

**LITTLEWORTH CHURCH
STAFFORD**

CHURCH MEMBER'S HANDBOOK.
(Draft Copy)

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1. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

1. We believe the true church consists of the whole number of God's elect, chosen before the foundation of the world from every generation and from every land and who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and brought to trust in Christ alone for salvation.
2. The New Testament also uses the term church in a restricted and local sense, whereby Christians in a particular locality unite together in a visible bond.
3. This particular local church will be known as Littleworth Church, an independent, evangelical, local church. As such, we seek to put ourselves in submission to Christ, as the Head of the church. We seek to express this in the following ways:
 - 3.1 Gathering together as God's people for the express purpose of worshipping God
 - 3.2 Preaching, teaching and practising the whole counsel of God
 - 3.3 Responding to the Great Commission given by the risen Christ to His church to go into the world with the gospel. We seek to do this globally through prayer and the practical support of those involved in the work of the gospel in various parts of the world and locally through personal witness and corporate evangelism.
 - 3.4 Gathering together for prayer acknowledging our total dependence upon God in all things.
 - 3.5 Administering correctly the two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, established by Christ's authority.
 - 3.6 Fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ with a view to exercising the biblical pattern of ministry to one another for mutual edification and encouragement.

Passages for study:

1. Isaiah 2:1-5; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 5:8-10; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 2:1-6; Acts 4:12; John 6:44
2. Matthew 18:15-20
3. Acts 2:40-47; 11:22; 13:1; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 1:18
- 3.1 Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 10:20-21; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 10:7; Psalm 99:5,9; 122:1; John 4:23-24
- 3.2 Micah 4:2; Acts 10:34-43; Romans 10:8-15; 2 Timothy 4:2; John 15:14; 1 John 5:1-5; Acts 20:17-31
- 3.3 Matthew 28:18-20
- 3.4 Proverbs 15:8; Matthew 7:7-8; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15
- 3.5 Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- 3.6 John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10,16; 14:13; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; 5:21; Ephesians 4:16

2. CONFESSION OF FAITH

We believe that

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 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 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 preach 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 for ever.

Note: The above statement of beliefs is the one drawn up by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. A fuller expression of our beliefs can be found in the Baptist Confession of Faith 1689.

3. CHURCH CONSTITUTION

A. Church membership:

1. The Biblical Warrant for Church membership

A true Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ must include and is inseparable from his commitment to Christ's truth and Christ's people. This will ordinarily express itself in a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to the membership of a local church for the following reasons:

- a) **The fulfilment of Christ's Great Commission requires Church membership.** According to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptising them and teaching them. The apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptised believers into local churches where they were duly taught all that Christ had commanded (Acts 2:38-42, Acts 20:20-21, 1 Cor 4:17). With the exceptions of the dying thief on the cross and the Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8, the New Testament records nothing of believing men and women who were not members of local churches.
- b) **The New Testament describes the local church as a distinct group of believers that could:**
 - (i) be counted (Acts 2:41-42, 4:4)
 - (ii) be added to (Acts 2:47, 5:14).
- c) **Obedience to Christ's directives concerning the Lords Supper requires Church membership.** All believers are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Table (1 Cor 11:23-25) and the Lord's Table is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Cor 11:17, 18, 33, 34 cf. 1 Cor 1:1-2). It follows that all Bible believing Christians ought to belong to a visible local Church to partake Biblically of the Lord's Supper.
- d) **The New Testament envisages the sombre possibility that a person may be expelled from Church membership.** (Matt 18:15 ff., Rom 16:17-20, 1 Cor 5:1-11) Simple logic dictates that it is not possible to put someone "out" of a church unless there is a clear and explicit understanding as to those persons who are "in" the church.

2. Qualifications for Church membership

Candidates for Membership must satisfy the following requirements:

- a. **Assent to the Basis of Faith** outlined above and the 'Family Covenant'. This implies both an awareness of the doctrinal stance and practices of the Church and an undertaking to uphold them.

- b. Have a credible testimony to the saving grace of God.** This is to be assessed by means of an interview with one or more of the Elders or other suitably qualified persons deputed by them for this purpose. Where candidates have previously been members of another Evangelical Church, a commendation from that church will usually be required.
- c. Submit to the ordinance of Baptism by immersion.** This will not be required where candidates have been baptised as believers at a previous church. Candidates baptised at a previous church by sprinkling, or those holding to a genuine paedobaptist position through the study of the Scriptures, may be accepted at the discretion of the Elders.
- d. The Church must be willing to receive them in fellowship.** Names will be submitted to a Church Meeting. This will:
 - (i) Provide the Elders with an opportunity to acquaint the Church with candidates' testimony to saving grace,
 - (ii) Provide the Elders with an opportunity to seek the advice of the Church. Church members may be aware of pertinent considerations unknown to the Elders.
 - (iii) Remind the Church of its responsibilities toward the new member.

Once these conditions are met, the prospective candidates will be welcomed into Membership at the first convenient service around the Lord's Table.

3. The Privileges of Church membership

- a. Access to the Pastoral care and concern of the Elders,** including direct access for prayer and consultation whenever mutually convenient (Acts 20:28).
- b. The nurture and support of the whole fellowship.** Where appropriate, this may include practical benevolence. (Eph 4:11-16, Col 1:28, 2 Cor 8 & 9)
- c. The protection and security afforded by Christ's due process in the resolution of grievances.** (Matt 18:15-18)
- d. Partaking of the Lord's Supper** as often as it is administered (Acts 2:42).
- e. Participation in the ministries of the church** in accordance with gifts, opportunity and qualification (Prov 18:16, Rom 12:3-8, 1 Pet 4:9-11).
- f. Participation in the government of the church,** including attendance at Church Meetings, the acceptance of new members, the appointment of church officers, disciplinary matters and all other matters relevant to the life of the church (Acts 6:3).

