



North Evington Free Church

Constitution (Approved 9/07/2024)

The organisation formerly called 'North Evington Free Church (Baptist)' will hereby be named 'North Evington Free Church' and will be structured according to the constitution as it appears in this document.

The content of this document replaces and supersedes all previous constitutions.

Within this document, 'church' refers to the organisation and members of North Evington Free Church.

1 INTRODUCTION

North Evington Free Church is currently in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and with the East Midlands Baptist Association, and associated with the Union of Unaffiliated Congregational Churches.

The church follows the New Testament pattern in being self-governing and self-supporting and depends upon the loyal and practical service and support of its members.

It is our certain belief that the Bible is the complete inspired Word of God. This constitution is never to be seen as opposed to, or above, Scripture, but is rather our prayerfully considered application of the Word of God to the church at North Evington.

2 BASIS OF FAITH

The Holy Bible as originally given is inspired by God through His Spirit. It contains no mistakes and is the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice. Its main purpose is to direct people to Jesus, who is the Word of God.

God is one and there is no other, existing in three equal persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving; governing all things at all times and providing Salvation to all who repent and believe.

Humans were created in God's image and are all equally valuable. They were given creation to enjoy and rule over. Through choosing to rebel against God's command they became sinful in nature, guilty before God and under His just condemnation. All people have inherited this sinful nature from birth and continue to rebel against God throughout life.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God and the chosen Messiah, born of a virgin, sinless in life, fully God and fully man. His teachings are perfect and have complete authority. His death brings forgiveness as a substitution for our punishment and His resurrection brings victory over death. He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Salvation comes from God alone and cannot be obtained through our works. We are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus alone through repentance and faith alone, which brings us complete forgiveness, power over sin and death, and the promise of eternal life with God in His kingdom. The church is called to share this good news with the world.

The Holy Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son, being fully God, and essential to bring spiritual understanding, conviction, faith and new birth. He empowers us to overcome sin and equips the church to become spiritually mature.

The Church worldwide is the people of God, saved through the work of Jesus and united through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is its head and the ultimate authority.

Jesus will return to judge the world. The dead will be raised, and all people will be separated either to eternal life through the saving work of Jesus or to eternal death as the just punishment for their sin.

3 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Although Church membership is not explicitly taught in the Bible, it provides a way for those who are committed to the Church to formally join the fellowship. Members are committing themselves to serve the Church, to share its vision and to submit to the leadership. By becoming a member, individuals will be able to formally have a say on decisions through their presence at members' meetings and voting.

3.1 BECOMING A MEMBER

- 3.1.1 Church membership will be open to all who profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who assent to the Basis of Faith, and whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession.
- 3.1.2 Individuals in regular attendance of the Sunday church meetings may be considered for membership either by invitation of the elders or by expressing interest to the eldership.
- 3.1.3 Any person desiring to become a member of the church will make application to one of the elders. The elders will arrange an interview with the applicant which should be

conducted by one elder alongside a current member. If approved, current Church members will be notified at least one week before the next church meeting, in which a vote will be held to decide whether to accept the applicant into membership.

- 3.1.4** Admission will be made upon the recommendation of the elders, with the approval of at least 75% of those present at the meeting.
- 3.1.5** The applicant will be notified of the result of the vote, and if accepted will be corporately welcomed into membership either at the next Sunday service or by another means as requested by the new member. New members will be added to the official list of church members.
- 3.1.6** For the purpose of calculating the quorum percentage when employing an elder, dismissing an elder, or dismissing a deacon only members who are present at the meeting, or have been present at at-least one out of the three most recent regular Church Members' Meetings will be included in the calculation.
- 3.1.7** Members of the church who permanently move away from the district will be expected and encouraged to seek fellowship in that locality in a church where the gospel is faithfully preached, and the doctrines of the Christian faith upheld.
- 3.1.8** Resignations from membership will be made in writing to the elders. They will report the resignation to the church at the next church meeting.
- 3.1.9** Where a member is absent from Sunday services, without sufficient reason, for a consecutive period of six months, this will be considered sufficient cause to remove that person from membership. The decision to remove a member in such circumstances will be made on the recommendation of the elders and with the approval of the majority of members present at the church meeting.

