LONGMEADOW EVANGELICAL CHURCH HANDBOOK

We certify this to be the Church Handbook adop Church at a meeting of the members			ıgelica
Chairman:	Secretary:	\	

As amended in accordance with the provisions of this handbook on:

Date of Revision

Signature of Chair

Signature of Secretary

LONGMEADOW EVANGELICAL CHURCH HANDBOOK

Principles for Charity Purposes

The Church Constitution

The Church is established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation under a constitution first adopted on 17th November 2019, ("the Constitution") which contains the main legal provisions governing the Church, its purposes and Basis of Faith, and its powers. Under the Constitution, the people with the responsibility for the general control and management of the administration of the Church are known as the charity trustees and they are identified in the Constitution by reference to the office they hold in accordance with this handbook.

The Church Handbook

This Church Handbook sets out the practices of the Church and its method of internal governance, none of which is contrary to any of the provisions of the Constitution.

The First Church Officers

The date of the legal establishment of the Church is the date that the Constitution is registered by the Charity Commission (rather than the date on which the Constitution was adopted by the members).

The first Church Officers are listed below and shall serve for the term specified:

Name	Role	Current term
 Wayne Campbell 	Elder	Not specified
 John Cooper 	Elder	Not specified
 Ben Epps 	Elder	Not specified
 Russell Knell 	Elder	Not specified
Ian Thompson	Elder	Not specified

For the avoidance of doubt the first Church Officers are the same people that were elected as Church Officers under the constitution of the registered charity (Longmeadow Evangelical Church Registered charity number 1134018) which is now replaced by this charity and their terms of office and rotation take effect as they would have done under the previous constitution.

Part 1 – Basis of Faith, Doctrinal Distinctives and Ethical Statements

1.1 Basis of Faith

The Basis of Faith (see Appendix 1) sets out matters that we believe all Christian believers should be able to accept wholeheartedly and a person can only become a member of the Church if they have indicated that they do accept those beliefs.

1.2 Doctrinal Distinctives

We recognise that there are a number of doctrines, not referred to in the Basis of Faith over which genuine Christian believers may take different views. Our Doctrinal Distinctives set out the position and teaching of the Church on these matters. Church members are not required to agree with the matters in the Doctrinal Distinctives and may hold and discuss views to the contrary, but members are required to respect the positions set out in the Doctrinal Distinctives as the teaching of the Church and should not be insistent on their own views or divisive over these matters.

Unity in service and worship for the worldwide church is the goal of our salvation (Rev 7v9; Eph 2v15-18; Phil 1v27). We pursue this with churches and para-church groups who affirm the Gospel, as outlined in the Basis of Faith and Ethical statements, regardless of differences of opinion on matters that are inessential to salvation. However, our commitment to the Gospel means that we are unable to express Christian fellowship with those who cannot affirm all of the fundamental truths of the faith. This means that we are unable to affiliate formally to groups which express unity between churches, without concern as to whether they hold to the core doctrines of the Gospel.

Men and women, while different, are created equal and together display God's likeness (Gen 1v26-27). Redeemed men and women have equal status as co-heirs of Christ (Gal 3v26-29, 4v5-7), and each have various gifts for service given by the Spirit (1 Cor 12v7). Both sexes work together in partnership both in the family and the church, for example both sexes may pray and prophesy publicly (1 Cor 11), although we're persuaded that Scripture gives the responsibility of leadership to men: to husbands in the home, and to male elders in the church (1 Cor 11). Such a distinction in role is not driven by culture but by how God has created us (1 Cor 11), as a reflection of the asymmetric relationships within the Trinity (1 Corinthians 11v3).

Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. We baptise people on confession of Christ alone as their personal Saviour and Lord.

The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated in thanksgiving for the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. It is a service of remembrance of, and communion with, the risen Lord by those who have been saved. We welcome all those acknowledging and living with Christ as Saviour and Lord and in good fellowship with their brothers and sisters to the Lord's Table.

1.3 Ethical Statements

The matters covered in this section set out how the beliefs set out in the Basis of Faith apply in relation to ethical matters. Church members are required to lead their lives in a manner that is consistent with these Ethical Statements recognising the reminder and encouragement given to all Christians in 1 John 1:8-9.

