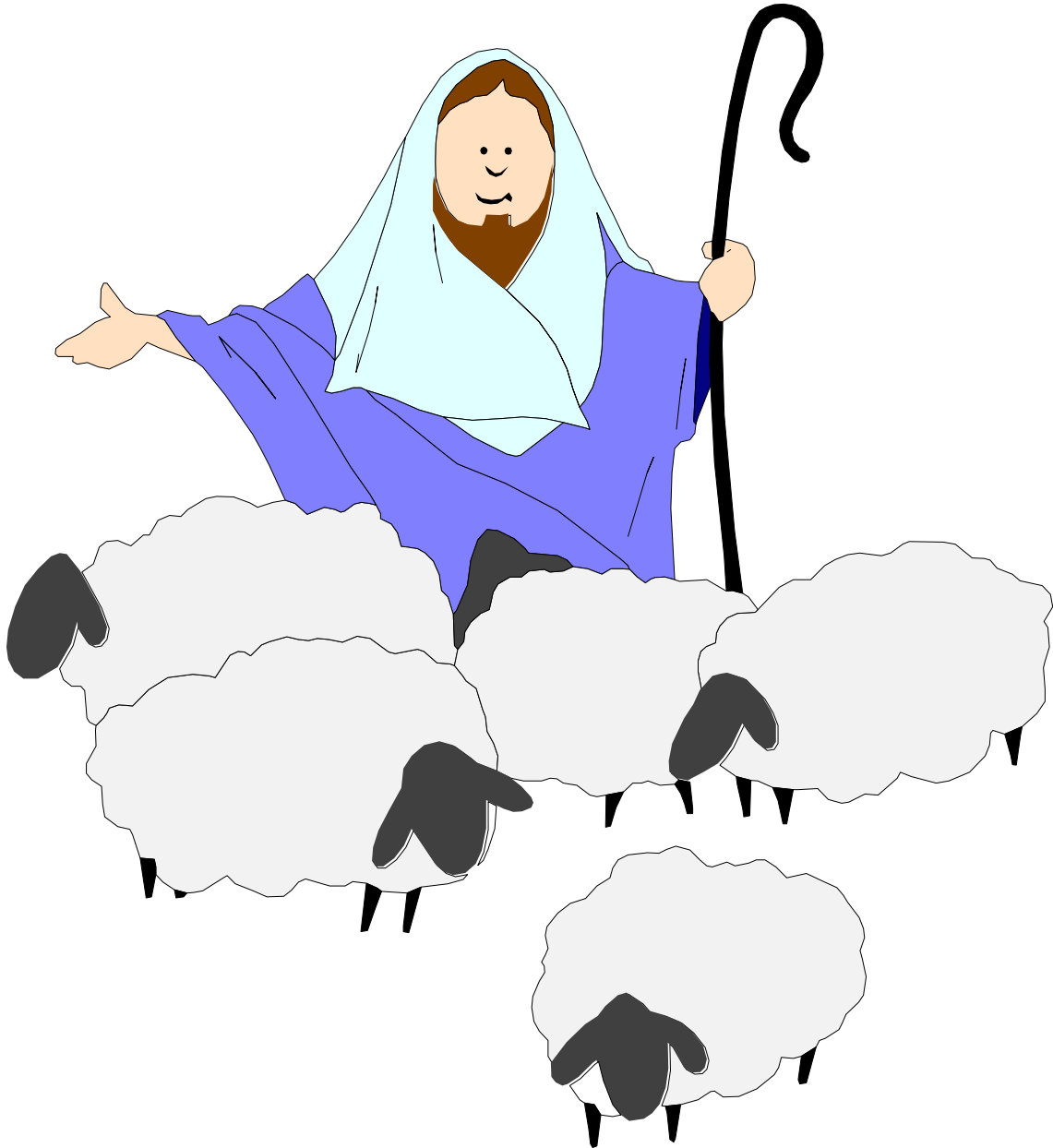


Community Baptist Church



Constitution

Revisions

1.0 Initial adoption	9 th June 1993
2.0 Revised to simplify	10 th June 1999
3.0 Charity Trustee statement added	3 rd July 2004

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Community Baptist Church (Bracknell, Berks.), desiring to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and to promote good order in the church, hereby adapt the following articles to be the Constitution of this Church. This Constitution is a practical guideline for the governing of our church. It is not an addition to or substitute for the Bible, God's Holy Word.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church will be the **Community Baptist Church**.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

Our purpose as a local church is to glorify God by means of

- (a) *evangelism*: bringing people to a saving faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- (b) *edification*, encouraging, strengthening and discipling believers in the Lord Jesus;
- (c) *exultation*: worshipping the one true God as revealed in Scripture.

