

1. NAME OF CHURCH

The church shall be styled 'Yardley Baptist Church'. It shall be in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and with the Heart of England Baptist Association.

2. MEMBERSHIP

(a) Membership shall be open to all who profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and whose lives bear witness to their Christian profession.

They will be required to believe:

- i. In God the Infinite and Eternal Father and in His Son Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, and in God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Sanctifier of those who believe.
- ii. In the Scriptures as the will and law of God, a complete revelation of the means of salvation and the sole and final authority upon all questions of Christian faith and duty.
- iii. In the two Scriptural Sacraments and Ordinances of Believers' Baptism by immersion and the Communion of the Lords' Supper.
- iv. In the Priesthood of all believers.

(b) Members will be expected to share in the Christian worship and service of the Church, to contribute to the funds of the Church according to their means and to seek, by watchfulness, prayer and charity, to establish and maintain the purity and dignity of the Christian character, the efficiency of the Church and the glory of God in the salvation of all people.

(c) Membership is open to those who have confessed their repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in believers' baptism. In addition, in exceptional circumstances other true believers, on application and after due consideration of each case individually, may be received into membership.

(d) Persons wishing to become members shall apply to the minister or church secretary and shall satisfy the church through the visitors, of their sincere faith in Christ, their hearty desire to follow and obey Him. Also their agreement with the principles, rules and doctrines set out in this document. To give effect to this they shall be asked to read the Church rules and signify their acceptance to the visitors.

(e) Members of other Baptist churches wishing to join the fellowship, will, in addition, be required to obtain written recommendation from the Church of which they have been a member.

(f) If a Member is absent from Worship for three months a pastoral enquiry shall be made by the Minister or the Leadership Team. If a Member is absent for a further six months without adequate reason, the Church is empowered on the recommendation of the Minister or the Leadership Team to remove the member's name from the Church Roll, after the member has been asked to give adequate reason why this should not be done. The Church Roll is to be revised annually.

(g) Should any member so act as to affect the honour of the Church, the Minister or the Leadership Team shall have power to deal with the matter and, if necessary, make a recommendation to the church. If the church so decide it may suspend the offender or erase the name from the church roll.

3. CHURCH OFFICIALS

(a) THE MINISTER

The Church shall be presided over by a Minister who shall be an accredited minister or probationer of the Baptist Union. He or she shall be elected at a church meeting specially called for the purpose by notice on the official notice board at least two Sundays before the date set for the meeting. For a person to be appointed it shall be necessary to secure at least three-quarters majority of the votes cast by secret ballot of members present and those using postal votes. The minister may terminate the appointment by giving three months notice. The church may terminate the appointment by giving nine months notice. This shall require at least three-quarters majority of the votes cast by secret ballot of members present and those using postal votes at a church meeting called after two weeks notification.

In the event of serious misconduct, a serious breach of duty by the minister or the removal of the minister's name from the accredited list of the Baptist Union, the church shall have the right to determine the appointment without notice.

(b) THE MODERATOR

In the absence of an incumbent Minister the church meeting may elect a member to act as moderator. This

shall require at least three-quarters majority of the votes cast by secret ballot of members present, and those using postal votes at a church meeting called for this purpose. Alternatively, if felt to be desirable, it may appoint a Moderator approved by the Regional Minister of the Heart of England Baptist Association. The moderator shall carry out such ministerial duties as the church meeting may require. Termination can be given by either party with immediate effect.

(c) THE ELDERSHIP

Elders may be appointed to oversee, together with the Minister, the overall direction of the church and, in particular, its spiritual life. In order to be appointed elders must be nominated by the minister, and endorsed by a three quarters majority of votes cast by secret ballot by members present and those using postal votes, at an Annual Church Meeting, or at a church meeting specially called for the purpose. A list of nominees shall be displayed on the official church notice board at least 3 Sundays before such a meeting. They may serve a three year renewable term of office, but an eldership will automatically be dissolved after three months of a fresh ministry unless the new minister requests otherwise. During an interregnum the elders would remain in office. Additional elders may be appointed during an interregnum if nominated unanimously by serving elders and approved by the church meeting as outlined above.

