



**HANDBOOK**  
**of**  
**BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**

# **CHURCH HANDBOOK**

## **BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **WELCOME TO BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER BAPTIST CHURCH**

We offer you a warm welcome to Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church and trust that you will find this handbook useful.

Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) and the West of England Baptist Association (WEBA).

As a Baptist Church we are committed to sharing the good news of God's love for people, and this will happen through teaching and explaining the Christian faith as well as practical action.

A copy of this Handbook will be made available to Church Members and to every applicant for membership with the intention that every Member shall be informed about the organisation of the Church and be enabled to participate in the life of the Church and in Church Members' Meetings.

## **PREFACE**

The responsibilities of a Church Member:

1. To live a life consistent with the gospel and worthy of our high calling in Christ.
2. To spend some time every day in prayer and reading the scriptures.
3. 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.
4. To live in loyal love and fellowship with all the other members of the church and with all Christians everywhere.
5. To take some part in the work of the church according to our calling, gifts and opportunities.
6. To accept personal responsibility for the government of the local church, by being present, whenever possible, at the Church Members' Meeting.
7. To accept, as far as conscientiously possible, the decisions of the Church Members' Meeting.
8. To set aside and give a sum of money every Lord's day or regularly for the work of God's Kingdom at home and overseas.
9. To attempt, by personal invitation, hospitality and visitation, to introduce and bring others to the Church.
10. To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed and to take part in the evangelisation of the district and the world.

## 1. WHAT WE DO

1.1 At Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church we try to provide a range of activities for different age groups and interests

1.2 A typical week at Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church includes:

<b>Sunday</b>	Morning Service: 10.30 am, including alternative activities for young people. Evening Service: 6.00 pm.
<b>Monday</b>	Noah's Ark Toddlers: 9.30 am - 11.30 am during school term times. House Group first and third Mondays of each month at 7.30 pm.
<b>Tuesday</b>	House Group first and third Tuesdays of each month at 2.30 pm.
<b>Wednesday</b>	Prayer Meeting: 9.30 am Ladies Meeting second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 2.45 pm
<b>Thursday</b>	Open4U: 10.00 am – 4.00 pm Deacons' meetings monthly. Church Members' meeting at least 6 times per year at 7.30 pm.
<b>Friday</b>	J Team: 6.00 pm during school term times for children of Primary School age.
<b>Saturday</b>	Occasional social events.

**Note:** The Church hall is a bookable resource that is used by various local groups throughout each week.

## 2. WHO'S WHO

2.1 The church has a full-time Minister, Revd Ian Fowler, who you will get to know quite quickly as he will make it his priority to meet you. We want you to know that the Church is here to help you and to ensure that any questions you may have are answered. Ian can be contacted on 01451 824225 or 07906 518316 or via e-mail at [bourtonbaptist@homecall.co.uk](mailto:bourtonbaptist@homecall.co.uk).

2.2 The Church has a Diaconate, which together with the Minister, has responsibility for leading the Church. Contact details can be found on the Church Diary published monthly.

2.3 Please ask the Minister or Deacons if you wish to know the contact details for any of the Church activities listed above.

2.4 Please visit the website at [www.bourtonbaptist.homecall.co.uk/](http://www.bourtonbaptist.homecall.co.uk/) for information about the church and its activities.

2.5 Pastoral care in the Church is organised by the Minister working with the Church's pastoral team; if you need help and support please contact the Minister.

### **3. VOLUNTEERING AND JOINING IN**

3.1 We hope that you will like attending Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church. We hope too that you will find friends and be able to join in some of our activities and, if you are able to provide some help, this would be very welcome.

3.2 There are some parts of Church life where we need to take special care. As in all organisations where activities involve children or vulnerable adults, we need to ensure that the appropriate checks are undertaken.

3.3 We welcome your ideas and suggestions. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please speak to the Minister or a deacon in the first instance.

### **4. SAFETY**

4.1 Safety is always important and we do our best to make sure the Church premises are safe. However, we realise that accidents can happen. Please let one of the Deacons know if there is a problem.

4.2 If you need the First Aid kit, it is kept in the kitchen together with the Accident Book which should be completed as required.

4.3 Fire extinguishers are located around the building, but we hope you will never need them!

4.4 Nobody should be using step ladders or undertaking any kind of maintenance or building work whilst they are on their own in the building. More details of the Church's health and safety policy can be found on the notice board in the hall.

## **5. JOINING BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER BAPTIST CHURCH**

5.1 Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church is governed by the Church Constitution in accordance with Charity Law and is organised through the Church Members' Meeting. Copies of the Church Constitution are available from the Church Secretary.