- 1.3.1 Sexual Ethics our Basis of Faith sets out that the Bible is the final authority for all matters of belief and practice. The teaching of the Bible is that marriage is between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Ephesians 5:31-33) and that all sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman are sinful, but forgivable through repentance. This includes heterosexual and homosexual practices (1 Corinthians 6:9-20) regardless of whether or not homosexual marriage is permitted by the laws of England and Wales. The Bible also teaches that we must not be actively or passively complicit in sin (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:8-16; 1 Timothy 5:22) and that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). It is therefore part of our doctrine that in relation to any activities of this Church we must in no way condone, promote, assist or encourage adulterous or extramarital sexual practices, including the viewing of pornography.
- 1.3.2 **Relational Ethics** As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are committed to living out the unity we have in Christ (Eph 4:1-3). We will think the best of one another's motives, speak well of one another, and look to encourage the good wherever we find it (Rom 15:5-7). Where conflict occurs, we will look to resolve it with generosity and love (Matt 5:23-24); where correction is necessary, we will do so with gentleness and respect, recognising our own sinfulness and failures, and rejoicing in God's grace to us all (Gal 6:1-2, Matt 7:3-5).
- 1.4 Amendments to this Part 1 of this Church Handbook shall only be permitted where the provisions of Clause 2.11. have been satisfied.

Part 2 - Provisions for the Internal Governance of the Church

2.1 Members and Membership

- 2.1.1 Clause 2.1 comprises the membership requirements of the Church Handbook referred to in the Constitution.
- 2.1.2 Members of the Church shall be those persons of at least 18 years of age who have confirmed their unreserved agreement to the Basis of Faith and Ethical Statements, and their acceptance of the Constitution and this Church Handbook in its entirety (including the duty of members referred to in the Constitution) and whose Membership has been approved and has not been suspended or terminated, all in accordance with the provisions of this Clause 2.1.
- 2.1.3 Membership brings with it certain privileges and responsibilities. The privileges are identified as: membership of the local Body of Christ in all its work and worship; to be able to partake in discussing and agreeing the way in which the local church should move forward and fulfil its Biblical role in the local community; and the benefit of pastoral care. The obligations of membership are: to submit to the authority and leadership of the Elders in accordance with the provisions of this Church Handbook and the Constitution; to participate in the work of the Church and its activities; to attend meetings regularly; to bear each other up before the Lord in prayer; and to share in the financial needs of the Church. In particular this will involve:
 - a. Regular attendance at Sunday worship. (Acts 20:7, Heb. 10:25)
 - b. Regular personal prayer and Bible study. (2 Tim 3:15-17, Phil. 4:6)
 - c. Regular attendance, when possible, at the main weekday meeting of the church for prayer, Bible study and fellowship. (Acts 1:14, 2:42)
 - d. Sharing in the life, work and witness of the local church. (Rom. 1:16, 1 Cor. 15:58)
 - e. Regular giving to the local church and the Lord's work in general. (1 Cor. 16:2, 2 Cor. 9:6-7)
 - f. The showing of Christian love and concern, both for the members of the church family and for the community at large. (John 13:35, 1 Thess. 3:12)
 - g. An endeavour to live a life consistent with the faith we profess. (Rom. 6:1-2, Eph. 4:1)
 - h. Regular attendance at the Lord's Supper. (Acts 2:42, 20:7)

Admission to Membership

- 2.1.4 The first Members of the Church are the people who agreed to approve the original version of the Constitution together with the original version of this Church Handbook. (The fact that the first Members voted to approve the Constitution and Church Handbook, including the Basis of Faith means that no further written declaration from them is required). A person may apply to the Elders to become a Member of the Church, and that application, if thought fit, will be put to the Members at a Church Members' Meeting for their approval.
- 2.1.5 A Pastor (and, if married, his wife) shall be received into Membership on the taking up of his appointment as Pastor subject to their compliance with Clauses 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.
- 2.1.6 The Church Secretary shall maintain a written register of all Church Members.

Termination of Membership

2.1.7 Under clause 9.4 of the Constitution, a church member may voluntarily resign by informing the Elders, preferably by written notice through the Church Secretary. Where a member is unable to provide written notice, verbal notice should be given and the Church Secretary shall make a written record of the member's notice to resign.

2.1.8 A member may also be removed from the Membership by reason of death or by the application of the disciplinary procedure set out in Clause 2.7.