ARTICLE III - CHURCH COVENANT

Having been saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and having been scripturally baptised, I now enter into covenant with this church, with which I agree in doctrine and purpose. I, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, commit myself to this local body of believers:

... To uphold the Bible as my only infallible rule of faith and practice: strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and spirituality; sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines: and contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of its ministries with my substance, time, talents, and attendance.

... To give Christ pre-eminence in all things: to maintain regular devotions: to train my children according to the Word of God: to seek the salvation of my relatives and acquaintances: to avoid all gossip, backbiting and undue anger: to abstain from all forms of activity which would dishonour the Lord, or cause a fellow believer to stumble or hinder the lost to trust Christ.

... To encourage one another in the blessed hope of the Lord's return; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to encourage Christian sympathy and courtesy; to be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation, and to seek it without delay.

ARTICLE IV – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

A. THE BIBLE

We believe 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 sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

(2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)

B. THE ONE TRUE GOD

We believe there is one God, who exists in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is personal, spirit, eternal, and unchangeable in His holiness, justice and wisdom. He is the almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will for His own glory.

(Mark 12:29; John 4:24; Psalm 135:6; Matthew 28:19; John 5:23)

C. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We believe that the Lord Jesus is both God and Man, that He was virgin born, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death for sinners and was bodily resurrected. He is now ascended into heaven from where He will return to earth to establish His righteous kingdom.

(John 1:1-3,14; Matthew 1:18-23; Hebrews 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:3,6,7,11; Revelation 19:11-20:6)

D. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit has been sent by God to convict sinners; and indwell and baptise all genuine believers at the time of their salvation. His miraculous sign gifts, eg tongues and healing, were temporary and limited to the 1st century apostolic age.

(1 Corinthians 12:13; 13:8; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3,4)

E. MANKIND

We believe in the direct creation of man by God, and that by subsequent disobedience to the revealed will of God sin spread through the whole human race. Thus all men and women are alienated from God, and under His righteous judgment and wrath, without any ability to restore or save themselves. Therefore, every person needs to be forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please Him.

(Genesis 1:26-28; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12; 1:18; 3:19; 4:4; 7:18; Mark 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:1,8,9)

F. SALVATION

We believe salvation is by God's grace alone received as the gift of God through faith in the Lord Jesus and His finished work on the cross; and that man neither merits salvation nor can earn it. No one who is genuinely saved by grace can lose their salvation.

(Ephesians 2:8,9; 4:30; 1 Peter 1:18,19; John 10:28, 29; Titus 3:5-7)

G. THE CHURCH

We believe there is one true Church, which is composed of all true believers of the present age, under its Head, Jesus Christ. All the various members of this one spiritual body should join themselves in membership to a local church for worship, service, teaching, prayer, fellowship, united testimony, observance of the ordinances and world-wide Gospel witness.

(Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:11-16; 5:25-32; 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Acts 2:41-47; Hebrews 10:25). The Church is comprised of saved Jews and Gentiles, and is not identical to "Israel". (Romans 9-11; Ephesians 2:11-22).

POLICY: As a church we believe that we may voluntarily fellowship and cooperate with other churches of like practice and doctrine as long as each local church maintains its own autonomy. We stand apart from the modern ecumenical movement in all its forms, believing that it is not right for us to engage in any joint activities with other churches or Christian organisations, which by their preaching or practices deny essential truths of the Bible.

(2 Corinthians 6:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:5,6,14,15; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; Ephesians 5:8-11)

H. TWO ORDINANCES

We believe there are two Scriptural ordinances, both of which are to be administered by the local church. These two ordinances are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism, by immersion, is symbolic of the believer's identification and union with the buried and risen Christ, and is prerequisite to membership and privileges in the local church. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of Christ's substitutionary death, until He returns. It is to be preceded by solemn self-examination and partaken of by baptised believers only.

(Acts 2:41,42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28) Also see "Policy Statement" on Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I. SATAN

We believe in the existence and personality of Satan, the devil, who is the great adversary of God and His people. He is a deceiver and a liar. His powers are great but limited by the sovereign will of God. Our Lord has defeated him in His death and resurrection, and has assured Satan's final doom. Believers are able to resist him as we submit ourselves to God and put on the whole armour of God.