(d) DEACONS

Deacons shall in general oversee the practical and administrative life of the church.

- i. There may be eight Deacons with the addition of one per fifty members or fraction of fifty, elected from the membership.
- ii. No one shall be elected unless a three-quarters majority is secured of votes cast by secret ballot of members present and those using postal votes, at the meeting in which the ballot is held.
- iii. All nominations shall be made in writing with the consent of the nominee and handed to the Secretary not less than sixteen days prior to the Annual Church Meeting, or a church meeting specially called for the purpose, and a list of the same shall be put on the official Church notice board.
- iv. Members may be elected to the Diaconate after being in membership for at least six months if (and only if) their nomination is endorsed by a majority of both Deacons and Elders (voting separately). Apart from this provision, no one shall be elected a deacon who has not been a member of this church for at least 12 months.
- v. Deacons shall be elected for a period of three years, at the end of which time they shall be eligible for renomination.

(e) POSTAL VOTES

These may be requested in ballots for the Eldership, Diaconate, the appointment of a Minister, or in other special circumstances. Postal votes may be allowed at the discretion of the Minister or Secretary. Ballot papers will be given to such members and returned in sealed envelopes to the church secretary and passed to the tellers at the Church meeting concerned.

(f) SECRETARY AND TREASURER

- i. A Secretary shall be elected annually from the diaconate at the Annual Church Meeting. A three-quarters majority of votes cast by secret ballot by those present shall be required.
- ii. A Treasurer shall be elected annually at the Annual Church Meeting. A three-quarters majority of votes cast by secret ballot by those present shall be required.

(g) OTHER APPOINTMENTS AND COMMITTEES

Selected positions shall be elected annually. Any committee chosen by the Church shall have power to fill vacancies made between elections.

4. CHURCH MEETINGS

- (a) The Church members shall meet for Christian Fellowship and the transaction of business bi-monthly, except at the discretion of the Church meeting.
- (b) A special Church meeting may be called at the discretion of the Minister and a majority of the Elders and Deacons or at the written request of one tenth of the church membership or twelve members whichever is the less. Notice of such a meeting shall be given on the two preceding Sundays.
- (c) The business shall be transacted under such rules as normally govern the conduct of public meetings.
- (d) Before matters are submitted to the Church for a decision they shall come before the Minister, Deacons or Elders.
- (e) A member may vote in person or by postal vote provided that they have been a member for a minimum of 3 calendar months and have taken communion at least once within the preceding six calendar months. This applies to both general and special church meetings.

5. GENERAL

(a) Meetings and Services on Church premises shall only be held with the permission of the Minister or Deacons and upon such conditions as they may decide.

(b) All organisations, committees or individuals carrying out work in the name of the Church shall report from time to time to the Church meeting and shall submit to the guidance and control of that meeting and also present a balance sheet annually to the Auditors.

(c) All Officers of Church organisations shall be Members of the Church.

6. ALTERATIONS TO THE RULES

These rules shall not be altered or added to except at the Annual Church Meeting or a meeting specially called for the purpose. Notice of such proposed alteration or addition having been given at the Ordinary Church meeting prior to the one which is to discuss the alteration or addition.

The Chairman may accept amendments to any suggested alteration without notice if no question of principle is thereby raised.

Revised July 2009

YARDLEY BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT

Gathered together in the family of God our Father, with Whom we are at peace through our Lord Jesus Christ, we do solemnly covenant with His and with one another to give of our loyalty and devotion to this, the Yardley Baptist Church, that it may be an habitation of God through the Spirit, and in very truth part of the one church of the Redeemed, belonging to both Heaven and Earth. In humble reliance upon the Grace of our Divine Saviour, we pledge ourselves not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together to hear His word, to partake of the symbols of His Body once broken for us, and to partake also of the fulness of life in His continuing Body, the Church, studying to be an example to each other in love and humility, that we may walk worthily, bearing one another's burdens, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, giving of our substance to the furthering of His work at home and abroad, taking our share in the labours of the Church and spending ourselves in the extension of His Kingdom in such ways as He shall reveal to us.

Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen.