipped to do God's work.
- It is the privilege of all believers to join in fellowship with a local church both for their spiritual growth and the spreading of the gospel. It is God's will for His people that they should be so joined in fellowship.
- The Bible teaches that baptism is of believers by full immersion on profession of faith in Jesus Christ, in obedience to His command.
- The celebration of communion is a believer's remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection and is taken at His instruction.

MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES

Membership means being part of God's family. Each member is equally important and valuable. We are all different, but we are called together into one family.

Our membership responsibilities

As members we all take responsibility for our part in the health and growth of the church. Our responsibilities as members are:

1. To live lives inspired by the Lord Jesus Christ,
2. To establish good habits that will help us to grow in our faith, including personal prayer and Bible reading.
3. To love each other as Jesus has loved us.
4. To worship God, both on our own and together

5. To use our gifts and abilities to serve God and his family
6. To show the love of Jesus in our families, workplaces, the community and the wider world, and to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

We ask all members to attend worship regularly, to be involved in our housegroups, to attend members' meetings and to contribute to the church through giving of our time, abilities and money.

ETHOS STATEMENT

Pilgrims Hatch Baptist Church exists to worship God and, in accordance with His will for the whole Church, to help the people of Pilgrims Hatch and the surrounding area to become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

We believe that our ethos emerges from our common faith in Jesus Christ and our desire to express his love to all people, regardless of their faith or lack of it.

As a Christian church, our ethos is based on two key Biblical texts:

Our motivation: "Christ's love compels us." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Our attitude: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:1)

This motivation and attitude is essential for the success of our mission. The motivation and attitude of our staff and is as important as the mission itself.

It is therefore a genuine occupational requirement that key roles in our church are held by committed Christians who hold to the statement of belief as set out in the church membership documents and rules. Roles that have significant leadership or teaching responsibilities, those which have key spiritual elements, and those which are central to achieving our aims, will only be held by committed Christians.

Other roles in the church, essentially those which involve helping rather than leading, are open to be people who are not committed Christians. We do this because we believe these people often have a lot to offer and because we hope they will want to explore the Christian faith. It is essential that these staff and volunteers respect the Christian motivation and attitude of the church.

We expect our staff and volunteers to maintain evangelical Christian standards of behaviour as set out in the Bible, including those to do with sexual morality. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Notwithstanding this, we are committed to a policy of non-discrimination. We will not discriminate on any grounds that are unrelated to our ethos. We believe that defining our ethos does not restrict, but actually enhances, our commitment to diversity.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

We believe that all people are created by God and are of great value to God.

We therefore aim not to discriminate against or treat any

individual less favourably on the grounds of sex, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, or sexual orientation, whilst being bound by our Ethos statement at all times.

Our aim is that people with disabilities are given full opportunities within our church and we will take all reasonable steps to ensure this.

In recruiting staff and volunteers we will select people on the basis of their personal merit and ability, with respect to the needs of the job and the aims of our church.

It is the responsibility of every member to tackle discrimination, where necessary to report discrimination to the elders, and to work for a church that demonstrates God's love to all people.

Sexual and racial harassment are forms of discrimination. They are unacceptable and will be matters for church discipline.

The elders of the church are responsible for the implementation of this policy. Should they not be able to resolve any matter relating to this policy it will be referred to the Eastern Baptist Association.

The Rules of Pilgrims Hatch Baptist Church

Name and affiliation

1. The church shall be known as "Pilgrims Hatch Baptist Church". It is affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the local Association and shall consist of those individuals who have become members in the manner described below.

Membership

2. Membership shall be open to all who
 - profess repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and
 - whose lives bear evidence of their Christian faith, and
 - who undertake a. course on baptism and church membership, and
 - who have witnessed to their faith through Believers' Baptism, or
 - who have satisfied the church that, for physical reasons, such baptism would be detrimental to their health, or

- have previously been in membership with other Protestant churches and are supported by a letter of commendation from their former church.
3. Application for membership shall be made to the Minister, or an elder or deacon (hereafter called the "leadership"). The leadership shall appoint two church members to visit the applicant. After the course on baptism and church membership, these members shall report on the applicant at the next Members' Meeting, whereupon the application shall be subject to a vote by the members present. If the application is approved the applicant shall be received into membership at a convenient communion service, at which the applicant shall be asked to dedicate himself or herself to the service of God within the church.
 4. Every year the Minister and the leadership will review the membership list and, after due notice, remove the names of those who, although able to attend, have been absent from worship for an extended period. This list should then be ratified by a Members' Meeting.
 5. Names of members who have moved away permanently and who cannot take an active part in the life of the church shall be removed from the list of local members but retained on a separate list of non-resident members until an application is received for a transfer of the membership. This secondary list shall not be included in quorum calculations.

