fbchurch
finchampstead baptist church

Church Handbook

1. What is Finchampstead Baptist Church?

Finchampstead Baptist Church (FBC) exists to **help people find and follow Jesus**. In order to do this, we organise ourselves to create opportunities for all people to encounter Jesus' love; for the first time; rediscovering Jesus; remaining in Jesus. We want all people to follow him and to thrive in their faith.

To help us in our mission and in common with most Baptist Churches, FBC is an entity which is self-governing and self-financing. The Church is established as a Charitable Company limited by guarantee and our governance arrangements are set out by this handbook and in the Memorandum and Articles of Association (the M&A)[1], a full copy of which is freely available on request or via THIS LINK

We are not part of a hierarchical church organisation but rather we seek to work in association with other churches in our area, across the United Kingdom and around the world to share and learn from each other.

2. FBC Partnership

We believe that all who truly believe in God and who follow Jesus receive the Holy Spirit and thus being guided by and receiving wisdom from God can play an active part in the life of His Church. As Christians, we form the body of Christ and at FBC we are excited when believers feel that their next step is to get more involved in what we do as a church and how we do it. We want to encourage and support people in their involvement by becoming Partners.

Partners (previously known and referred to in the M&A as Church Members) are a group of people who are actively involved in the life and mission of FBC, who embody the values of the Church and who want to be involved in the process by which we discern God's leading for us as a body. Partnership primarily fulfils a spiritual responsibility but also fulfils a corporate

[1] *Nothing in this handbook may be inconsistent with or may affect or repeal anything in our M&A. Any changes to the M&A requires consultation with the Baptist Union, a 75% approval at a church meeting and is subject to approval by the Charity Commission and Companies House.*

responsibility in the governance of Finchampstead Baptist Church. As an organisation, we need to be both spiritually healthy and corporately robust. Partners play an important role in both these respects.

To help govern and make decisions at FBC we appoint some Partners to be Trustees. When appointed, Trustees undertake a two-year term of office, during which they are responsible for overseeing how best FBC should advance its mission. The trustee role carries legal responsibility for everything that goes on at FBC as well as carrying responsibilities to God and to the Gospel. The Trustees support and oversee the appointment and activities of the Staff Team who run all aspects of FBC day to day.

What's involved in being an FBC Partner?

At FBC we avoid setting out "tick-box" criteria for those interested in becoming a Partner but there are some important aspects which bind the Partners together, not least their faith and their passion for the mission of the Church.

We recognise that some individuals' lives and circumstances may prevent them from fulfilling all of the criteria all of the time. (If you have any concerns, please come and speak to a Trustee about whether Partnership would be appropriate for you.)

To become a Partner, you must be over 15 years of age and, after attending an Introduction to Partnership course, must be willing to sign a written application confirming your commitment to the following:

Belief:

Assent to the Statement of Faith

Active involvement in the life of the church:

Commit to connecting relationally (e.g., through Sunday worship and in a small group); serving on a team; financially supporting the work of FBC; inviting friends and family; and praying for the life and mission of the Church.

Attendance at Prayer and Vision Meetings:

- Attend Prayer and Vision meetings. We aim to have 6 meetings a year on a bi-monthly basis. These meetings may be in person, online, or hybrid.

Ideally Partnership will reflect the diversity of our church and community and we encourage anybody who feels nervous or unsure whether to become a Partner to contact one of the Trustees to explore this further.

One of the roles of the Trustees is to approve Partner applications. On the very rare occasion that Trustees believe an applicant would not be appropriate for partnership they will meet with the individual to discuss their concerns.

How long does Partnership last?

Every three years we will invite all existing Partners to commit again for the next three-year term. It is our hope that people will remain Partners, praying and supporting the Church in this way for many years. However, we understand that people's circumstances may change and as it is important that Partners remain actively engaged we offer this refresh/renewal opportunity to all at the end of every three years. People may become Partners at any point during the three-year term and may choose to resign their Partnership in writing to the Trustees at any time.

Partnership may be revoked by the Trustees if they agree it is no longer appropriate for an individual to continue as a Partner. This could be for reasons such as a significant lack of engagement; behaviour inconsistent with the values of FBC; or persistently living in a manner inconsistent with the Christian message. In practice we expect this step to be very rare and only taken after significant consideration and appropriate consultation.

An individual's Partnership may be temporarily suspended by the Trustees or at the request of the Partner should their circumstances require.

What happens at Prayer and Vision Meetings?

The purpose of Prayer and Vision Meetings (known in the M&A as Church Meetings) is to ‘meet together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of Jesus Christ to discern the mind of God in the affairs of the Church’. Usually, sung worship will be a key feature of the Meeting. Prayer and discussion of any matters affecting the life and activities of the Church shall be set in this context with the intention that, so far as possible, practical issues are not perceived as being separate from the spiritual aspects of the Church.

Prayer and Vision meetings are open to anyone who is part of FBC, particularly those who are interested in exploring Partnership.

At least one Prayer and Vision Meeting will be considered to be the Annual Church Meeting (ACM) as defined in the M&A, which will include consideration of FBC's financial accounts and the Auditor's report and will appoint or reappoint the Auditors.

It will be necessary to hold a Special Church Meeting for Partners to appoint or dismiss Trustees and this will normally be held once a year and may coincide with the ACM.

Further information about the proceedings of Prayer and Vision Meetings can be found in the M&A under Part C - Church Meetings.