Associate Membership

- 2.1.9.1If a Member or Christian worker 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.
- 2.1.9.2 If a person is removed from membership by reason of incapacity, under clause 9.4.1.2 of the Constitution, the elders may grant them the status of Associate Member.
- 2.1.9.3A believer below the age of 18 who is baptised may apply to become an Associate Member; upon reaching 18 years of age he or she may apply to the Elders to become a Member of the Church, and that application, if thought fit, will be put to the Members at a Church Members' Meeting for their approval.
- 2.1.9.4In all cases 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.
- 2.1.9.5 Associate Members will not be required to attend church meetings and will not have a vote. The presence or absence of Associate Members will not affect the quorum of a church meeting.

2.2 Baptism

- 2.2.1 The Doctrinal Distinctives set out the view of the Church with regard to Baptism.
- 2.2.2 Any person wishing to be baptised shall submit their request to the Elders who will arrange for one of their number to interview the applicant. He shall report back to a meeting of the Elders and within his report will be any recommendation as to any further interviews, and the mode of Baptism if it is not to be by immersion. This recommendation shall be submitted to the Members for approval.
- 2.2.3 An applicant who is to be baptised will be encouraged to give testimony to their faith before the baptism (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12).

2.3 The Lord's Supper

2.3.1 The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated most weeks, and at least monthly. In recognition of the wider body of Christ, visitors who are in a right relationship with the Lord and their home church are welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper.

2.4 Church Officers

The Church Officers are the people who hold the roles set out in this Clause 2.4.

2.4.1 Elders

- 2.4.1.1The Church adopts the principle of plurality of elders men whom the church recognises and who are qualified in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- 2.4.1.2The elders shall have spiritual oversight of the church (1 Pet. 5v1-3). The function of the elders is to be responsible for teaching, pastoring, discipline and overseeing the spiritual ministry. They are to lead and direct the church (1 Tim. 5:17). Elder responsibilities also include overseeing baptism and membership, encouraging evangelism, ensuring that the church upholds the truth and the Gospel, encouraging others in their responsibilities and

the development of gifts and training.

- 2.4.1.3 New elders shall be appointed following the recommendation of the existing elders. Suggestions for prospective elders can also be made by individual church members to the existing elders, having the consent of the nominee. After making their recommendation to the church members, the elders shall allow at least one month for prayer and consultation, after which a special meeting shall be called for a decision to be taken. An appointment is made with a vote of at least 75% in favour.
- 2.4.1.4 Eldership will sometimes be a position with a fixed stipend usually referred to as a Pastor.
- 2.4.1.5 No maximum limit of time serving as an elder applies. A term of office may be terminated by 75% vote at a Members' Meeting, by death or by letter of resignation to the other elders.

2.4.2 Pastoral Workers

- 2.4.2.1The church may appoint any number of Pastoral Workers. Particular responsibilities of Pastoral Workers could include women in the church, children's and youth work, families work and community outreach work, as specified by the elders at the time of appointment. Each Pastoral Worker shall meet regularly with the elders.
- 2.4.2.2 New Pastoral Workers shall be appointed following the recommendation of the Elders. Suggestions for prospective Pastoral Workers can also be made by individual church members to the Elders, having the consent of the nominee. After making their recommendation to the church members, the Elders shall allow at least one month for prayer and consultation, after which a special meeting shall be called for a decision to be taken. An appointment is made with a vote of at least 75% in favour.
- 2.4.2.3A Pastoral Worker may have a fixed term appointment, and the role may sometimes come with a fixed stipend.
- 2.4.2.4A term of office may be terminated by 75% vote, or by letter of resignation to the elders.

2.5 Church Secretary and Church Treasurer

- 2.5.1 The Elders shall appoint from among their number a Church Secretary and a Church Treasurer.
- 2.5.2 The Church Secretary shall be responsible for the preparation of notices of any Church Members' Meetings and the issuing of all papers and reports to be presented to such meetings. Members shall deliver to the Church Secretary any notice of items of business they wish to be discussed at a Church Members' Meeting in sufficient time to enable them to be circulated to all Members before the meeting.
- 2.5.3 The Church Treasurer shall be responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Church. Any Member holding any church funds shall account for those funds to the Church Treasurer together with such explanations and documentary evidence as will enable him to incorporate the figures into the church accounts.
- 2.5.4 The Church Secretary and Church Treasurer may delegate practical tasks to members of the church as the Elders see fit.