4. The Responsibilities of Church membership

- a. A godly Christian life.** (Eph 5:8-21) This should include the following:
 - (i) Personal devotion to God (2 Pet 3:18)
 - (ii) Separation from the world (1 Cor 6:9-10, 1 John 2:15-17). Contracting marriage with unbelievers is clearly forbidden in Scripture (2 Cor 6:14-18). Believers should therefore avoid courtship with unbelievers.
 - (iii) A godly family life (Eph 5:22-6:4)
 - (iv) The wise use of Christian liberty. Christ alone is Lord of the conscience. If God's word has not condemned or forbidden a practice, the Christian is free to do it. This liberty however, must be tempered by the following considerations. The Christian is to glorify God in all things (1 Cor 10:31)

and to ensure that he exercises the mastery over his habits and that they do not gain the mastery over him (1 Cor 6:12). He is to show a tender regard for the immature consciences of weaker brothers (1 Cor 8:1-13, Rom 15:1-3), to show a loving concern for the effects of his behaviour on the lost (1 Cor 9:19-22) and to pursue spiritual excellence (Rom 13:14, 1 Cor 6:12).

(v) Personal involvement in carrying out the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20).

- b. Loyal and punctual attendance at the stated gatherings of the Church.** These include the preaching services on the Lord's day, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Prayer Meetings and Church meetings (Heb 10:24-25). The first Christians continued steadfastly in a communal lifestyle, which included meeting for teaching, the breaking of bread, fellowship and prayer (Acts 2:42). Responsible Church members will inform the Elders when they are hindered by illness, the care of children, unusual work or study conditions and other providential circumstances.
- c. Financial support.** (2 Cor 8 & 9) Christian giving is part of giving of ourselves to God and others (8:5-7). It should be sacrificial (Luke 21:1-4), willing and cheerful (9:6-7). Giving should also be regular and systematic, in proportion to our means (1 Cor 16:2). The tithe (10% of one's gross income) is strongly urged as a healthy discipline but ultimately, each Christian is simply a steward of the resources that God has given him to use for his glory. The believer is urged to seek employment (2 Thess 3:10) so that he may provide for his family (1 Tim 5:8), pay his taxes (Rom 13:1-7) and support the ministry of his local church (1 Tim 5:17-18). As the spirit of the age is materialistic, the Christian can make an effective witness by limiting his desires to what God provides and cultivating the spirit of contentment (Phil 4:11-12, 1 Tim 6:6)
- d. Maintaining peace and harmony within the Church.** Those who have been joined to Christ are members of one another (Eph 4:25). They must therefore actively seek to get to know one another, pray for one another, love, comfort, encourage, exhort and help one another. They must maintain peace, harmony and love in the body of Christ (Rom 12:3-8, Eph 4:11-16, 1 Pet 4:10-11).
- e. Support of and submission to the Leadership.** (See below under Eldership.)
- f. Zealous use of the gifts that God has given.** (Rom 12:3-8) Any call to a spiritual ministry, inside or outside the Church, must first have the recognition and commendation of the Elders and, where applicable, of the whole Church (Acts 12:25-13:3).

5. The discipline of Church members

The Church has no jurisdiction over those who are not its members (1 Cor 5:12-13). It does however, reserve the right to discipline members in cases of absenteeism, immorality, uncharitable conduct towards other members, schism, heresy and unwillingness to submit to the legitimate authority of the Church. Such discipline shall have as its primary aim the restoration of the offender and every effort shall be made to implement it with the right attitude of heart (Gal 6:1). It shall relate only to areas of Christian life clearly governed by Scripture. In line with our Lord's teaching in Matt 18:15-20, private counsel and reproof will always take precedence over public reproof (1 Tim 5:20), the suspension of privileges, shunning (Rom 16:17, 2 Thess 3:6, 14) and excommunication. As a spiritual society, the Church may only impose spiritual penalties on its errant members.

The Church is to beware of both the neglect of Church discipline and the abuse of it, which includes excessive penalties and delayed restoration (2 Cor 2). The heart attitudes which are to characterise the exercise of Church discipline are as follows:

- a. **Unanimity and prayer.** The public sanctions of the Church are intended to be the united acts of the whole body in conjunction with the risen Christ (Matt 18:18-20).
- b. **Love and goodwill.** The whole purpose is that the person disciplined may be restored (Gal 6:1, Jas 5:19-20).
- c. **In dependence on the power of Christ, the head of the Church.** It is his power which entitles and enables the local Church to gather together and deliver unrepentant members over to Satan (1 Cor 5:4-5).
- d. **In sincerity and truth.** Hearsay, suspicion, prejudice and bias ought to have no place in the proceedings of the Church (1 Tim 5:21).
- e. **In grief and hatred for sin.** (1 Cor 5:2)

Church members who receive the word of public reproof in a spirit of meekness and demonstrate the reality of their repentance in a changed life (Prov 28:13) will be commended publicly (2 Cor 7:7-11) and restored to full Church privileges.

6. The Termination of Church membership

Church membership may be terminated in one of the following ways:

- a. **By transfer.** When a Church member in good standing moves to another part of the country, he is encouraged to seek out and identify with a like-minded church to Littleworth Church. In such cases, a letter of transfer to that church will be granted (Acts 18:27). No such letter will be issued with respect to a member currently under the discipline of this church. When other churches enquire about the status of such members, the Elders reserve the right to give such explanation as may seem necessary. A period of two years will be allowed to give Church members adequate time to find a suitable local church. In the meantime, they are required to keep the Elders informed of their intentions.

The Church does not recognise the practice of resignation as this is often used as a way of evading problems or side-stepping discipline. Where Church members undergo a change in their doctrinal convictions and can no longer conscientiously identify with the position of Littleworth Church, they are encouraged to explain their change of views to the Elders. The Church will then grant a transfer of membership to a Bible believing church which agrees with the new convictions of the members in question.

Church members who die are regarded as having transferred their membership from the Church militant on earth to the Church triumphant in heaven (Heb 12:23).

- b. **By excommunication.** According to the teaching of Scripture, a Church must cut off from its membership any person who teaches false doctrine or anyone who blatantly and impenitently behaves in a way which contradicts his Christian profession or disturbs the unity, peace or purity of the Church (Matt 18:15-20, Rom 16:17-20, 1 Cor 5:1-11). Like all the sanctions of Church discipline, excommunication is intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Thess 3:14). It is to be regarded as a last resort when all else has failed, a final appeal to a conscience in grave spiritual peril. Such a person faces only two possible outcomes, repentance or apostasy. Excommunication is a grievous matter, which ought to break the hearts of God's people. It should be a cause for weeping, mourning, sadness and heaviness of heart.

As Littleworth Church does not exist in isolation from other Churches of Christ, the Elders reserve the right to notify other churches of the reasons for the excommunication of a Church member where it is deemed appropriate (2 Tim 2:17, 4:10). In the same way, the Church does not exist in isolation from society at large but has a duty to maintain the integrity of its testimony (2 Cor 8:20-21). The Elders therefore reserve the right to disclose to any relevant parties the reasons for the excommunication any Church member where it is deemed appropriate. Excommunicated Church members have a duty to refrain from negative criticism of the Church, whether in other church circles or in the world at large but rather to seek repentance and reconciliation. Other Church members have the same duty to refrain from negative criticism of Church members under discipline and excommunicated Church members and to exercise discretion in disclosing information about the situation to anyone outside the fellowship.

- c. **By withdrawal** When Church members cease to attend the means of grace and, in effect, withdraw themselves from the fellowship of the Church without either transferring to another local Church or giving satisfactory reasons for their non-attendance, the Church will withdraw from those members, recognising that they have already withdrawn from the Church. A failure to attend the Lord's Table for 12 months will be deemed satisfactory cause for the Church to take such action.

B. The Officers of the Church

The Bible teaches that Christ has appointed two classes of spiritual office within the churches, Elders and Deacons.

1. Elders

These are otherwise described in Scripture as overseers or 'bishops', pastors, or teachers, according to the particular aspect of office to which reference is being made. The terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament and refer to the same office. Elders are the love-gifts of the risen Christ to his Church (Eph 4:11).

- a. **Qualifications** Only men with the necessary qualifications are eligible for the office. These are laid down in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Elders should be men who have already proved that they will not rule the church in a haughty and arrogant spirit (1 Pet 5:3) and that their attitude toward their fellow believers is affectionate, patient and gentle (1 Thess 2:7). In view of the responsibility the Elders jointly bear for providing and overseeing the public teaching ministry of the Church, it is understood that prospective Elders will be able to make conscientious and unequivocal subscription to the doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the 1689 Baptist Confession, though with liberty of conscience with regard to the Confession's statements about the identity of antichrist and the fate of children dying in infancy. It is also expected that they will hold a "cessationist" position with reference to the gifts of tongues, interpretation and prophecy.
- b. **Number and length of term** In normal circumstances, and according to apostolic precedent, the local Church is governed by a plurality of Elders. The Church is responsible to discover and recognise all the men and only the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the number of Elders will not be fixed. The Elders may continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able and willing to serve. Thus the length of their term of office will not be fixed by the Church.
- c. **Equality and Diversity of Elders** All the Elders are equal in office and authority (Acts 20:28, Heb 13:7, 1 Pet 5:1-4) but will vary in their gifts so as to complement one another. Each Elder must be able to teach and be engaged in private instruction, admonition and nurture as well as the administration and government of the Church, but the Eldership as

a whole will seek to recognise the particular gifts of individual Elders in a way that helps them function for the good of the Church. Some will be engaged in public preaching and teaching more than others (1 Tim 5:17). The Church recognises it as a Scriptural principle that one of the Elders (or more if the prosperity of the fellowship makes it possible) should be remunerated in order to enable him to devote himself the more effectively to prayer and the ministry of the Word. While it is understood that a full-time Elder should not be influenced by pecuniary motives (1 Pet 5:2), such remuneration should be sufficient for him to live among his fellow Church members without embarrassment. Whether he is called from the body of the existing Eldership, or from that of another Church, his separation to the full-time ministry is to be on the recommendation of the other Elders and ratified by the Church Membership.

- d. The Function of Elders** The task of Elders is to serve the Church through oversight, ruling and teaching. They are responsible for:
- (i) Overseeing the conduct of public worship,
 - (ii) The administration of the ordinances of believers baptism and the Lord's Supper,
 - (iii) Preserving purity of doctrine and the maintenance of discipline among Members.
 - (iv) All Meetings and organisations connected with the Church come under their supervision. After seeking the mind of the Church the Elders are responsible for the appointment and oversight of teachers in the Sunday School, Bible Class, and those responsible for any other ministries of the Church at any given time.

