

RULES OF THE UNITED CHURCH FERNDOWN WIMBORNE ROAD, FERNDOWN, DORSET

INTRODUCTION

1. The Ferndown Baptist Fellowship and the Ferndown United Reformed Church have covenanted to work, worship, and witness together as one body under the name of the "Ferndown United Church (Baptist/United Reformed)" hereinafter called the "United Church Ferndown".
2. The United Church respects and honours the traditions of the uniting Churches, freely drawing on those traditions and gladly accepting and fulfilling their respective obligations in support of the wider ministries of the Churches at home and overseas.
3. The uniting Churches remain in existence for all legal purposes and their respective membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom shall continue.
4. These rules should be read in conjunction with the new constitution and schedule that make up our Governing Document. For ease of reference the paragraphs in this document are cross referenced to paragraphs in the Governing Documents.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION AND BELONGING (Paras 7-13 of the Schedule to the Governing Document)

1. The United Church makes provision for both Believer's Baptism and Infant Baptism, provided that Infant Baptism is seen as an initial step in the process of Christian initiation (introduction) to be followed by a personal and public confession of faith in, and commitment to, our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord at a later date, before the full responsibilities and privileges of Church Membership are entered into.
2. When a Baptist minister is the Minister of the United Church and the rite of Infant Baptism is requested, a United Reformed Minister may be invited by the Minister of the United Church to administer the rite within the context of a normal service of worship. Similarly, when a United Reformed Minister is the Minister of the United Church, a Baptist Minister may be invited to administer the rite of Believers Baptism when this is requested.
3. Membership shall be open to all who publicly profess repentance toward God, faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, and commitment to him as Lord; and whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession.
4. Believers in membership with other Baptist or United Reformed Churches shall be received into membership by letter of Transfer or of Commendation when this has been approved at an Ordinary Congregational Meeting.
5. Believers in membership with other Churches may be received into membership by letter of Commendation and visitation by two Church Members, whose report shall be approved or otherwise by an Ordinary Congregational Meeting.
6. Applicants for Church Membership (other than by Transfer or Commendation from other Churches), shall in the first instance consult the Minister or Church Secretary who shall refer all names to the Deacons meeting, who shall appoint two visitors. After visitation a report and recommendation shall be submitted by the visitors to

an Ordinary Congregational Meeting at which the application shall be approved or otherwise.

7. Application for a transfer from the United Church to another shall be dealt with by Letter of Transfer or Commendation by the Church Secretary after approval has been given by the Deacons Meeting. All such transfers shall be ratified at an Ordinary Congregational Meeting.
8. Those accepted for Membership of the United Church shall be received into the fellowship at a Communion Service.
9. Any member of the Church, whose conduct is thought to be inconsistent with the Christian profession, shall be visited by the Minister and Deacons, and lovingly counselled and, if necessary, cautioned. If such conduct is continued the Deacons shall take the matter to the Ordinary Congregational Meeting.
10. The Church rolls shall be revised annually, and those members who have not attended a Church service for 12 months without reasonable cause shall automatically be transferred to a supplementary list, and no longer hold voting rights at Congregational Meetings. If after 12 months on this list, and having been reminded of their obligations as Church Members they are still not attending Church services, then their membership shall be deemed to have lapsed. Members who move from the district, and are unable to attend worship at the United Church shall also be transferred to this list until such time as they have had an opportunity to transfer their membership to a new church.

WORSHIP (Paras 14-16 of the Schedule to the Governing Documents)

1. Communion shall be celebrated at one morning and one evening service each month, and at such other times as may be considered desirable. Normally it shall be presided over by the Minister of the Church, but in his absence by a visiting Minister, a U.R.C. authorised person, or an acceptable Baptist person. All Christians are invited to share in this service. Members are expected to do their utmost to be present regularly at Communion, regarding it as a sacred privilege.

MINISTRY (Paras 17-22 of the Schedule to the Governing Documents)

1. The Minister shall be an accredited Baptist or United Reformed Minister.
2. The Minister shall be called by a resolution of the Church members at a Special Congregational Meeting convened for this purpose. The concurrence of both Denominations to the call shall be required, expressed by the U.R.C. Wessex Synod, and the Southern Counties Baptist Association.
3. The stipend of the Minister shall be not less than the basic stipend of the denomination to which he belongs. Realistic and adequate ministerial expenses shall also be paid.
4. The Minister may terminate his appointment to the Pastorate by a written three months' notice to the Church. The Church may terminate the appointment of a Minister at a Special Congregational Meeting convened for that purpose. The notice given shall be a minimum of six months or payment in lieu thereof.
5. In the event of an interregnum, the Deacons shall confer with the Area Minister of the Southern Counties Baptist Association and the Moderator of the Wessex

Synod of the United Reformed Church regarding the appointment of an Interim Moderator who shall normally be a Baptist or United Reformed Church Minister.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

(A) Congregational Meetings (Paras 9-21 of the Constitution section of the Governing Document)