2.6 Charity Trustees

2.6.1 The Constitution sets out which of the Church Officers are the charity trustees of the Church.

2.7 Church Discipline

Removal from membership

- 2.7.1 Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5 teach that local churches should remove from among them members who refuse to repent of sin. We believe that local churches should always take this action with the aim that it will prompt the person who has been removed from membership to repent so that he or she can be welcomed back into the church, and with the aim that it will help to prevent other members from being tempted to follow their example.
- 2.7.2 A Member of the church may be removed from membership for any of the following reasons:
 - a. He or she errs in doctrine so that he or she no longer affirms the Basis of Faith of the Church
 - b. He or she is no longer willing to respect the practices and doctrinal positions adopted by the Church set out in Part 1 of this Church Handbook
 - c. He or she errs in conduct by committing open sin which brings the church into disrepute
 - d. He or she has consistently failed to fulfil the obligations of a member of the church
 - e. He or she refuses to repent of sin committed against another member which has been drawn to his or her attention
 - f. He or she has made false and malicious allegations against an Elder, Pastoral Worker or other member of the church
 - g. He or she is no longer living in submission to the leadership and authority of the Elders of the church.
- 2.7.3 A Member ("M") may only be removed from membership by a resolution of the members at a Church Members' Meeting which has been proposed by the Elders of the Church.
- 2.7.4 The Elders shall not propose a resolution to remove M unless the following steps have been taken:
- 2.7.4.1 The Elders have held a Charity Trustee Disciplinary meeting ("the CTD Meeting") at which they considered whether or not to propose a resolution to remove M from membership;
- 2.7.4.2 The charity trustees have given to M 21 clear days' notice of the CTD Meeting, informing M why his or her removal from membership is being considered, and inviting M to make representations to the charity trustees as to why he or she should not be removed from membership;
- 2.7.4.3 The charity trustees have allowed M to make those representations at the CTD Meeting himself or herself or through his or her representative; and
- 2.7.4.4 The charity trustees took those representations into account when deciding whether to propose a resolution that M be removed from membership.
- 2.7.5 At the meeting where Members vote on the resolution to remove him or her from membership, M shall be entitled to a reasonable amount of time to address the Members and make such representations as he or she wishes prior to the vote on the resolution.

- 2.7.6 The Church Secretary shall inform M of the decision of the Members and, where termination of membership is to be applied, shall amend the register of Members accordingly.
- 2.7.7 A person who has been removed from membership shall be welcomed back into membership if they apply for membership in the normal way and their application is approved.
- 2.7.8 The steps set out at Clauses 2.7.9 to 2.7.11 should also be followed prior to the CTD Meeting taking place, but failure to follow those steps will not invalidate a resolution of the Members to remove a person from Membership.
- 2.7.9 The Elders must be informed where it is believed that any of the reasons set out in Clause 2.7.2 apply to a Member of the Church. Where a person's behaviour is being reported by a Member who has been sinned against by the person he or she is reporting, that Member should normally raise the issue first with the person concerned and only report it to the Elders if the two persons concerned are unable to resolve the matter between themselves.
- 2.7.10 Where the Elders are informed or they themselves believe that any of the reasons at Clause 2.7.2 apply to a Member, they shall appoint two persons of spiritual maturity to meet with the Member to enquire into the matter and to investigate the matter thoroughly, and where appropriate to encourage the Member against whom the allegations have been made to repent.
- 2.7.11 After the persons appointed under Clause 2.7.10 have investigated the matter and have met with the Member against whom the allegations have been made (or the Member has been given reasonable opportunity to meet and has refused), they shall report back to the Elders who shall decide whether it is necessary for a CTD Meeting to be held and what additional steps they should take (if any).
- 2.7.12 Even in cases where there has been genuine repentance, the Elders may still be required to report the facts arising from the investigation to the relevant secular authorities. In such cases the Elders shall give to the Member concerned all the support that is appropriate for a Member who is genuinely repentant.