(1 Timothy 3:7; 1 Peter 5:8; John 8:44; 12:31,32; 16:11; Job 1; Revelation 20:10; Ephesians 6:12-18; James 4:7)

J. FUTURE LIFE

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ will receive His Church up to heaven to be with Him, and that He will return to earth with them to set up His righteous kingdom, prior to the establishment of the eternal state which shall include the new heaven and new earth. We believe in the conscious existence of the dead, the resurrection of the body, the judgment, reward, eternal life and blessedness of believers; and the judgment and eternal condemnation of unbelievers.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:11-20:10; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Corinthians 5:8,10; Philippians 1:21-23; John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 25:46)

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

A. BEING ADDED TO THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. We hold that those who desire to become church members must publicly profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and be baptised by immersion after they have believed. Only those who have committed themselves to church membership should be allowed to regularly serve in the church. Furthermore, each member should be actively engaged in serving the Lord through some church ministry
2. After attending our services for sometime, if an individual desires to join the church they should express their desire to the pastor (or deacons). After hearing their testimony and observing their life for evidence of spiritual life, the pastor or one of the deacons should lead them through a study of the constitution and church membership classes. Once these are successfully completed and full agreement declared, the prospective member will be asked to share their testimony of salvation with the membership. Subsequently, the pastor may put forward the name of the candidate for the members to vote on. If the candidate for membership has not yet been baptised as a believer by immersion, the church should vote to accept them into membership upon their baptism.

B. INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP LIST

1. Members who intentionally absent themselves from the church services for a period of 6 months should be placed on an inactive members list. It is assumed that during this time there will be efforts made by the church members to encourage such persons to live in harmony with the Lord and be reconciled to the congregation.
2. Persons on this list may not hold office, teach, vote, or partake of the Lord's Table.
3. Members who remain on this list for a period of six months will be considered for dismissal from the membership.

C. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Members who are in good standing with the church and request a transfer of membership to a likeminded church will be granted one and voted out of membership.
2. Members will be voted out of membership who are unresponsive to church discipline taken against them (Matthew 18:15-17); or who have joined another church; or who continue on the inactive list for 6 months. Members who have gone home to be with the Lord will also be taken off the membership list.

ARTICLE VI - CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHURCH

We hold to the autonomy of the local church, i.e. that each local church should govern itself under its Head, our Lord Jesus Christ. The final responsibility for deciding church matters rests with the members. This is primarily expressed in the calling of a pastor, annual election of deacons, approving the annual budget, and determining the membership.

B. CHURCH OFFICERS

OFFICE OF PASTOR. The pastor(s) of this church will have a dear testimony of salvation in Christ, be in full agreement with the church's constitution and possess the qualities of a pastor as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9 (c& 1 Timothy 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:17-35). The pastor is to be our shepherd and leader, who guides us into a greater understanding and obedience of the Word of God.

CALLING A PASTOR. When the church is without a pastor, the deacons will seek out, on behalf of the church, the man that God would have pastor the church. After a thorough examination, much prayer, opportunities for the congregation to become well acquainted with the potential pastoral candidate, and the employment arrangements have been agreed by all parties involved, the deacons will put forward one name for the church to vote on. The church call to a pastoral candidate will be to serve as pastor for an undetermined period of time. He will be accepted into church membership upon his acceptance of the call. The pastor may be dismissed at a business meeting by a 75% vote of the total active membership. The vote should be by written ballot. Taking in mind the pastoral service rendered to the church and the reasons for termination, the church can offer terms of dismissal.

OFFICE OF DEACON. The deacons of this church will have a dear testimony of salvation, be in full agreement with this constitution, and possess the qualities of a deacon as given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons are to assist the pastor and congregation in every area of church life where their ministry is needed. Deacons should be elected by the church for a two year term. The number of deacons should be limited by the need for such servants in the church and the qualifications required of them by Scripture. A deacon shall be relieved of his office and duties in cases where it is evident he has defected in morals, doctrine or allegiance to the church. He may be dismissed at a business meeting by a 75% vote of the total active membership.