3. The Trustee Team[2]

The Trustee Team are the managing trustees and directors of the charitable company and are responsible for the mission and vision that God has given us, through prayer, conversation and listening to God together. They ask the question: 'What is God saying?' They seek to ensure that all we are and do seeks God first and falls within our mission, vision, values and Statement of Faith. They provide accountability for the Lead Pastor and the Church Leadership Team (defined in section 4 below), and model our mission, vision and values in their individual and family lives. As the Trustees of the church they have specific and fiduciary responsibilities, especially around our finances and are elected by the church meeting.

They are expected to be willing and able to act as Trustees, being ultimately responsible for the governance of the church under the authority of the church meeting.

Proposal, Nomination and Appointment of Trustees

The Bible teaches the 'priesthood of all believers'. All are equal before God and all are equally called to serve God in the local Church. However we also believe that some are called to lead the church in discovering and fulfilling its God-given mission to the world.

[2] *The Trustee Team are referred to as The Leadership Team in the M&A. This is not the same team as the Church Leadership Team, described in section 4 of this handbook.*

In Scripture, one of the most important qualities to consider in a leader is character. Of course no one is perfect, but 1 Timothy 3 has a helpful list of personal qualities that are appropriate for leaders, including spiritual maturity. Acts 6:5 describes the church as choosing Stephen who was ‘a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit’. The church needs people in leadership who are able to get on well with other people and work as part of a team – something that strongly links with good character.

Competency is also important and those nominated as a trustee should understand their spiritual gifts. 'We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is ... leadership, let them govern diligently...' (Romans 12:6-8).

Trustees are people who can grasp the ‘big picture’. Scripture also says, ‘They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.’ (1 Timothy 3:10).

Finally, there is the practical question of availability. Trustee meetings take place typically once every 2 months and sometimes more frequently if specific issues arise.

In thinking about possible members of the Trustee Team there are probably two extremes to avoid. The first is to see the criteria for a trustee as so demanding that no one feels either able to nominate anyone else or be nominated themselves. The second extreme is to be too anxious to find candidates and so push someone who is either not a good fit or not ready. The role of the church in nominating Trustees is to discern whom God is calling to this work. It is something to be done prayerfully and thoughtfully.

There will be a maximum of 12 members of the Trustee Team, including Ministers/Pastors, and when the Church has more than one Minister/Pastor the normal expectation is that at least one will be a member of the Trustee Team.

To be eligible for nomination to the Trustee Team an individual must have been a Church Member for at least twelve months (this does not apply to Ministers/Pastors), be over the age of 18 years, have the character and ability (i.e. time, motivation and gifts) as set out above.

Proposals for the role of the Trustee Team Member, other than a Minister/Pastor, shall be made to the Lead Pastor or Chair of the Trustees not later than four weeks before the Special Church Members’ Meeting at which

the election is to be held. Proposals must be submitted in writing; a proposal form can be obtained from the church office. No person may nominate more candidates than there are places vacant.

Those who receive 7 or more proposals shall be informed by the Lead Pastor (or other representative appointed by the Trustee Team for this purpose) who will discuss with him/her their suitability and willingness to stand for appointment. Receiving 7 proposals automatically qualifies the member to be eligible to be nominated to the Trustee Team, although they may choose to decline their nomination.

Election to the Trustee Team is to be made at a Special Church Meeting by secret ballot and is usually for a fixed term of 2 years. Individuals may be re-appointed for further terms of office.

The appointment of a Member of the Trustee Team is not to take effect until he/she has signed the prescribed Companies House form.

4. The Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)

The Ministry Leadership Team, as defined in this handbook (not to be confused with the Trustee Team) is a committee appointed by the Trustees as defined in section 25 of the M&A.

The MLT oversee and lead various areas of the church, covering a wide base of ministries and roles, equipping the people and ministries of FBC to be all that God wants them to be. They also model our mission, vision and values in their individual lives. These leaders are appointed and tasked by the Trustee Team to implement the mission, provide direction and be responsible for the day-to-day running of the Church, including all ministries and control of the budgets. They ask the question: How do we get the job done?

5. Ministers/Pastors

a. Ministers/Pastors of the Church shall fulfil all the conditions of Church Membership, shall have been baptised as a believer and shall uphold and teach the doctrines contained in the Statement of Faith.

b. Ministers shall be nominated by the Trustees and approved by secret ballot at a Church Meeting.

c. If, at any time, there is more than one Minister/Pastor, one of the Ministers/Pastors shall normally be appointed as the Lead Minister/Pastor by the Church Meeting. The Lead Minister/Pastor would normally be a member of the Trustee Team.

d. During any period of more than three months when there is no Lead Minister/Pastor, the Church Meeting may appoint one of the other Ministers/Pastors or Trustees to fulfil the duties and functions of a Lead Minister/Pastor.

If this is not possible then the Trustee Team may appoint a moderator to fulfil the duties and functions of the Lead Minister/Pastor.
A Moderator is not required to be either a Member or a part of the Congregation of the Church but shall be appointed in the same way as appointing a Minister.

6. Church Ministries and Activities

a. A 'Church ministry or activity' is any ministry or activity that uses the name of, or otherwise presents itself as being a part of Finchampstead Baptist Church.

b. Church ministries and activities shall be accountable to and accept the guidance of the Church Leadership Team as defined in this handbook. Leaders of Church Ministries shall normally be members of the Church.

c. If a Church ministry or activity maintains separate funds, its accounts shall be included in the church's annual audit and if it ceases to function, its assets shall be disposed of as determined by the Church Leadership Team.

7. Statement of Faith

We believe in...

- The one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.

- The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.

- The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.

- The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.

- The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.

- The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.

- The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.

- The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.

- The Church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers - given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.

- The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.