3.2 ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- 3.2.1** If a member moves away from the area but wishes to remain linked to the church, he or she may apply to the elders to be granted the status of Associate Member.
- 3.2.2** If a member is unable to attend church on a regular basis by reason of incapacity, the elders may grant them the status of Associate Member.
- 3.2.3** In all cases and other exceptional circumstances, conferral of this status will be at the Elders' discretion, and clauses which apply to the resignation, suspension or termination of Membership apply equally to Associate Membership.
- 3.2.4** Associate Members will be encouraged, if able, to attend church meetings and will not have a vote.
- 3.2.5** The presence or absence of Associate Members will not affect the quorum of a church meeting.

3.3 EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

- 3.3.1** Members are expected to support the central vision of the church and hold to the basis of faith.
- 3.3.2** Members should strive for unity where possible.
- 3.3.3** Members should seek to love and support each other, and to build each other up in the faith through prayer and action.
- 3.3.4** Members are expected to regularly attend Sunday services where possible and commit to the activities of the church as they see fit.
- 3.3.5** Members should prayerfully consider how they may give financially to the church.
- 3.3.6** Members should seek to show love and compassion to any and all non-members who interact with the church in line with our values.
- 3.3.7** Members should seek to support and encourage their leaders, and be willing to serve under their spiritual authority.
- 3.3.8** Members are expected to recognise and submit to the spiritual authority and discipline of those over them in the Lord. In the event of a matter arising between members, this should be settled according to the principles of Galatians 6 v 1. If a person is caught up in any wrong doing, then it will be the task of the elders and the spiritually mature to restore such a person, counting him not as an enemy but challenging him as a brother, as in 2 Thessalonians 3:15.
- 3.3.9** If it should become necessary for the church to consider the withdrawal of membership through persistent and unrepentant sin, or for other reasons brought to the attention of the elders, the method to be observed is that outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20. Firstly, a pastoral visit to seek the cause of spiritual decline and to urge a return to the Lord Jesus. If necessary, this will be followed by a second visit from two persons appointed by the eldership. Should the member refuse to listen, the elders may recommend their removal from membership which will be voted on in an upcoming members' meeting with as much details given as the elders deem appropriate.

4 ELDERS

The church will be governed according to the principles set out in 1 Timothy 3 v 1 – 13, Titus 1 v 5 – 9 and 1 Peter 5 v 1 – 4. The leadership team will be made up of a team of elders who will be fully accountable to the membership of the church and appointed according to the procedures outlined below.

- 4.1 The role of the elders is to collectively direct the affairs of the church, provide spiritual oversight and teaching, protect against false teaching, ensure pastoral care for the congregation, and administer church discipline where necessary.
- 4.2 All elders must hold to and teach the doctrines found in the basis of faith and should be chosen according to the qualities of character and gifting laid out in the Bible.
- 4.3 Amongst the elders, there may be some who are employed and some who are not, here referred to as salaried and unsalaried elders.
- 4.4 **Unsalaries Elders** will be selected from those who have been church members for at least 1 year.
 - 4.4.1 New elders will be appointed either at a regular members' meeting or at a special members' meeting convened by the current elders.
 - 4.4.2 Members will be informed when a new elder is being sought and given an opportunity to propose potential candidates to the current elders.
 - 4.4.3 If the current elders endorse the candidate, they will approach them to explain to them the expectations and responsibilities of being an elder.
 - 4.4.4 The candidate will then be given time to consider the matter before reporting their decision to the current elders.
 - 4.4.5 The names of those standing will be made known to the church members at least one month before the members' meeting in order that they can prayerfully consider the matter.
 - 4.4.6 Unsalaries elders will be appointed at a members' meeting. by the unanimous recommendation of the existing elders and the approval of 75% of those present at the meeting.
 - 4.4.7 Unsalaries elders will serve a term of no more than three years (unless re-elected), during which time they will meet together regularly to pray for and plan the ongoing work of the Lord in His church at North Evington.
- 4.5 **Salaried Elders** (either full-time or part-time), where required, will be selected from either the current elders or be a new candidate.
 - 4.5.1 The current elders will prayerfully consider whether there is need to employ someone as an elder, either through recognising the gifts or commitment of a current elder or by seeing an unfulfilled need in the church.
 - 4.5.2 If the prospective employed elder is not from amongst the current elders, the church will be given the opportunity to meet them and assess their suitability.