C. OTHER CHURCH POSITIONS.

TREASURER. It is the function of the treasurer, who will be elected from and by the church members annually, to keep accurate records of all money received, deposited and paid; and to present such reports quarterly to the church. All financial records should be examined annually by persons independent of the treasurer, appointed by the pastor and deacons.

SECRETARY. It is the function of the secretary, who will be elected from and by the church members annually, to take and maintain accurate minutes of all business proceedings of the church; and to maintain a current register of the membership. Such records and register are to be presented to the church at the AGM.

ARTICLE VII - BUSINESS MEETINGS

A. FREQUENCY

Business meetings will be held quarterly. A written agenda should be distributed to members prior to the meeting. Additional business meetings can be called by the pastor, after giving the members at least one week's advance notice. For the transaction of church business, a quorum of at least 50% of the active church membership will be required.

B. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Election of deacons and other church positions, as well as approval of an annual budget, and presentation of reports should be done at the AGM.

C. ELECTIONS

Nominations for deacons, treasurer and secretary should be submitted to the pastor at least two weeks prior to the election (AGM.). He may consult with those nominated and others to see if the nominees are willing to serve and if they are qualified to serve in such positions. The pastor, or those designated by him, shall then prepare an election ballot. Voting for the above church offices may be in person or by a signed written vote delivered by another church member.

ARTICLE VIII - AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

All ministries and organisations of the church (e.g. the Sunday School, Awana Club, prayer meetings, women's meetings, etc.) will come under the general supervision of the pastor and deacons.

ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by a 75% vote of all the active church members, provided that public notice of the proposed amendments shall have been given at least two weeks prior to the business meeting. (Public notice will be considered as part of the regular notices of the church at any church service or regularly scheduled mid-week meeting of the church.) It is acknowledged that additional policies, other than what may be contained in a constitution, will need to be formed and accepted by the church as the need arises.

ARTICLE X - DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of this church none of its assets will be divided among its members or other individuals, but will be designated by church vote to such Christian organisations as are in essential agreement with the statement of faith of our church. It is desired that such an organization will also be of the same evangelistic, church planting spirit as began this church.

MAY OUR LORD BE HONOURED THROUGH US.

Adopted unanimously on 9th June 1993

Policy Statement

BAPTISM & THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe there are two Scriptural ordinances, both of which are to be administered by the local church. These two ordinances are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. See the church's doctrinal statement & constitution's section on members.

A. BAPTISM

1. The symbolism and significance of baptism.
 - a) Baptism is an outward testimony to an inward faith in Christ Acts 8:12,37; 16:30-34; 18:8
 - b) Baptism symbolizes the believer's identification and union with the buried and risen Christ. Romans 6:3~5; Matthew 28:19,20
 - c) Baptism pictures the washing away of sins. Acts 2:38; 22:16
 - d) Baptism is a step of obedience for the believer in Christ. Acts 10:48; Matthew 28:19,20
 - e) Baptism is the initial act by which a believer joins a local church. Acts 2:40,41,(47). This is illustrated by the fact that the Scriptures teach us that as by Spirit baptism believers are placed in the Church, the universal Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12,13), so water baptism places the believer into the local visible church, the local Body of Christ. This was also the understanding and practice of the early church.
2. Baptism will be by immersion.
 - a) The original meaning of the term = "to dip, submerge, immerse, sink"
 - b) Acts 8:38 "they both went down into the water"
 - c) John 3:23 "...because there was much water there."
 - d) Church history notes that for more than 1300 years immersion was the prevailing practice of Christian churches throughout the world.
3. Prior to baptism, the "candidate" will receive instruction on the significance of baptism and Church membership.
4. Children in senior school may be baptised (and join the church), with parental consent, at the discretion of the church. Upon reaching 18 years of age, they may be allowed to vote on church business.

B. THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. As the Lord's Supper (or Communion) is a solemn time of commemoration of our Lord's death for us, it is to be preceded by self-examination as prescribed in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Those who are present, yet not living in obedience to the Lord, should refrain from partaking of the bread and the cup.
2. As a local body of Christ, we practice communion for those who are baptised believers. We would encourage those who are receiving communion to join our membership.

Policy Statement

TEACHING

Believing that teaching the Word of God is both a privilege and a responsibility, the following will be expected from all those who regularly teach in the church, whether in Sunday School, Sunday services, Bible studies, Youth Meetings, etc.:

1. Church membership at Community Baptist Church, and continued agreement with the church's doctrinal statement.
2. Regular attendance at Sunday services.
3. Living a life that reflects Biblical teaching and is a godly example to others.
4. Commitment to proper Bible study and thorough preparation for teaching.
5. In keeping with our understanding of Scripture since this church was formed. those who speak on the subject of eschatology will keep their teaching consistent with the pre-tribulational, pre-millennial interpretation of Scripture.