e. The recognition of Elders

In all ordinary circumstances, the right of nomination rests with the existing Eldership, who will, nonetheless, seek the opinions of the deacons and members before nomination though they are not to be regarded as "bound" by such. However, suggestions and recommendations from Church members will be appreciated and welcomed. Such should be forwarded to the Elders, in writing, with reasons given. The prospective Elder will be nominated at a regular quarterly Church meeting, where his candidature will be discussed. Any member feeling unable to join the Church in unanimous recognition of the prospective elder must make his reasons known to the Elders within 28 days. The Elders need not be bound by any reasons that are not grounded in the plain teaching of Scripture. At the next quarterly Church Meeting, if no valid objections have been raised, it will be assumed that the candidate has the unanimous support of the Church. If objections are still raised, the matter will be deferred for a further three months until another quarterly Church meeting, whereupon a secret ballot will be held. If the prospective candidate gains a minimum of 90% of the votes cast, the Church will be deemed to have recognised the validity of the gifts and calling of the brother in question. Those voting against the proposition will defer to the mind of the Church expressed through the ballot. The existing Elders will then ordain their new brother Elder at a service of the Church.

f. The duties of Church members towards the Elders

All who become members of this Church are expected to support and submit to the divinely appointed overseers of the Church. This will include the following:

- (i) Praying for them and their labours (Eph 6:18-20),
- (ii) Loving them (1 Thess 3:12),
- (iii) Trusting them (1 Tim 5:19),
- (iv) Esteeming them highly for their work's sake (1 Thess 5:12-13),
- (v) Standing by them (2 Tim 1:15),
- (vi) Giving adequate financial support to those who are full time (Gal 6:6, 1 Tim

- 5:17). Sabbatical leave will also be granted at appropriate intervals at the discretion of the Church Officers and with the agreement of the Church.
- (vii) Imitating their Christian graces as they imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1),
 - (viii) Receiving their teachings with a teachable spirit, yet with ultimate allegiance to the Word of God (Acts 17:11, 1 Thess 2:13, Jas 1:19-21),
 - (ix) Humbly heeding their Scriptural rebukes and warnings as from those appointed to watch for their souls and committed to presenting them complete and mature in Christ (Heb 13:17, Col 1:28),
 - (x) Abiding by their decisions in Church life without complaining even when personally differing with their judgement (Rom 10:21, 1 Cor 10:10, Phil 2:14).

g. The Discipline and Termination of Elders

Each undershepherd is himself a member of the flock of Christ. Each Elder is therefore under the discipline of his fellow Elders and is subject to the same discipline as all members of the Church. In addition, should an Elder fail to uphold the doctrinal standards of the Church or bring reproach on the Church and the name of Christ by scandalous or disorderly conduct, discipline will become appropriate. Where discipline is initiated by an individual Church member, the following procedure must apply. Any member who is offended at the conduct of an Elder should first approach him privately and express his concerns in the spirit of our Saviour's injunctions in Matt 18:15-20. If those concerns are not resolved, the member should approach the rest of the Elders and wait upon them for the resolution of the matter. The Elders should then proceed with great caution and much prayer. Elders are protected against malicious or frivolous accusations by the injunction that complaints must be upheld by more than one person (1 Tim 5:19).

Where discipline is initiated by the other Elders, the same broad principles and the same prayerful caution must apply. If the matter needs to be brought before the Church, the Elder will be entitled to speak in his own defence. The removal of an Elder shall require congregational approval at a duly convened Church Meeting. The Elder concerned may request a vote of confidence, in which case he must receive 90% of the votes cast in a secret ballot.

An Elder may resign his office if he can no longer discharge his duties because of illness, old age or some unexpected and severe providence. In such cases, the Elder concerned should always consult with the other Elders before offering his resignation. Where resignation occurs because of some unexpected providence, the Elder may, at the discretion of the other Elders, resume office immediately his providential hindrances have been removed, provided that he was not out of office for a period exceeding two years. If an Elder can no longer discharge his duties because of ill health or old age, it may be necessary for the other Elders to lovingly point this out to him and persuade him to step down.

Full time Elders should not lightly consider leaving the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers to labour in some other sphere of service. They should consult with the other Elders and the whole Church and be ready to give due weight to the counsel given. In the case of a full-time Elder, supported by the Church, to make room for the orderly discharge of financial obligations, the Church must give at least three months notice before termination, as must the Elder in question, if he should resign his office. The same principle will apply to all paid employees of the Church.

2. Deacons

The English word "Deacon" comes from a Greek word, which means "servant". While on the one hand, Elders are also the servants of the Church and on the other, all Christians are to serve the Church, Deacons have a recognised ministry of practical help.

- a. Qualifications** Only men with the necessary qualifications are eligible for the office. These are laid down in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. If a time should arise in the providence of God that the Church has no Elders, the Deacons will assume temporary, but full responsibility for the government of the Church. It is therefore understood that prospective Deacons will be able to make conscientious and unequivocal subscription to the doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the 1689 Baptist Confession, on the same terms as the Elders, and that they will hold a “cessationist” position with reference to the gifts of tongues, interpretation and prophecy.
- b. Number and length of term** The Church is responsible to discover and recognise all the men and only the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts. Therefore, the number of Deacons will not be fixed. The Deacons may continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able and willing to serve. Thus the length of their term of office will not be fixed by the Church. Confirmation every four years.
- c. The Function of Deacons** The task of the Deacons is to relieve the Elders of involvement in the material affairs of the Church so that their distinctive ministries of Prayer and the ministry of the Word are not neglected (Acts 6:1-4). It may be helpful to think of the Deacons having responsibility to wait at tables (Acts 6:2). These would include:
- (i) The Lord’s Table. In order that the Spiritual life of the Church, including the regular observation of the Gospel ordinances might prosper, the Deacons will take responsibility for the repair and maintenance of Church property, the supervision of the stewarding and cleaning and the collecting, distribution and accounting for of Church finances.
 - (ii) The Pastor’s Table. The Deacons will ensure that any full-time Elders or indeed other full-time workers supported by the Church are adequately provided for.
 - (iii) The Table of the Poor, i.e. the provision of monetary or other aid for sick and needy Members of the Church.

