

Churches Together for Chipping Barnet Constitution

Revised at the Annual General Meeting on February 24th 2022

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1. Basis

Churches Together for Chipping Barnet¹ unites in pilgrimage those churches in Chipping Barnet which, acknowledging God's revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and, in obedience to God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit, commit themselves:

- to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body;
- to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world;
- to support joint initiatives of Christian outreach for the benefit of our local community;

to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. Object

The object of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall be the advancement of the Christian religion and other purposes which are charitable according to the Law of England and Wales according to the doctrine and practices of the constituent Churches.

3. Aims

The aims of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall be:

- a) to enable local Christians² as pilgrims together, to explore the Christian faith together, to develop mutual relationships, to find common ground, and to work together to build God's Kingdom;
- b) to enable and encourage local Christians to worship and pray together;
- c) to enable the Member³ Churches to live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take further steps towards fuller unity;
- d) to enable the Member Churches to respond to the needs of society and to witness to the Gospel together;
- e) to enable the Member Churches to reflect together on the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of its mission – each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition;
- f) to be fully and appropriately engaged in the operation of Barnet Churches Action⁴ (BCA) as our primary means of joint compassion ministry.

¹ This is sometimes abbreviated to CTfCB

² Local Christians include (but are not limited to) those who attend our Member Churches

³ The term 'member' has been used in various ways in this document. Member Churches are those who have committed to be part of CTfCB (as described in section 6). Members of Council are those people who sit on the enabling body of CTfCB, which includes two Representatives from each Member Church, as well as a number of co-opted persons (see sections 7 and 10). Some Members of Council will also be Members of Barnet Churches Action (see section 5). In addition, all the churches have regular attendees whom we would regard as their members, though it is also acknowledged that some churches may apply the term more rigorously to those who have made a formal commitment to the Christian faith and/or to that church.

⁴ Barnet Churches Action is a CLG (company limited by guarantee) which was set up by CTfCB in 2014 to enable us to run a community centre in the Underhill area - we needed a different structure to allow us to employ staff, take out a lease, etc. BCA, in running the centre, provides services for a community which includes an area of significant deprivation, and therefore allows us to work together to demonstrate the love of God in very practical ways. While BCA has its own directors, many of our church members volunteer at the centre, and our Member Churches, in allowing their Council Representatives to also be BCA Members, influence the policies of BCA by holding their directors to account.

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4. Reviewing the Basis, Object and Aims

The Office-holders and Council, on the advice of the Clergy/Church leaders, will review the Basis, Object and Aims of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet (at 1, 2 and 3 above) annually to ensure that they reflect the current activities and aspirations of the Group. Any proposed amendments will be put to the AGM as required (see section 15 below).

5. Relationships

- a) In the absence of an ecumenical intermediate body in North London, Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall be in association with Churches Together in Hertfordshire and Churches Together in England;
- b) Members of Council who are Representatives of churches (see 7a and 7b below) shall also – unless their church decides otherwise (see c below) - be company Members of Barnet Churches Action and appoint directors of that company in accordance with its Articles of Association;
- c) If any church decides not to appoint its Council Representatives to also be Members of BCA, it must communicate its decision in writing both to CTfCB Office-holders and to BCA directors. If they wish to appoint alternate BCA Members, they must write to BCA directors and CTfCB Office-holders naming their appointed Member(s) and their addresses. These appointments will remain in force until the church writes (to both BCA and CTfCB) to change them;
- d) Approximately one month before any meeting of BCA Members, the directors will obtain the names and current correspondence addresses of relevant Council representatives from the Office-holders (see 10).

6. Membership

Membership of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet (CTfCB) shall be open to:

- a) Any local church in the area which is affiliated to a church or association of churches which is a full member of Churches Together in England;
- b) Any other local church in the area which affirms the Basis (see 1 above) and commits itself to promote the Aims (see 3 above) of CTfCB;
- c) Any local church which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the Basis, provided that it satisfies 50% in number of those Member Churches which subscribe to the Basis, that it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and it is committed to the Aims and purposes of CTfCB and that it will work in the spirit of the Basis.

New applications for membership under a, b, and c require the nomination of two Member Churches of CTfCB and will not proceed if more than 33% of Member Churches object. Member Churches must be given at least 28 days in which to respond to a nomination.