Policy Statement

MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

The Scriptures teach that God established marriage and the home. God's intention for marriage is stated in Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". By stating that the man and the woman become one unit in marriage, God revealed His intention that this was to be a lifetime relationship.

The passing of years has brought the practice of divorce to end marriages, with various reasons given as justification. When the Lord Jesus was asked about the matter of valid causes for divorce, He answered by referring back to God's original intent in the beginning. He further added, "Wherefore they are no longer two, but one flesh. What God has joined together let no man separate" (Matthew 19:3-6).

The marriage vow is a covenant vow, meaning it remains in force for life (Malachi 2:14). Indeed, the Scriptures declare that death alone releases a person from their wedding bond so that he is free to marry again and not be guilty of adultery before God (Romans 7:2-3).

The marriage relationship is to exemplify that between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:25-33). As this is the case, a Christian can only rightly marry another saved person. Otherwise one is saying by practice that an unsaved person can be one with Christ (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). This is a relationship of unending love which never ceases. Divorce strikes at the very heart of this picture. No wonder then that God declares that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

The Scriptures state that the root cause of divorce is hardness of a person's heart; therefore divorce is a spiritual problem (Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:8). This means church members who become involved in a divorce may be subject to church discipline. The goal of such discipline is reconciliation and restoration.

The case of the prophet Hosea and his unfaithful wife express the view of God with regard to sexual infidelity as grounds for divorce. The Lord told Hosea, "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other Gods..."(3:1). Even such painful circumstances as sexual infidelity on the part of a person's marriage partner gives no ground for divorce.

The exception mentioned in Matthew 5:32; 19:9 refers to something which related to Jewish betrothal customs. The man and woman were considered husband and wife during the period which we now title the engagement period. If one was involved in sexual unfaithfulness to one's betrothal partner prior to the time of the marriage's consummation, then the other person could dissolve the betrothal agreement (Matthew 1:18-19).

The Scriptures state that if a husband and wife separate, whether one or both are saved people, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled (1 Corinthians 7:10-13). The Bible announces that whichever partner marries another commits adultery in so doing as does the individual who marries a divorced person (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). This means that the marriage bond of the original relationship has continued to exist in the sight of God. He warns that those

who disregard the sacredness of marriage will be judged (Hebrews 13:4).

In summary, we believe the Bible, to teach that marriage is a unique lifetime covenant relationship between one man and one woman. Marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the Church. Divorce mars the image by attacking the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. Thus, we do not see that divorce is a God-pleasing action.

Therefore, the following listed items will be the practice of the church regarding marriage, membership, ministry, and discipline:

1. Both persons to be married must give testimony to being born again. They must be an actively fellowshipping member with a New Testament church, one or both of them should be an active member of the Community Baptist Church.
2. The remarriage of divorced people is not sanctioned by Scripture, unless it is the remarriage/reconciliation of a divorced couple. It must be pointed out that if the man and/or woman have married someone else during the time of their separation they cannot remarry again according to Scripture (Deuteronomy 24). A divorced person whose first marriage partner has died can marry again to someone who meets the Biblical criteria for marriage. These exceptions are the only divorced individuals who will be married in this church or by the Pastor.
3. Although believing that divorce and remarriage are not Biblically sanctioned, previously divorced and remarried people can become members of Community Baptist Church. Those persons divorced and remarried while unsaved may become full members upon their salvation and Scriptural baptism. Those people who have become involved in divorce and remarriage while being believers in Christ, giving evidence of genuine salvation, being in agreement with the doctrinal statement, and having confessed to the Lord the wrong of their actions, may also become members of the church. Even though consequences of their actions remain, this sin and its guilt has been forgiven through the atoning blood of Christ Jesus, as all other sins, so that they should be fully and warmly received into the church's fellowship.
4. Church members should never have their marriage terminated in divorce. To have such occur indicates a spiritual problem. Two believers following Biblical precepts should be able to resolve their problems and difficulties to avoid divorce. The two parties will be counselled by the pastor and/or deacons to assist in reconciling the difficulties. If the difficulties eventuate in divorce, either one or both the people will be dropped from the church membership based on who violates Scripture in the matter.
5. Since marriage is a testimony to the relationship of Christ and the Church, the church leaders will not be people who are divorced and/or remarried. The Scriptures disqualify divorced and remarried men from the offices of pastor and deacon (1 Timothy 3:2; 3:12; Titus 1:6). Divorced people in leadership positions would show approval of what the Scriptures condemn.
6. Church members who are divorced/remarried will not be permitted to hold elected church office. Also, they will be excluded from teaching positions.