Additional Disciplinary Measures

- 2.7.13 Whenever the Members vote to remove a person from membership, they may also resolve to impose any of the following measures:
 - a. a restriction from attending or taking part in any or all of the meetings of the Church, including meetings or activities that are normally open to the public;
 - b. the remaining Members may be required not to have any association with the person who has been dismissed from membership in accordance with clear and specific guidance from the Elders as to what is required in this regard.
- 2.7.14 Any of the measures at Clause 2.7.13 may be removed by a resolution of the Elders at a Church Members' Meeting.

2.8 Church Members' Meetings

The provisions for Church Members' meetings are set out in the Constitution under the Clauses headed "Members' decisions" and "General meetings of members". A "general

meeting of members" under the Constitution is referred to as a "Church Members' Meeting" in this Church Handbook.

Decisions covering any matters that are listed in Appendix 2 to this Church Handbook require the approval of the church members at a Church Members' Meeting by the majorities set out in Appendix 2 for them to be recognised as decisions of the Church.

2.9 Church Safeguarding Policy

- 2.9.1 The Elders shall operate a church safeguarding policy and shall ensure that activities involving children and vulnerable adults are carried out in accordance with that policy.
- 2.9.2 Each person overseeing church activities involving children or vulnerable adults and every Elder shall provide to the Church Secretary a current Disclosure and Barring Service certificate.

2.10 Exclusion of Non-Members From Public Meetings of the Church

- 2.10.1 The Elders may propose that the open invitation to attend public meetings of the Church customarily extended to non-members may be withdrawn from any individual who seeks to obstruct the carrying out of the work and ministry of the Church, or to undermine the leadership of the Church.
- 2.10.2 Subject to Clauses 2.7.13 and 2.7.14 the Elders may only withdraw such open invitation to an individual if this is supported by a vote of 75% of Members present and voting at a Church Members' Meeting.
- 2.10.3 An invitation that has been withdrawn may be reinstated by a resolution at a Church Members' Meeting.

2.11 Amendment of the Church Handbook

- 2.11.1 Other than the section headed "Principles for Charity Purposes", any provisions of this Church Handbook can be amended by the charity trustees under the authority of a resolution of the Members of the Church approving such a change at a Church Members' Meeting, provided that the proposed amendment shall not be such as would cause the Church to lose its charitable status or such as would cause this Church Handbook to be inconsistent with the Constitution. The section headed "Principles for Charity Purposes" can only be amended where this is required because the provisions of the Constitution have changed.
- 2.11.2 A majority of 75% of those Members present and voting at the Church Members' Meeting is required to approve a proposed amendment to any clause, excepting the provisions in the section headed "Principles for Charity Purposes" where the charity trustees shall make the amendment without the need for a vote following any change to the Constitution.
- 2.11.3 Notice of any proposed amendment together with the specific wording of the proposed change must be given in writing to all Church Members at least 3 weeks before the meeting at which the proposal will be put to the vote.
- 2.11.4 No amendment may be made under this Clause to any provision of the Constitution, including the Basis of Faith.

APPENDIX 1 BASIS OF FAITH

1.GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

2. THE BIBLE

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. THE HUMAN RACE

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

4. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

5. SALVATION

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. THE CHURCH

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

8. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

9. THE FUTURE

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

APPENDIX 2

MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL AT A CHURCH MEMBERS' MEETING

The table below sets out the decisions that need to be approved by Church Members at a Church Members' Meeting. Some items within the table simply reproduce requirements that are set out elsewhere in the Constitution or Church Rules ("Type A Items"). Other items cover decisions which are only required to be approved by Church Members by virtue of having been included in this table ("Type B Items"). Type A Items will be amended whenever the relevant provision of the Constitution or Church Rules is amended. Type B Items may be amended in accordance with clause 2.11.2.

	Decision	Majority required
1	To propose and pass a resolution that has less than 14 days' notice (Constitution - 11.3.2)	90% of all Church Members
2	To amend the Constitution (Constitution - 28.1)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
3	To amend the Basis of Faith (Constitution - 28.3)	75% of all Church Members
4	To wind up the Church (Constitution - 29)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
5	Approval of an application for Membership (Handbook – 2.1)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
6	Appointment of an Elder (Handbook – 2.4)	75% of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
7	Removal of an Elder from office (Handbook – 2.4)	75 % of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
8	Appointment of a Pastoral Worker (Handbook – 2.4)	75 % of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting
9	Removal of a Pastoral Worker from office (Handbook – 2.4)	75 % of Church Members voting at a Church Members' Meeting