Member Churches may resign from CTfCB by writing to the Office-holders. Any subscription paid will not be refunded. CTfCB will also inform BCA, all Member Churches and all Members of Council. The action will be recorded at the next Council Meeting.

If a Member Church is thought to be unable/unwilling to support the Basis and Aims of CTfCB or in danger of bringing the group into disrepute, a request in writing to the Office-holders from at least three Member Churches will trigger a review which shall proceed as follows:

- (i) The Ministers' Meeting will be asked to advise on the issues, including matters of doctrine and polity, relevant points of disagreement (including between members of the Ministers' Meeting itself), and the feasibility of reconciliation and continued unity in mission (including

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- any recommended next steps theretoward). This advice shall be provided to the Office-holders within 28 days.
- (ii) Office-holders shall report accordingly to the next available Council meeting, at which (subject to (iii) below) a proposal to implement an appropriate course of reconciliatory action may be tabled and agreed in the normal way.
 - (iii) If however, in the light of (i) and (ii) above, the matter is regarded (whether by Council or by the Ministers' Meeting) as being otherwise irresolvable, then the Office-holders shall write to all Member Churches explaining the issues and asking them each to indicate whether they would agree with removal of the complained-against Church from Membership of CTfCB. Member Churches will have 28 days to reply in writing.
 - (iv) Removal of a Church from Membership of CTfCB will not proceed if more than 33% of Member Churches object in writing within the allotted 28 days.
 - (v) Subject to (iv) above, removal of the complained-against Church from Membership of CTfCB requires the agreement (in writing within the allotted 28 days) of Member Churches from at least three denominations and comprising more than 50% of the Member Churches.
 - (vi) The Office-holders will then write to all Churches to inform them of the result. If the complained-against Church is to be removed, this shall be effective immediately; in such a case all Members of Council and BCA directors will also be informed, and the action will be recorded at the next Council Meeting.
 - (vii) Tasks allocated to "the Office-holders" in the above clauses may be discharged by them either collectively, or by delegation to one or more of their number. However, any Office-holder who belongs to the complained-against Church shall recuse her/himself from involvement in the process set out above.

When a Church ceases to be a member of CTfCB, any of its members who have been appointed/co-opted as Office-holders, as Members of Council, as Members of BCA or to Standing Committee shall be deemed to have resigned.

7. The Council and its Membership

- a) The enabling body of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall be called the 'Council of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet' (hereafter 'the Council') and shall consist of one lay person appointed by each Member Church, and the principal minister or leader of each Member Church. These people are termed the Representatives of the Member Churches.
- b) When the post of principal minister or leader of a Member Church is vacant or in interregnum that church shall be able to appoint an additional person to represent that church.
- c) The Council may co-opt other Members, such co-options (other than Office-holders) not exceeding 25% of the total number of Representatives from the Member Churches.

8. Meetings and Proceedings of the Council

- a) The Council shall meet at least three times a year, of which one meeting shall be the Annual General Meeting.
- b) Other meetings of the Council shall be held as deemed desirable by the Office-holders (see section 10) or at the written request of either two Member Churches or two Representatives from different Member Churches.
- c) At least two weeks' notice in writing of any meeting of the Council shall be given.
- d) Meetings of the Council will be open to all, and non-members may be invited to speak at the discretion of the chair of the meeting, but only the Members of Council present at a meeting shall be entitled to vote.
- e) Decisions shall be reached by consensus where possible, but may be taken by simple majority where necessary.
- f) The attendance by at least one Council Representative of at least half of the Member Churches and at least three denominations shall constitute a quorum.

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- g) Major decisions about policies or priorities must be referred to Member Churches' own decision-making bodies; in such cases each Member Church shall have two months to make its decision and report this to the Secretary who will then advise the Office-holders and Council. When the Office-holders have introduced the policy/priority to Council, they will also have determined whether this is 'major', but where such issues are raised by Council Members without prior discussion by Office-holders, the chair of the meeting shall reserve the right to refer the matter to the Office-holders and/or Member Churches, before any decision is made.
- h) The Council may set up specialised groups which shall be accountable to it and shall report to it when required. These groups could include specialists from outside our churches, as well as church members who are not Council Members.