5.2 The membership shall be open to all who profess repentance towards God and who hold the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and profess faith in Him, whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession. Members are usually received after baptism by immersion. All applicants shall be asked earnestly to consider the New Testament teaching on baptism but the Church welcomes to full membership all who conscientiously follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

5.3 Believers in membership with other churches may be received into membership by Letter of Transfer or of Commendation and shall receive a welcoming visit by two Church Members appointed by the Church Members' Meeting. Similarly, application for a transfer from this Church to another shall be dealt with by Letter of Transfer or Commendation by the Church Secretary after approval has been given by the Minister and Deacons.

5.4 When people wish to seek membership of the Church, they are usually visited by two members appointed by the Church Members' Meeting on the recommendation of the diaconate, who will ask some questions about the applicant's Christian journey and make a recommendation to the next Church Members' Meeting.

5.5 Those accepted for membership shall be received into the fellowship of the Church at a Communion Service when they shall sign the membership roll.

5.6 The membership roll shall be revised at least annually. No name shall be removed from the church roll without, if at all possible, due notice to and visitation of the person concerned. Deletion of names shall require the votes of at least two thirds of those members present at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting and eligible to vote.

5.7 Belonging to a Baptist Church involves some responsibilities. As well as having the opportunity to participate in Church Members' Meetings, there is a responsibility to listen carefully to the Spirit speaking through others and to speak carefully in helping to make good decisions about the life and work of the Church.

5.8 Any member of the church whose conduct is thought to be inconsistent with the Christian profession, shall be visited by the Minister initially and Deacon(s) and lovingly counselled and, if necessary, cautioned. If such conduct is continued the Deacons shall take the matter to the Church Members' Meeting.

## **6. ORDINANCES**

6.1 The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper will normally be observed on first and third Sundays to which all Christian people are invited. Members should do their utmost to be present at the Communion Service, for it is a great and sacred privilege to do so.

6.2 Young People: The general principle is that children of Primary School age are welcome at Communion services but would not normally be served with the elements. If, however, visitor families came from a church where it was usual for their children to receive communion, this would be accepted.

6.3 The Ordinance of Believer's Baptism shall be administered as appropriate.

## **7. CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETINGS**

7.1 The church shall meet for Christian fellowship, the discussing of important issues and the transaction of business of the church not less than six times a year. There are two types of formal Church Members' Meetings, Ordinary Church Members' Meetings and Special Church Members' Meetings.

7.2 One Ordinary Church Members' Meeting each year shall be the Annual Church Members' Meeting and shall be open to members of the church and congregation. At this meeting the annual accounts are presented, annual appointments are made and the Secretary's report is given.

7.3 Due public notice of Ordinary Church Members' Meetings shall be given at both services on the preceding Sunday and due public notice of Annual Church Members' Meetings shall be given at both services on the two preceding Sundays.

7.4 Only church members shall be eligible to vote at the Annual Church Members' Meeting.

7.5 Decisions at Ordinary Church Members' Meetings shall require a simple majority except where otherwise stated.

7.6 Members shall be entitled to raise matters under "any other business". These will be discussed at the discretion of the Chairman.

7.7 No business of importance introduced by a member can be decided upon at any meeting unless prior notice in writing, specifying the subject, be handed to the Church Secretary for discussion by the diaconate.

7.8 A Special Church Members' Meeting may be called at the discretion of the majority of deacons or at the written request of at least one tenth of the church membership or twelve Church Members whichever is the less. Public Notices of Special Church Members' Meetings shall be given at both services on the two preceding Sundays. Advice shall be given to church members of the subject for discussion. Decisions at Special Church Members' Meetings shall require the support of at least two thirds of those present and eligible to vote.

7.9 At all Church Members' Meetings, one quarter of the church membership shall constitute a quorum

## **8. MEMBERS CHOOSING THEIR LEADERS AND MINISTERS**

8.1 The deacons and ministers in a Baptist Church are chosen by the Church members. Therefore, there are processes for appointing people to these important responsibilities.

8.2 Once a minister has been appointed that person normally serves the Church until the time when they resign or retire. Very rarely will a minister be asked to leave the Church by the Church Members' Meeting.

8.3 The deacons of Bourton-on-the-Water Baptist Church are appointed from among the members; they usually serve for a period of three years. To make it easier to ensure continuity, one third of the deacons retire each year; however, they may stand for re-election.