Members' Meetings

6. The ultimate authority within the church lies with the Members' Meeting, passing resolutions on the basis of majority voting in accordance with these Rules.
7. Members' Meetings shall be held, normally on a bi-monthly basis, for fellowship and the transaction of church business. Notice of any Members' Meeting shall be given on the two preceding Sundays, and an agenda shall be available on the Sunday prior to the meeting.
8. Extra-ordinary Members' Meetings may be called on receipt of the written request of ten members. The notice provisions above shall apply.
9. The quorum for Members' Meetings shall be 25% of the church membership; but the quorum shall be 50% at a meeting at which:
 - any member of the leadership is to be elected, or
 - a resolution to change these' Rules is proposed,
10. In any ballot to elect a member of the leadership, postal votes will be made available to any member who is unable to attend the relevant Members' Meeting and who applies to the Secretary or Minister in advance. These votes shall be included in the calculation of the necessary quorum.

Ministers

11. Any minister shall normally be an accredited minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. A minister cannot be called with less than a 75% majority of those present a Members Meeting duly called for the purpose and for which the quorum shall be 75% of the membership.

The Leadership

12. At the discretion of the Minister and the leadership, names of prospective **ELDERS** from amongst the members who have received Believers' Baptism shall be brought to a Members' Meeting for approval, for a three-year term of office commencing at that meeting. The election of elders shall proceed in the same manner as that for deacons (below), save that for the appointment of an elder to be confirmed, a candidate would need to receive a vote in favour of 75% of the ballot papers received. At the end of a three-year term, an elder will be eligible for re-election following the same process.
13. There will be no predetermined number of elders, but that number will not normally exceed four.
14. The **DIACONATE** shall consist of up to six church members who have received Believers' Baptism and have been in membership of the church for not less than six months at the time of nomination. Nominations for the diaconate will normally be sought about six weeks prior to the November Members' Meeting; a nominee must indicate his or her willingness to stand for election and be

nominated by six members of the church. A retiring member of the diaconate shall be eligible to stand for re-election, for normally no more than three consecutive terms.

15. Members shall be advised of the names of those nominated for election on the three Sundays prior to the relevant Members' Meeting.
16. Election to the diaconate shall normally take place at the November Members' Meeting. For each vacancy, subject to obtaining votes in favour on more than 50% of the valid ballot papers received, the candidate(s) obtaining the highest number of votes in each separate ballot shall be elected for a period of three years from the following 1st January.
17. In the event of a mid-year vacancy on the diaconate for any reason, the vacancy may be filled by a ballot at any Members' Meeting after observing the normal election procedures, or at the next annual election. The person specifically elected to fill such a vacancy or, if the election takes place at a normal annual election, the successful candidate who receives the least number of votes, shall be regarded as being elected to serve for the remaining term of the person whose absence created the vacancy.

Secretary and Treasurer

18. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected by ballot at a Members' Meeting for which appropriate notice shall have been given from amongst those who have already been elected to the leadership team. The Secretary and Treasurer

shall continue in office while willing and while elected to the leadership team, or until requested to retire by a vote taken at a Members' Meeting.

Church Organisations

19. The minister shall be ex officio president of all church organisations and shall be entitled to preside at all meetings of the church and its organisations.
20. The principal leader of each church organisation shall be a church member and their appointment for the ensuing year shall be ratified at the November Members' Meeting.

Changes to the Rules

21. A copy of the rules shall be given to each person applying for membership. The rules may be altered only at a Members' Meeting. Notice of proposed alterations shall be given in writing by the Secretary or Minister to all members at least three weeks before the relevant Members' Meeting.

