

CHURCH RULES

1. The Church shall be known as “Gorleston Baptist Church”. It is affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the local Association, and consists of those individuals who have become members as explained in these rules.

2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- a. Membership shall be open to all those who profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and whose lives bear witness of their Christian profession. Members are usually received after baptism by immersion, but the Church welcomes to full membership all who conscientiously follow our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Those wishing to join the Church shall apply to the Minister or the Administrative Co-ordinator: their names shall be proposed at a regular Church Meeting and after visitation and a satisfactory report by the Minister and two members, shall be voted upon at the Church Meeting. If elected they shall be welcomed into membership at the Lord’s Table as soon as possible.
- c. The same process will apply to anybody wishing to transfer from another church.
- d. Members are expected to regularly attend the Church Services and to contribute financially towards its support as God has prospered them, and to take part in Church activities, and with God’s help, to lead lives regulated by the teaching and inspiration of the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper shall be observed during the morning service at least monthly. All Christians are welcome. Members should do their utmost to be present at

the Communion Service, and the names of those absent for six consecutive months without reasonable excuse, may, after due notice, be removed from the Church Roll of Membership.

4. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The oversight/leadership of the Church shall comprise of a combination of recognised minister(s), elder(s) and deacons. The minister (senior minister in the case of more than one) should be regarded as the senior elder.

a) Minister

The Minister(s) shall be elected in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Baptist Union, of which he (they) shall be an accredited minister.

b) Elders

Elders may be appointed to share with the minister(s) in the responsibilities of the spiritual leadership and pastoral care of the fellowship. They should also act as a Pastoral Support Group to the Minister, who should be regarded as a Senior Elder. The maximum number of elders appointed shall be that recommended by the existing elders and confirmed at a Church Meeting. The Minister(s) and Elders may meet separately from the Deacons but should fully liaise, with the aim of maintaining clear and united purpose and vision.

Elders may be recognised following recommendation by the minister and elders, which should only follow full and careful consultation with the Church, and time for prayerful consideration. Such recognition must be approved by a minimum of two thirds of those members present at a Church meeting.

Elders may serve for a three year period, after which they must be approved once more by the Church meeting.

Following appointment of a new minister, all elders must be renewed in the next twelve months.

c) *Deacons*

Deacons are to be appointed to share with the Minister(s) and Elder(s), and to be primarily responsible for the practical and administrative aspects of church life.

The Diaconate shall consist of up to ten Church Members. Those elected shall be above the age of 21 years and shall have been a member for at least six months.

Deacons shall serve a term of up to four years following their election. As far as possible, one half of their number shall retire in rotation every two years, and shall be eligible for re-election in accordance with Rule 4.c.iii.

If deemed necessary for the continued efficient functioning of the Diaconate, an election may be called at the discretion of the Minister and a majority of the serving deacons. Notice of such election shall be given at the preceding Ordinary Church Meeting. Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be made in writing to the appropriate person with the supporting signatures of two other members and the consent of the nominee.

Deacons shall be elected by ballot of the membership in the appropriate years from those who have previously given their consent to nomination.

Those obtaining two thirds of the votes cast at the meeting shall be declared to be elected.

Elders and Deacons of the Church shall nevertheless at all times consist of persons who have been baptised by immersion upon confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Church administration and church finance shall be undertaken by two separate teams. At least one member from each team shall be a deacon, designated from within the diaconate as Administrative Co-ordinator and Finance Deacon respectively, to lead the teams.

5. **CHURCH MEETINGS**

The Church shall meet for Christian fellowship and for the transaction of business of the Church at least once in every two months. Notice of such meetings shall be given at every service on the preceding Sunday. A Special Church Meeting may be called at the discretion of the Minister and a majority of the Deacons or at the written request of five church members. Notice of such meetings shall be given at every service on the two preceding Sundays. The agreement of two thirds of the members present shall constitute a majority and the business shall be transacted under such rules as ordinarily govern the conduct of public meetings.

6. **CHURCH SOCIETIES**

The Minister shall be ex-officio President of all Societies connected with the Church and is entitled to preside at all meetings. Meetings and Services on Church premises shall be held with the permission of the Minister and Deacons and upon such conditions as they may decide. The appointment of all Church officers shall be vested in the Church, and the officers of all constituent societies must be Church Members.

7. **CHURCH ACCOUNTS**

The Church Accounts shall be audited annually by one Deacon and by one member elected by the Church. No one to be elected for more than two consecutive years.

8. **ADOPTION OF RULES**

These Rules shall be adopted at a Special Church Meeting and a copy be given to each member, and may be altered only at the Annual Business Meeting, or a special meeting called for this purpose. Two months' notice shall be given of any proposed alterations.

Revised 2010

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE

This Church is in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which is based on the following:

1. That our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all 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.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following statement of faith shall be understood by all who seek membership of this Church:

- Membership of this Church is open to all who profess repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and whose lives bear witness of their Christian profession.
- That on joining the Church, prospective members promise that if they have not been baptised, to give the matter careful consideration, and to seek to live out the experience that believers' baptism symbolises – separation from the world, death to sin and self and union with Christ in His victory and life. (Romans 6: 2-4)
- This Church believes the following essential doctrines:
 - The One Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is Sovereign and Lord in Creation, Providence, Revelation, Redemption and Final Judgement. (Genesis 1:26-27, John 1:12, Ephesians 1:3-5, Colossians 1:15-20)
 - The divine inspiration and authority of the Bible as the word of God, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:13-17)
 - The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became man, who died on the Cross in man's place bearing his sin, who rose again on the third day, who ascended to the right hand of God, and who will come again to judge the world and glorify His people.

(Luke 1:35, John 1:1, Acts 1:8-11, 1 Cor 15:3-5, 1 Thess 4:16)

- The fallen nature of mankind, whose sin makes him subject to the judgement of God
(Romans 3:23, Romans 2:1-10)
- The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ crucified and risen
(Acts 11:18, Eph 2:8, Romans 5:1&8)
- God the Holy Spirit, who brings sinners to conviction and faith, and who indwells the believer for sanctification and service.
(John 16:7-11, Eph 1:13-14, 1Peter 1:1-2)
- The Priesthood of all believers, constituting the Church, the Body of Christ who is the head, and which is committed by His command to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world
(Romans 12:4-6, Matt 28:18-20, 1Peter 2:9)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- To live a life consistent with the Gospel and worthy of our high calling in Christ which we believe includes serious consideration of believer's baptism.
- To spend some time daily in prayer and reading the Scriptures.
- To share each Lord's Day, unless unavoidably prevented, in the corporate worship of the Church, and to be regular and faithful in observance of the Lord's Supper.
- To fulfil the ministry of intercession both privately and by being present whenever possible at the meeting for corporate prayer.
- To live in loyal love and fellowship with all the other members of the Church.
- To take some part in the work of the Church, according to our calling, gifts and opportunities.
- To accept personal responsibility for the government of the local Church by being present, whenever possible, at the Church Meeting.
- To give a sum of money regularly for the work of God's Kingdom at home and overseas.
- To attempt by personal invitation, hospitality and visitation, to introduce and bring others to the Church.

- To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

“The Church is the only organisation which exists for the benefit of those who are not already members of it.”

(William Temple)