1. The meeting structure of Annual, Ordinary and Special Congregational Meetings together with their conduct is covered in paragraphs 9-21 of the Constitution to the Governing Document.
2. Items for an Ordinary Congregational Meeting agenda may be submitted in writing to the Church Secretary by a Church Member, but at least fifteen days before the Meeting to allow sufficient time for consideration by the Deacons Meeting. Matters which could not be submitted earlier may be considered under Any Other Business at the discretion of the Chairman and shall normally be only of minor importance.
3. No resolution shall be rescinded unless notice has been given at the Congregational Meeting preceding the one when the rescission is proposed.
4. No postal voting shall be valid at any congregational meeting. Voting by proxy shall be permitted in the election of individuals to roles or responsibilities within the church including appointment of Trustees (Deacons) and the calling of a church minister where the names of those nominated are known in advance of the meeting. Those wishing to nominate a person to act as their proxy must do so in writing in advance of the meeting at which the vote will take place. No person may hold more than one proxy vote.
5. Except for the appointment of Charity Trustees referred to in 'Section (B) Trustees' below a resolution at an Ordinary Congregational Meeting shall be carried if supported by a majority of the Members present, together with any proxy votes, entitled to vote and voting (*This wording means that an abstention is a decision not to vote and therefore is not counted as a vote against the proposal*).
6. A resolution at a Special Congregational Meeting shall be carried if supported by at least two thirds of the Members present, together with any proxy votes, entitled to vote and voting
7. The Congregational Meeting or Charity Trustees may want a higher measure of support for a particular resolution but a higher proportion of votes for a resolution shall not override the arrangements in clauses A5 or A6 unless, before the vote is taken, the Congregational Meeting passes a further or enabling resolution referring to that particular resolution and specifying the proportion of votes necessary to pass it.

(B) Trustees (hereinafter called Deacons) (Paras 22 - 44 of the Constitution section of the Governing Document)

1. In accordance with paragraph 22 of the constitution the Minister(s) of our church shall be trustee(s) by virtue of office. In our case this is interpreted to mean the Minister of our church and our Youth Minister.

2. The Deacons, together with the Minister, shall be responsible for the spiritual leadership, oversight and day to day administration of the Church and shall act on behalf of the Church in between Congregational Meetings.
3. Deacons Meetings shall be held monthly, and shall usually precede Congregational Meetings, so that Church business is considered by the Deacons Meeting for transmission to the Congregational Meeting where appropriate.
4. The maximum number of Deacons that can be appointed shall be decided upon from time to time by the Congregational Meeting in accordance with Paragraph 55 of the Constitution.
5. Deacons shall serve for no more than two full terms without standing down for one year. However, in some instances there may exceptional circumstances that override this rule. This is to be agreed at a Congregational Meeting. Normally the spouse of a serving Deacon shall not be eligible for election, in exceptional circumstances, this rule may be set aside. This is to be agreed at a Congregational Meeting.
6. Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be made to the Church Secretary not later than two Sundays before the Congregational Meeting at which the election is to be held, (normally the Annual Congregational Meeting in March). Nominations must be submitted in writing with the signature of two Church Members, the consent of the person nominated having been previously obtained. No person may nominate for election more candidates than there are places vacant.
7. Election shall be by ballot. Those so elected shall be set apart for their office with prayer and the Right Hand of Fellowship at the Lord's Table.
8. Where there have been more candidates nominated than there are vacancies the following shall apply: At the first ballot the Members shall be asked to vote for those whom they wish to serve as Deacon. They shall vote for no more candidates than there are vacancies. The chief scrutineer shall report, in writing, and in confidence, to the Chairman the number of votes cast for each candidate.
9. The Chairman shall ascertain which names need to be deleted so as to retain on the list as many of those with the highest number of votes as there are vacancies, (he may use his casting vote where there is a tie). Members will then be asked to vote for those remaining on the list whom they wish to serve as Deacon.
10. The degree of support required to appoint Deacons is subject to the rules applying to Special Congregation meetings see A6 above. This may be set aside under the provisions set out in para A7.

(C) Finance (Paras 45-54 of the Constitution section of the Governing Document)

1. The United Church shall make contributions which are usual in Baptist and United Reformed Churches towards denominational funds for work at home and overseas.
2. Financial accounts shall be kept by every church organisation, and shall be independently examined annually. Copies of the accounts shall be submitted to the Deacons if requested.

(D) General

1. Officers of all Church Organisations shall be Church Members and shall be appointed annually at the Annual Congregational Meeting. In the event of a vacancy occurring in any such office during the year, the Deacons are empowered to fill that office. Each organisation shall accept the guidance and control of the Church in all matters.
2. The Minister has the right to attend all organisations and any associated business meetings.
3. The Trustees shall ensure that pastoral care and visitation is adequately undertaken by the Pastoral Team appointed for this purpose in liaison with the Minister.
4. Applications for meetings or lettings on Church premises shall be made to the Church Administrator or Lettings Secretary. No meetings shall be held on Church premises without prior permission.

(E) Alteration to Rules

1. The foregoing (a copy of which shall be given to each Church Member) may be altered (providing the alterations do not conflict with the Church's Governing Document or the Church's Sharing Agreement) only at a Special Congregational Meeting called for that purpose. Three months' notice shall be given in writing at a Congregational Meeting, of such proposed alterations and the opinion of the Deacons' Meeting shall be made known to the Church before a decision is taken.
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