In the absence of Elders, and at their own discretion, the Deacons may seek advice and counsel from Elders of other Churches.

d. The recognition of Deacons

In all ordinary circumstances, the right of nomination rests with the existing Elders and Deacons, who will, nonetheless, seek the opinions of members before nomination though they are not to be regarded as “bound” by such. However, suggestions and recommendations from Church members will be appreciated and welcomed. Such should be forwarded to the Elders and Deacons, in writing, with reasons given. The prospective Deacon will be nominated at a regular quarterly Church meeting, where his candidature will be discussed. Any member feeling unable to join the Church in unanimous recognition of the prospective Deacon must make his reasons known to the Elders within 28 days. The Elders and Deacons need not be bound by any reasons that are not grounded in the plain teaching of Scripture. At the next quarterly Church Meeting, if no valid objections have been raised, it will be assumed that the candidate has the unanimous support of the Church. If objections are still raised, the matter will be deferred for a further three months until another quarterly Church meeting, whereupon a secret ballot will be held. If the prospective candidate gains a minimum of 90% of the votes cast, the Church will be deemed to have recognised the validity of the gifts and calling of the brother in question. Those voting against the proposition will defer to the mind of the Church expressed through the ballot. A service of recognition will then be held at one of the regular services of the Church.

e. The Discipline and Termination of Deacons

Each Deacon is subject to the same discipline as all members of the Church. In addition, since the Diaconate is a spiritual office, more rigorous standards should apply (Luke 12:48). Therefore, should a Deacon fail to uphold the doctrinal standards of the Church or bring reproach on the Church and the name of Christ by scandalous or disorderly conduct, discipline will become appropriate. Where discipline is initiated by an individual Church member, the following procedure must apply. Any member who is offended at the conduct of a Deacon should first approach him privately and express his concerns in the spirit of our Saviour's injunctions in Matt 18:15-20. If those concerns are not resolved, the member should approach the Elders and wait upon them for the resolution of the matter. The Elders should then proceed with great caution and much prayer. Although it is not expressly required in Scripture, Deacons, like the Elders, deserve protection against malicious or frivolous accusations. Complaints must therefore be upheld by more than one person.

A Deacon may resign his office if he can no longer discharge his duties because of illness, old age or some unexpected and severe providence. In such cases, the Deacon concerned should always consult with the Elders and other Deacons before offering his resignation. Where resignation occurs because of some unexpected providence, the Deacon may, at the discretion of the other Church Officers, resume office immediately his providential hindrances have been removed, provided that he was not out of office for a period exceeding two years. If a Deacon can no longer discharge his duties because of ill health or old age, it may be necessary for the other Church Officers to lovingly point this out to him and persuade him to step down.

Note:

The treasurer of the Church shall normally be appointed from among the Deacons.

C. The Ordinances

The Church recognises only two ordinances that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism

- a. The Meaning of Baptism.** Baptism is a public profession and pledge of union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. It is a vow to live in holiness as one joined to the risen Christ (Rom 6:1-6). Baptism also involves admission into covenant membership with a local Church (Acts 2:41-47).
- b. The Subjects for Baptism.** Christian believers and these alone are fit subjects for the ordinance of Baptism. Those who have not experienced the inward grace ought not to receive the outward sign that testifies to it. Baptism is a necessary part of Christian obedience. The New Testament does not envisage baptised unbelievers or unbaptised believers.
- c. The Mode of Baptism** Immersion in water is the mode which best expresses both the meaning of the term and the symbolism of death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:1-6). Immersion will, under normal circumstances, be the only mode the Church will use. Exceptions will be at the discretion of the church elders (See Qualification for Church membership paragraph c) Baptism should be in the triune name (Matt 28:19). As the initiatory rite of the Christian Church, it should be observed only once by each believer.

2. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament in which:

- a. A particular local Church (1 Cor 11:17ff)
- b. At stated intervals on the Lord's day (1 Cor 11:25-26, Acts 20:7)
- c. Together eats a ceremonial meal (1 Cor 11:20-22, 33-34)
- d. Consisting of bread and wine (1 Cor 1:23-26)
- e. Distributed to all by Christ's servants (1 Cor 11:24),
- f. In which that gathered Church symbolises its spiritual nourishment by Christ's body and blood (1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:24-25) and
- g. Proclaims the death of Christ and his atonement for sin (1 Cor 11:26).

This ordinance is to continue in perpetuity until the return of Christ (1 Cor 11:26). The bread and wine are and remain only symbols of the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ but those who partake feed by faith upon the living Christ who is present with, but not in the elements.

In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the Elders will seek to ensure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches of Christ are admitted to the ordinance.

D. The Church Meeting

1. The Purpose of the Church Meeting

Outside the stated gatherings of the Church for worship, teaching, prayer and the Gospel Ordinances, the Church meets for the following purposes:

- a) To provide an opportunity for fellowship and thus be a means of glorifying God and edifying his Church.
- b) To provide the Elders with an opportunity to inform the Church of matters for its prayerful scrutiny, consideration and discussion. This will assist the Elders in determining the mind of the Church and thereby the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8).
- c) To embody before the world the Scriptural doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

2. The Business of the Church Meeting

Appropriate matters will include the following:

- a. The recognition of new Church Members.
- b. The recognition of Elders and Deacons.
- c. Disciplinary matters where appropriate.
- d. Reports on the life and progress of the various ministries of the Church.
- e. The prayerful scrutiny of financial and property matters.
- f. Other appropriate business as circumstances dictate.

3. The Conduct of Church Meetings

- a. **Frequency.** Church Meetings are to be held quarterly. The dates for each year will be set at the final Church Meeting in the preceding year, though these may be altered if circumstances dictate, provided that an adequate period of notice is given. If necessary a Special Church Meeting may be called by the Elders (or any one of them in an emergency) or by written request bearing the signatures of ten Church Members or 10% of the total, whichever is the lesser, and giving explanation as to the purpose of the Special Church Meeting. The date of each Church Meeting will be announced on the two

Sundays prior to it.