- 4.5.3** The church must receive assurances that the current elders have conducting due diligence and interviewed the candidate and that they (1) qualify to become an elder (in accordance with the above) and (2) are brought before them with the unanimous, unreserved recommendation of the elders.
- 4.5.4** The church must be given adequate time to consider the matter prayerfully before expressing its judgement at the members' meeting, the quorum for which will be 60% of the active members. The employed elder will be accepted with the approval of not less than 75% of those present.
- 4.6** If it should become necessary to remove from office any elder because of persistent unrepentant sin, or for any other reason deemed inappropriate for their position, this will be done by the unanimous decision of the remaining elders and the decision of the members' meeting, the quorum for which will be 60% of the active members. The decision being taken by the agreement of 75% of those present.

5 DEACONS

The elders will work alongside a team of deacons who will lead in practical and administrative areas of the church, as initiated in Acts chapter 7. Deacons will be appointed according to the procedures outlined below:

- 5.1** The role of the deacons is to help organise and plan the practical needs of the church and to aid in providing support and care for individual members within it.
- 5.2** All deacons must hold to the doctrines found in the basis of faith and should be chosen according to the qualities of character found in the Bible.
- 5.3** Deacons will be appointed from those who have been church members for at least 1 year.
- 5.4** Deacons will be appointed either at a regular members' meeting or at a special members' meeting convened by the elders.
- 5.5** Members will be informed when a new deacon is being sought after and given an opportunity to propose potential candidates to the current elders.
- 5.6** If the current elders endorse the candidate, they will approach them to explain to them the responsibilities of office.
- 5.7** The candidate will then be given time to consider the matter before reporting their decision to the elders.
- 5.8** The names of those standing will be made known to the church members at least one month before the members' meeting in order that they can prayerfully consider the matter.

- 5.9** Deacons will be appointed at a members' meeting by the unanimous recommendation of the elders and the approval of 75% of those present at the meeting.
- 5.10** Deacons will serve for a term of 3 years, during which time they will meet together regularly with the elders to pray for and plan the ongoing work of the Lord in His church at North Evington.
- 5.11** If it should become necessary to remove from office any deacon because of persistent unrepentant sin, or for any other reason deemed inappropriate for the position, this will be done by the unanimous decision of the elders and/or the decision of a special members' meeting, the quorum for which will be 60% of the active members. The decision being taken by the agreement of 75% of those present.

6 OTHER CHURCH POSITIONS

6.1 TRUSTEES

- 6.1.1** The elders and deacons are joint trustees of the church and have responsibility for activities that take place under its name and in the building.

6.2 SECRETARY AND TREASURER

- 6.2.1** The secretary and treasurer will be nominated from within the church membership by the elders and elected either at a regular members' meeting or a specially convened members' meeting with the approval of 75% of those present.

6.3 GROUPS, LEADERS AND TEACHERS

- 6.3.1** Any project, group or activity that runs under the name of the church must be approved by the elders
- 6.3.2** Church projects, groups or activities should have an assigned main leader who is responsible for upholding the church's policies and procedures.
- 6.3.3** Each main leader of a project, group or activity must be a professing Christian and approved by the elders. They must be willing to give an account of said project, group or activity as requested by the elders.
- 6.3.4** Volunteers and helpers at church projects, groups or activities should be approved by the main group leader and must follow current church policies and procedures for recruitment and would be expected to act and speak in line with the values of the church.
- 6.3.5** Regular church teachers will be approved by the elders.

- 6.3.6** Staff employed by the church will be approved by the elders and will be paid fairly and reviewed regularly.

