

### **How does the church make its decisions at these meetings?**

Major decisions are decided by a majority vote. But it is important to remember that we do not see the vote simply as a democratic process, but as a way of discerning God's will for us a church.

### **How is the church managed?**

The Ministers and the Deacons together form the Leadership Team. They meet regularly to pray and to deal with the tasks of looking after and managing the church, reporting regularly to the church meeting and bringing to the church meetings matters that need to be considered and decided by the members meeting together.

### **How can I bring forward ideas, plans or concerns that I may have?**

You can bring matters forward for discussion at church meetings, and you can speak to any one of the Ministers or Deacons. If you belong to a Home Group you can also speak to your home group leader.

### **Where can I get a copy of the complete rules?**

You can find the complete rules on the church website at [www.hertfordbaptist.org.uk](http://www.hertfordbaptist.org.uk) or you can ask the church office for a printed copy if you would like one. They are in the form of a constitution, which we must have because we are a registered charity, with trust deeds. The Baptist Union Corporation is our holding trustee, under their New Model Trust, which our church has adopted, and the Ministers and Deacons are the Managing Trustees.

## **HERTFORD BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **The Church Rules and Membership – a simple introduction**

#### **Why do we need rules?**

We have to have rules in order to comply with the law, but the rules do have a practical value for us. They explain what our purpose as a church is, and they also set out what we believe as a church and how we should behave as individual members. They are rules which we have agreed together as a church – we have not been told what we must believe or do.

#### **What is our purpose?**

It is to “advance the Christian faith according to Baptist principles”, both as a church fellowship and as individual members of that church. We aim to do this not only in the church in Hertford but also outside in the community and in other parts of the world.

#### **Why become a member?**

We welcome all to worship with us and learn together about how to become better followers of Jesus. It has always been a Biblical principle that Christians be an active part of a fellowship of believers. If you become a member of our church you commit yourself to being a part of the Baptist church here in Hertford, with common aims and beliefs.

#### **Who can become a member?**

We are a Baptist church, united by our Christian faith. We offer Christian baptism to all who come to faith in Jesus, and we also welcome into membership those who have been initiated into their Christian faith through Trinitarian baptism and personal declaration of faith in other church traditions.

### **How do I become a member?**

The first step is to speak with one of the Pastors who will explain more and answer any questions. If you then want to proceed, the next church meeting will appoint two people to meet with you as welcomers on behalf of the membership. They will commend you to the following church meeting. After that, when your application is accepted, the Pastors will welcome you into membership during a Sunday service.

On that occasion we will ask you to respond to the following question:

*“Do you believe God has called you to serve Christ as part of Hertford Baptist Church and do you commit yourself to love and serve the Lord within this fellowship and in the world?”*

The membership will then respond to this challenge:

*“Do you welcome ..... into the family of God in this place and do you promise to love, encourage, strengthen, guide, pray for and care for them as partners in the body of Christ?”*

It is not about joining a club or enrolling on a list, but about making a covenant together to serve the Lord and be His church in this place. In this way we express the real meaning of church membership.

### **What are my rights and privileges as a member?**

As a member you can play a full part in deciding what the Church does, what are its priorities, how its money is spent, how the various church activities are run, and who are chosen to be the Ministers and Deacons. An important part of the church's values is the care and support that is offered and received by all.

### **What are my responsibilities as a member?**

It is important to remember that as a member you have responsibilities, as well as rights!

Our rules explain these responsibilities in the following words:

- attending worship and participating in church activities;
- personal prayer and Bible study;
- participation at the Communion of the Lord's Supper as a privilege and a priority;
- helping the church whenever possible by using gifts and abilities to advance the purpose of the church through its activities;
- attending and participating in church members' meetings;
- giving regular financial support to the church in proportion to personal resources and circumstances;
- upholding Christian values

### **What happens at Church members' meetings?**

We believe that it is the church meeting together that discerns the will of God for the church to go forward in its task. So church meetings provide a forum for the discussion of matters which concern the life of the church, and for decisions to be made about how we can best fulfil our purposes.