- b. **Quorum.** As decisions are taken in the name of the whole Church, it is a matter of considerable importance that each Church Meeting be attended by a representative sample of the whole membership. The Meeting will therefore be deemed inquorate if less than 40% of the Membership are present.
- c. **Absence.** Absence should be avoided wherever possible. When it is unavoidable, members ought to notify the Elders beforehand, explaining the reasons.
- d. **Chairman** One of the Elders will be Chairman, unless the Elders appoint another Chairman for special purposes. If the Church has no Elder for the time being, the Deacons will appoint one of their number to fill the role of Chairman.
- e. **Discretion** On occasions of particular sensitivity, and at the request of the Elders, certain matters discussed at Church Meetings are to be held in the strictest confidence. For the same reason, Church members who are minors are not permitted to attend Church Meetings until they reach the age of sixteen.
- f. **Ballots.** The Church is not a democracy, but a theocracy expressed through the rule of Christ's undershepherds. The Church will not normally reach decisions through the use of ballots but will seek to resolve its affairs through prayerful discussion leading to a common and unanimous mind. Sometimes this may mean that a decision has to be postponed to another Church Meeting to allow time for further reflection and prayer.

If it becomes clear that a substantial section of the Church Membership is opposed to a proposal under discussion and remains opposed after adequate time for discussion and prayer, the Elders will withdraw the proposal for the sake of the peace and unity of the Church.

On the other hand, a small and unrepresentative section of the Church Membership should not be able to frustrate the clear will of the Church indefinitely. If there are still objections by the time of the third consecutive Church Meeting that a particular proposal is put forward, a ballot may be requested. The intention behind such a ballot is to clarify the extent of the opposition to such a proposal and therefore ascertain the will of God working in and through His people. Ballots should only be requested with extreme reluctance. They will take the form of a simple ballot held at a quarterly or special Church Meeting. Ballot papers will be circulated on the night, explaining the question before the Church with "Yes" and "No" boxes clearly marked. Two tellers will be appointed who are members but not officers of the Church. They will distribute the ballot papers and collect them once completed. Church Members who can give a good reason for their absence and who notify the Elders, may request a ballot paper in advance of the Church Meeting. This will be obtained from one of the tellers, completed and returned on the Sunday prior to the Church Meeting. The tellers will then retain those ballot papers completed early and add them to the others completed at the Church Meeting. The tellers will count the votes cast in a separate room and then inform the Elders of the result. The ballot will be deemed to have carried if it secures the agreement of 90% of the votes cast. Once such a ballot has been held, Church members on both sides of the issue have a particular duty to maintain the peace of the Church.

- g. **The tone of Church meetings** Members must not frame criticism or disagreement in words that are not governed by the spirit of charity (Col 4:6). Church Meetings are not proper occasions for rebuke except in disciplinary cases where the principles of Matthew 18:15-20 have already been observed.
- h. **Agenda** The Agenda will be prepared by the Elders in consultation with the Deacons

and wherever possible, presented to Church Members two Sundays before the meeting. Church Members may request matters to be raised by approaching one of the Elders within fifteen days prior to the Meeting. Such matters will ordinarily be appended to the section of the Agenda entitled "Any Other Business". Matters for business may not be raised at Church Meetings without such prior notice.

- i. The Annual General Meeting** This will be the first Church Meeting of each year, and with reference to the preceding year, will include the following:
- (i) The presentation of accounts, duly audited,
 - (ii) Reports of the various facets of the Church's ministry.

E. Miscellaneous

1. Littleworth Church is the Church meeting for the worship of Almighty God in the Littleworth Community Centre, St Thomas Street, Stafford or such premises as the Church may occupy at some unspecified time in the future. It also includes any portion of its members who form part of a Church planting project in any other location.
2. A copy of this Constitution and Confession of Faith shall be presented to all new Members of the Church. Prospective Members will be given copies of the Confession of Faith and the information contained above regarding Church Membership to help them in their considerations.
3. This Constitution and Confession of Faith have been compiled by fallible men living in a changing world. It may therefore need to be amended or supplemented from time to time. At such times, the following procedure shall be adopted:
 - a) If the Elders of the Church become aware of the need to alter the Constitution they must inform the Church at a regular quarterly Church Meeting, detailing the proposed alteration, with written copies available for the prayerful consideration of every Member. In order to allow time for prayer and discussion, no decision will be taken at the Meeting when the proposed alteration is first aired. Thus at least one regular Church Meeting must elapse before the Church declares its mind.
 - b) If the proposed alterations come from a Church Member, the Member should first of all find another Member to second the proposals and then arrange a Meeting with the Elders. Should the Elders feel able to endorse the proposals, the procedure outlined in a) above will be followed.
 - c) If after consultation with the Elders, and once enough time has elapsed to allow for prayerful consideration and consultation, the Elders feel unable to endorse the alterations, proposals may nevertheless be aired at a regular Church Meeting provided that ten signatures, or the signatures of 10% of the members, whichever is the lesser are recorded in support of them and that written copies are available for the prayerful consideration of every Member. The Elders must be notified prior to the Meeting that such discussion is requested so that it may be entered in the Agenda. Once again, no immediate decision must be required of the Church. At least one regular Church Meeting must elapse before the mind of the Church is declared.
 - d) When the Church declares its mind upon such proposed alterations, every effort will be made to secure unanimity according to the procedures outlined above under "the conduct of Church Meetings". If a ballot is eventually requested, it must gain the support of 90% of Church members present and voting.

4. PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

A. Your walk with God

1. Listen to God's voice daily in the reading of His Word. Study your Bible prayerfully (Ps 119:18); search it diligently (Acts 17:11); keep it faithfully (John 8: 31); look into it continually (James 1:25) and practice it fully (James 1:22).
2. Look to the Lord continually in prayer (Col 4:2), but arrange fixed times for supplication and thanksgiving (Phil 4:6). Remember Daniel's method and seek to follow him in having a stated time for fellowship with the Lord (Daniel 6:10; Ps 55:17).
3. Lean on the Lord all day long, so that when temptation comes you will only have to turn to Him. Remember the Lord is with you to give patience in trial, help in temptation, strength in weakness, guidance in difficulty, gentleness in provocation, comfort in distress, and rest in weariness (Isaiah 41:10).

B. Your Home

In the following six "*whatevers*" of the Holy Spirit, we find the secret of a harmonious and happy home-life.

1. Obey Christ in everything. "Whatever he says to you, do it" (John 2:5).
2. Let Christ be in everything. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col 3:17).
3. Let everything be done as to Christ. "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Col 3:23).
4. Do everything for God's glory. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).
5. Ask Christ about everything. "Whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments", (1 John 3:22).
6. Then Christ's blessing will be upon everything. "Whatever he does shall prosper" (Ps 1:3).

If we keep to the pattern shown and commanded above, there will be no cause for complaint, whether it be in eating or drinking, in dress or demeanour. Neither laziness nor slovenliness will characterise us. Family prayers are strongly recommended. Let all remember their relative position to each other in the Lord as outlined in Eph. 5:25- 6:9.

C. Your relationships with other believers

The New Testament has much to say about our conduct towards each other. Fourteen times we are told to "love one another" (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:11-23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5). Then, there are twenty-one things we are told to do, to and for each other:

1. "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love" (Rom 12:10).
2. In honour "give preference to one another" (Rom 12:10).
3. "Be of the same mind towards one another" (Rom. 12:16; 15:5).
4. "Edify [one] another" (Rom 14:19).
5. "Receive one another" (Rom 15:7).
6. "Admonish one another" (Rom 15:14).
7. Greet one another with affection (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16: 20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Pet 5:14).
8. "Care for one another" (1 Cor 12:25)
9. Serve one another with humility (John 13:14; Gal 5:13).
10. "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2).

11. Bear “with one another in love” (Eph 4:2; Col 3:13).
12. “Be kind to one another” (Eph 4:32).
13. “Submit to one another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5).
14. Esteem others better than ourselves (Phil 2:3).
15. Forgive one another (Col 3:13).
16. “Abound in love to one another” (1 Thess 3:12).
17. “Comfort one another” (1 Thess 4:18; 5:11).
18. “Consider one another” (Heb 10:24).
19. Confess faults to each other (James 5:16).
20. “Pray for one another” (James 5:16).
21. “Be hospitable to one another” (1 Pet 4:9).

There are six things we are not to do to each other:

1. Not to “judge one another” (Rom 14:13).
2. Not to provoke each other (Gal 5:26).
3. Not to envy each other (Gal 5:26).
4. Not to “lie to one another” (Col 3: 9).
5. Not to “speak evil of one another” (James 4:11).
6. Not to “grumble against one another” (James 5:9).

If only Christians could learn to obey these instructions, the world will believe that Christ was sent by the Father (John 17:21).

D. The Public Means of Grace

Of course, they are only the means of grace as we meet the God of grace in them. But do not neglect the means because they are not the end. They lead to the end.

We are told to “Come together” (1 Cor 11:20). We are instructed not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb 10:25). We should exalt the name of the Lord together (Psalm 34:3). We have the example of the early Christians, for “all who believed were together” (Acts 2:44). We have the promise of the Lord’s presence when we are gathered together in His Name (Matt. 18:20).

The means of grace may be classified as follows:

1. **Meetings for prayer** In the Acts of the Apostles, we find that the early Christians were gathered together for five specific purposes in prayer:
 - (i) For their own sanctification and strengthening (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 16:13).
 - (ii) For power to witness to Christ and to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 4:31).
 - (iii) For special guidance under difficult circumstances (Acts 1:24; 13:3).
 - (iv) For deliverance for others who were suffering for Christ (Acts 12:5-12).
 - (v) For blessing upon others (Acts 6:4; 8:15; 9:40; 16:25; 20:36)

We should be careful to pray with uncondemning hearts (1 John 3:20-22); in the name of Jesus (John 14:14); in the full assurance of faith (Heb 10:22); by the power of the Holy Spirit (Jude 20) with oneness of heart (Acts 1:14); and for the Lord’s glory (John 15:7-8). If we do not pray in this manner, we keep blessing both from ourselves and from others.

2. **Meetings for worship** These are specially on the Lord’s Day, when we come together in obedience to the command of Christ, and remember him, his death and his coming again, in the breaking of bread as the early Christians did (Acts 20:7). This is a meeting for thanksgiving. The difference between worship and prayer is this, in prayer we ask from God; in worship, we give to God. There are three things that may be said to be specific acts of worship:

- (i) Giving thanks to the name of the Lord (Heb 13:15),
- (ii) Presenting our whole being to the Lord for His service and use (Rom 6:13-19; 12:1),
- (iii) Giving to those who are in need (Heb 13:16).

3. Meetings for Bible instruction Among the many gifts that Christ has given to His Church is the “Teacher” (Eph 4:11). A teacher is one who explains and applies the Word of God and gives the sense (Neh 8:8). Of the early Christians it is said, “they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine (i.e. teaching)” (Acts 2:42). We have examples of meetings for Bible instruction, in the meetings that Paul addressed at Troas (Acts 20:7) and at Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38).