7 CHURCH MEETINGS

- 7.1** Church meetings will be held quarterly, or otherwise as required. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held as close to the start of the new year as possible.
- 7.2** The elders may at times wish to convene a special members' meeting as required, giving a minimum of two weeks' notice to the members.
- 7.3** Church meetings will be open to all church members and it is their responsibility to attend, if possible. On occasions the elders and deacons may wish to invite non-members to the church meetings, but they will not be counted in the official register or voting.
- 7.4** Notice of any church meeting will be given on the two preceding Sundays prior to the meeting. At the discretion of the elders an emergency meeting may be called and this rule waived.
- 7.5** A financial statement for the previous calendar year (duly audited or independently examined by auditors or independent examiner appointed at a previous church meeting) will be presented at the AGM.
- 7.6** Reports (including a financial statement for the preceding calendar year) will be provided by each department of the church in writing at least seven days before the AGM. A printed copy of these reports will be given to each member at the AGM.
- 7.7** The business transacted at each church meeting will be considered private and confidential.
- 7.8** Voting is used as a means of determining God's will for the church. Members are to vote accordingly and not simply to express their own personal desires. Election of elders and deacons will always be by written vote. The number of votes cast for and against will not be published but only the outcome of the vote.
- 7.9** Postal or electronic voting may be considered by the elders and if deemed appropriate its implementation made clear to members prior to the meeting.

8 WORK OF THE CHURCH

- 8.1** The local church is the group of believers who gather together for worship, fellowship and service.

- 8.2** Members may, at any time, present matters for consideration by the elders and deacons. When appropriate, these matters will be brought to a church meeting for open discussion.
- 8.3** Not all the work of the church can be accomplished by the elders and deacons alone. The burden of the work must, as far as possible, be shared equally by all members. The strength and effectiveness of the church is dependent upon the degree of involvement of each member of the fellowship.
- 8.4** The church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults and all children and young people entrusted to its care.

9 DEDICATION

Dedication is a service in which the parents of a child can publicly acknowledge and thank God for the child and commit to raise them in the ways of the Lord Jesus. The church also commits to show Christ's love to the child and to help the parents as they see fit.

- 9.1** A dedication service will be conducted at the request of the parents of a child to the elders. The parents of the child are expected to be members or regular church attendees.
- 9.2** The church does not recognise infant baptism or christening as having any part in salvation and accordingly will not conduct either service.

10 BAPTISM

The Scriptures refer frequently to the place and function of baptism. The Lord clearly commands it in Matthew 28:19, and it is seen practised in the early church Acts 2:41, 8:12, etc. It does not impart salvation to an individual.

- 10.1** Baptism will be administered to those who profess to have repented of their sins and to have put their faith in Christ for salvation.
- 10.2** Those requesting baptism will be interviewed by conducted by at least one elder alongside a current member both to ensure that the true meaning of baptism is clearly understood and to establish a credible profession of faith.

11 THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is the privilege and responsibility of all believers to meet regularly at for communion in obedience to His command and after the example of the early church, Matthew 26:20, Acts

2:42, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus only.

11.1 The communion of the Lord's supper will be observed regularly.

11.2 The Lord's Supper will be conducted in such a way as to focus on Jesus and the communion of believers.

11.3 All believers who make profession of faith will be invited to partake of His table.

12 MARRIAGE

12.1 Couples, where one or both parties regularly worship at NEFC, can apply to the elders for marriage at this church. Any marriage will be dependent upon the couple's willingness to participate in a course in preparation for marriage and approval from the elders. The church retains the right to withdraw from conducting the marriage at any time that the eldership so determines.

13 GENERAL

13.1 Permission must be obtained from the elders and deacons before arranging any fundraising events on behalf of the church, arranging to hold any meetings on the church premises, or arranging to distribute or display any literature on the church premises.

13.2 Any large spends, major structural alterations to church properties or changes in the direction of the church will be brought before the membership for discussion and approval.

14 AMENDMENTS

14.1 Any proposed amendment to this Constitution must be submitted in writing to the elders at least one month before the AGM or a specially convened meeting by the elders. Amendments can only be made with the approval of 75% of those present.