Policy Statement

MISSIONARY SUPPORT

A. QUALIFICATIONS

The missionary must be:

1. Born again.
2. Called of God to serve.
3. Burdened for a field of service.
4. A member of a scripturally-sound Baptist church.
5. In accord with our beliefs and practices set forth in our statement of faith.
6. Willing to subscribe to our church covenant.
7. Willing to refrain from direct involvement with any group whose doctrinal position and testimony is in opposition to our statement of faith.
8. Primarily engaged in an evangelistic type of ministry for the starting and establishment of New Testament local churches, or a ministry which will assist in the propagation of such (e.g. Bible translation ministry).
9. Approved by a board or agency of like faith which engages in the above ministry and which has a doctrinal position, testimony, and convictions in agreement with those of the Community Baptist Church.

B. ACCEPTANCE PROCEDURE

Upon the satisfactory completion of the above requirements, the deacons will evaluate the situation and make its recommendation to the church for final decision.

C. SUPPORT OF MISSIONS

1. The financial support of our missionary programme will come from the tithes and offerings given to the church.
2. No organisation within the church shall undertake the regular support of any individual or organisation. All regular missionary support shall be a church-wide project.

D. TERMINATION OF SUPPORT:

1. Missionary support may be reviewed for the following reasons:
 - a. When a missionary changes the board under which he/she serves.
 - b. When there are differences between the mission board and the missionary.
 - c. When the missionary has been dropped (or services terminated) by the mission board.
 - d. When the missionary is on extended furlough, leave, etc.

2. Missionary support may be terminated for the following reasons:
 - a. Deviation from the doctrinal position of the Community Baptist Church.
 - b. Conduct out of harmony with the moral standard set forth in the Word of God.
 - c. Failure to function effectively as a missionary.
 - d. Conduct at variance with the missionary policy of the church.
3. Procedure:
 - a. No missionary shall have his support terminated while serving on a foreign field unless he refuses to return home, contrary to the request of his board and/or his church.
 - b. The missionary will be notified the reason(s) for dropping his support by the church.
 - c. The missionary can ask for a hearing with the pastor and deacons if he so desires.
 - d. Upon the majority vote of the congregation the missionary's support will be terminated, effective from the time of the vote.

Including revisions agreed at special business meeting 10th June 1999

Church Policy Statement

Charity Trustees

Community Baptist Church is a charitable organisation under UK law, even though as a church it is exempt from being registered as a charity with the charity commissioners.

In order to fulfill our responsibilities under law as a charitable organisation, Community Baptist Church must ensure that it has charity trustees who are capable and willing to manage the charitable affairs of the church. The charity trustees are responsible under law for controlling the management and administration of the church as a charitable organisation, under the guidance of the church's governing document (the Church Constitution).

Those elected to the offices of deacon within Community Baptist Church are *automatic trustees*, unless they cannot be a trustee because they do not meet the legal requirements for a trustee or are unable for some other reason to serve as a trustee. Automatic trustees can appoint other church members in good standing within the church to act as *ex officio trustees*.

Automatic trustees act as trustees for as long as they hold their elected office.

Ex officio trustees serve for a maximum period of 2 years before requiring reappointment. A person will automatically cease to be a trustee if they are no longer a church member.

There should be a minimum of three trustees. At least two thirds of the trustees must be in agreement in order for the trustees to take any action as charity trustees.

The automatic trustees must ensure that they themselves meet the current legal requirements for a trustee. These trustees are also responsible under law for verifying that anyone else to be appointed as an ex officio trustee meets those legal requirements before appointment. It is an offence for a person to act as a trustee if they do not meet the legal requirements.

Charity legislation means a person cannot be a trustee of Community Baptist Church if they do not meet certain legal requirements. The full legal requirement to which the church is responsible is detailed in the Charities Act 1993 and Trustee Act 2000.

Adopted unanimously on 3rd July 2004