8.4 Ideally, after serving six years, deacons should take a one year break; this has the benefit of allowing opportunities for new people to be appointed.

8.5 The diaconate will normally consist of a maximum of one elected deacon for ten members or part thereof, plus the Church Secretary and Treasurer who, by right of their office, will be members of the diaconate and will accept all the responsibilities of a deacon. The majority of deacons should have been baptised by immersion as believers. They shall be at least eighteen years of age and shall be elected from among members of not less than twelve months standing.

8.6 The annual election of deacons takes place at the Annual Church Members' Meeting. Nominations for the office of deacon shall be made to the Church Secretary not later than twenty one days before the Church Members' Meeting at which the election is held. Nominations must be submitted in writing with the signature of two church members, the consent of the person nominated having been previously obtained. No one person may nominate for election more candidates than there are places vacant. Requests for nominations shall be made at both services on the two Sundays immediately before that day when nominations must cease.

8.7 Voting shall be by secret ballot by those members present and eligible to vote. A ballot will be held irrespective of the number of nominations. Those receiving the highest number of votes and the votes of at least 50% of those members present and eligible to vote, shall be deemed to be elected. But see note 8.5 re proportion of deacons baptised by immersion.

8.8 If there are more candidates than vacancies and if after the ballot, some vacancies remain unfilled because insufficient candidates have received votes from at least 50% of those members voting, then those names shall be submitted to another Church Members' Meeting for balloting on the remaining places.

8.9 Church Secretary and Treasurer. Whenever a vacancy occurs in the office of Church Secretary or Treasurer nominations may be made in writing to the Chairman of the diaconate for either office by a church member or by the diaconate. Those so nominated shall preferably be members of the diaconate and shall be elected at the Annual Church Members' Meeting (or at an Ordinary Church Members' Meeting should this prove necessary) by secret ballot. To be appointed, two thirds of those members present and eligible to vote shall have voted in favour. The Church Secretary and Treasurer shall serve for a term of up to three years and shall then be eligible for re-election for further terms of three years subject to two thirds of those members present and eligible to vote having voted in favour.

## **9. CHURCH ACCOUNTS**

9.1 The Church receives income from donations made by members and individuals who attend the Church. Tax payers are encouraged to complete a Gift Aid declaration so that tax can be recovered, giving added benefit to the Church and increasing its income.

9.2 In this Church we aim to follow the following principles in managing our money:

9.2.1 To give 5% of our income to Home Mission (the funds of the Baptist Union of Great Britain) and to give 5% to BMS World Mission.

9.2.2 To give further gifts from our income to support other external charities – decisions about this are made by the Church Members' Meeting.

9.2.3 All our money is used to advance the Christian faith – but this involves many payments that are practical and that are associated with the organisation and maintenance of the Church. Our principle expenses include:

- Paying our Minister.
- Buying resources to be used in the mission of the church.
- Paying administration costs for the church, including annual subscriptions.
- Paying gas, electricity and water bills.
- Maintaining the Church grounds and buildings.
- Reimbursing reasonable expenses to those who volunteer for the Church, especially when they are asked to attend conferences or other events.

9.3 A statement of the Church Accounts, duly audited by an Auditor appointed by the diaconate and Church Members' Meeting, shall be presented at the Annual Church Members' Meeting.

9.4 Financial accounts shall be kept by every church organisation and copies shall be submitted to the diaconate if requested. Every such organisation shall present annually to the Church Treasurer a statement of its accounts for audit purposes.

## **10. GENERAL**

10.1 The Minister shall be, by right of his/her office, President of all church organisations.

10.2 Officers and Committees of all organisations connected with the church shall be confirmed annually at the Annual Church Members' Meeting upon

recommendation of the diaconate and shall normally be church members.

10.3 Each organisation shall accept the guidance and control of the church in all matters.

10.4 Applications for meetings on church premises shall be made to the Bookings Secretary, unless otherwise agreed. No meetings shall be held on church premises without prior permission of the Minister or the diaconate and upon such conditions as they may decide.

## **11. ALTERATION TO RULES**

11.1 This Handbook (a copy of which shall be given to each church member) may be altered (providing the alterations do not conflict with the Church's Constitution) only at a Special Church Members' Meeting called for that purpose. Three months' notice shall be given in writing at a Church Members' Meeting of such proposed alterations and the opinion of the diaconate shall be made known to the church before a decision is taken.

11.2 The Handbook has been drawn up in the best interests of the fellowship in conjunction with the Church Constitution and supersedes all other rules which may have been made during the history of the church.

Dated: September 2012