4. Meetings for the proclamation of the Gospel In the Acts of the Apostles, we have examples of such meetings. Many of God’s people do not recognise their responsibility in reference to such gatherings, but they should, in seeking to bring the unconverted under the sound of the Gospel; in praying for the success of the Gospel; and in supporting the messenger by their presence and prayers.

Please consider the following observations concerning your conduct at all meetings:

- (i) Never be absent when you can possibly be present (Heb 10:25).
- (ii) Whenever you are absent, let God be your witness that you have a good reason for it (Psalm 139:1-12).
- (iii) Never be late if you can possibly avoid it (1 Cor 14:40). It is said of Christ that, “When the hour had come, he sat down” (Luke 22:14). Christ is our Example in punctuality.
- (iv) Be mentally alert and reverent in demeanour before God (Psalm 89:7).
- (v) At the end of each prayer, respond in an audible voice, “Amen!” (Ps 106:48).
- (vi) Singing is as much an act of worship as prayer. Treat it with equal reverence (Ex 15:1-19; Eph 5:18-20).
- (vii) Beware, of the frame of mind in which you take the Lord’s Supper, and rather do not take it all than take it contrary to your conscience (1 Cor 11:23-34).

E. Christian Giving

Three things ought to be remembered in Christian giving:

- (i) **The Person to whom we give.** It is to the Lord. The reason why the Israelites brought such lavish gifts for the Tabernacle and Temple was that they recognised they were giving to the Lord, and not to Moses and David, (Ex 35:5, 21-22, 29; 1 Chron 29:9, 14-17).
- (ii) **The Principle, or how we give.** See that you give systematically, that is “on the first day of the week”; personally “every one of you”; faithfully, “as God has prospered” (1 Cor 16:2); cheerfully, for God “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9: 7); and sacrificially (Luke 21:4). All we do not absolutely require for our needs should be at the disposal of the Lord.
- (ii) **The motive, or why we give.** Because of what the Lord has given us (2 Cor 8:9); because all we possess we have received from him (Matt. 10:8); because it is a command (1 Cor 16:2); because it is our privilege (2 Cor 8:7-8); because it is an evidence that we are following in the footsteps of Christ, who went about doing good (Acts 10:38); because it is well-pleasing to God (Heb 13:16); and because it will return in blessing upon us (Mal 3:10).

5. THE CHURCH FAMILY COVENANT

This famous pledge of spiritual oneness was the “Solemn Covenant” adopted in 1689 by the Baptist Church at Horsleydown in Southwark, during the pastorate of Benjamin Keach. In those days it was read out at the beginning of every Lord’ Supper service.

In this version, it has been lightly edited to bring it into line with contemporary English usage.

We who desire to walk together in the fear of the Lord, do, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, profess our sense of deep and serious humiliation and shame for all our sins.

And solemnly, in the presence of God and of each other, with a sense of our own unworthiness, we humbly give ourselves to the Lord as members of this local church, according to the scriptures, that He may be our God, and we may be His people, through the everlasting covenant of His free grace, in which alone we hope to be accepted by Him, through His blessed Son, Jesus Christ, whom we take to be our High Priest to justify and sanctify us, our Prophet to teach us, our King and lawgiver to rule over us, and by His grace, to conform to His entire holy law and ordinances, for our growth, establishment, and comfort; that we may be as a holy bride to Him, and serve Him in our generation, and wait for His second appearance, as our glorious Bridegroom.

Being fully convinced of the doctrine of the local church, and the reality of the work of grace in one another’s spirits, we solemnly join ourselves together in a holy union and fellowship, humbly submitting to the discipline of the Gospel, and all the holy duties required of people in such a spiritual relationship.

- 1. We promise to walk in all holiness, godliness, humility, and brotherly love, as far as we are able, in order to make our fellowship delightful to God, encouraging to ourselves, and lovely to the rest of the Lord’s people.*
- 2. We promise to watch over each other’s manner of life, and not to connive at sin in one another, so far as God shall disclose it to us or anyone else; to stir up one another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with meekness, according to the rules left to us by Christ in the Holy Scriptures.*
- 3. We promise especially to pray for one another, for the glory and increase of this church and for the presence of God in it, for the outpouring of His Spirit on it, and His protection over it, to His glory.*
- 4. We promise to bear one another’s burdens, to have fellowship with one another, and to have a fellow-feeling for one another, in all conditions both outward and inward, as God in His providence deals with us.*
- 5. We promise to bear with one another’s weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, with great tenderness, not disclosing them to anyone either outside or within the Church, unless specifically called to do so by the rule of Scripture.*
- 6. We promise to strive together for the truth of the Gospel and purity of God’s ways and ordinances, to avoid causes, and perpetrators of division, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3).*

7. *We promise to meet together on the Lord's-day, and at other times, as the Lord gives us opportunity, to serve and glorify God in worshipping Him, edifying one another, and seeking the good of His church.*
8. *We promise to support, by prayer, fellowship, and practical giving according to our ability and their need, those whom God has called as Elders and Deacons to watch over us and care for us, in particular acknowledging the Lord's command that "those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14)*

To these and all other Gospel duties we humbly submit, promising and purposing to perform them, not in our own strength, being conscious of our weakness, but in the power and strength of the blessed God, Whose we are, and Whom we desire to serve. To Whom be glory now and forevermore. Amen.

Acknowledgement

This Church Members Handbook is based upon that drawn up by the Free Grace Baptist Church, Lune Street, Lancaster. This is particularly so in relation to sections 3-5 of the Handbook. The elders and church members of Littleworth Church, Stafford acknowledge, with thanks to God, the help and co-operation of the elders and church members of the Free Grace Baptist Church, Lancaster in allowing the free use of their Church Members Handbook.