9. The Annual General Meeting

- a) The Annual General Meeting shall normally be held prior to the period of Lent each year. At least two months' notice of this meeting and one month's notice of the agenda shall be given to the participating Member Churches, although necessary alterations to times or agendas shall be allowable with shorter notification.
- b) The Annual General Meeting shall:
 - receive reports;
 - elect the Office-holders;
 - receive the examined accounts;
 - approve a budget;
 - elect an independent examiner;
 - conduct any other business as may be appropriate.

10. Office-holders

The Office-holders of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall be:

- Chair;
- Vice-Chair;
- Treasurer;
- Secretary;
- Publicity Officer;
- Prayer Secretary;

who do not have to be from among the Representatives of the Member Churches, but who must be members of Member Churches. Such persons will be co-opted to the Council and will be able to vote.

11. Election of Office-holders

- a) The Office-holders will normally be elected at an Annual General Meeting (AGM), and shall normally serve for an initial period of three years. If re-nominated, they may be re-elected to the same post if willing to serve, for no more than one further period not exceeding three years. After six years they cannot be re-elected to the same post until a further year has elapsed.
- b) Nominations for the Office-holders shall be made by two Council Representatives and must carry the consent of the person nominated. The nominations will be communicated to all Members of Council at least 4 days before the meeting.
- c) Members of Council will vote by secret ballot. Where only one candidate has been nominated, members will be asked to indicate whether or not they have confidence in the candidate. Where more than one candidate has been nominated, Council Members will use their vote to name their preferred candidate, but will also be able to declare their confidence in all of the candidates. A candidate will only be declared elected if a majority of members have confidence in them; a simple majority will be sufficient to decide between candidates, and the chair of the meeting shall have a deciding vote if necessary.

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- d) Where an Office-holder position is not filled at an AGM, or becomes vacant during the year, the other Office-holders may find a suitable candidate to fill the position and request agreement from Council Representatives by email. Persons appointed in this manner shall resign at the next AGM, but will be eligible for re-election for an initial three years.
- e) Normally, the principal minister/leader of one of the Member Churches shall be elected to one of the offices of Chair or Vice-Chair, with a lay person serving as the other.
- f) If an Office-holder is thought to be unable/unwilling to discharge their duties or is in danger of bringing the group into disrepute, they may be removed from office after a vote of no-confidence by the Members of Council. Such a vote should be announced in writing at least a month before a Council meeting as an agenda item, and should be conducted by secret ballot.

12. Standing Committee

- a) The Council may appoint a Standing Committee whose functions shall be to enable the Member Churches to make decisions in common and to serve as a reference point for the Council.
- b) The Standing Committee shall comprise the Office-holders of the Council, up to four lay people, and up to four clergy or ministers appointed by the Member Churches with regard to an appropriate representation of the various Christian traditions and denominations in membership.
- c) Attendance by at least half of those eligible to be present shall constitute a quorum.
- d) Where there is no Standing Committee the Officer-holders of the Council shall fulfil this function as the need arises.

13. Ministers' Group

The Office-holders and Council will rely on the clergy for support and guidance.

14. Finance

- a) Each Member Church shall pay such annual sum to Churches Together in Chipping Barnet as shall be agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Council. The annual sum may be related both to the size of the church and to its ability to pay.
- b) The financial year shall be from January to December.
- c) Cheques and other payments from the account shall require the approval of any two of three named Office-holders.
- d) The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the financial affairs of Churches Together for Chipping Barnet; an honorary independent examiner shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

15. Amendment of the Constitution

- a) The constitution and any subsequent amendment to it requires the approval of 67% of the Member Churches, acting either through their Representatives on the Council or through their normal decision-making bodies. Member Churches must be given at least two calendar months' notice in writing of a proposed change
- b) The Council shall have the power to debate the Constitution at the Annual General Meeting, to record the decisions of the Member Churches if any amendments have been proposed, to approve or reject these amendments on the basis of the Member Churches' decisions, and to set up a working group to consider future changes.
- c) Any proposed amendment shall be supported by at least three Council Members and submitted to the Secretary at least two calendar months before the Annual General Meeting - preferably at least two weeks before the Council meeting that precedes the Annual General Meeting, so that it can be discussed and, if the Council thinks it appropriate and the proposers agree, refined by that Council.

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- d) At least two calendar months before the Annual General Meeting, the Secretary shall send details of any such proposals to the Member Churches, as well as to all the Members of the Council, for their consideration.
- e) The Member Churches should respond directly to the Secretary with their decision to either accept or reject the proposal or to abstain, or alternatively to delegate the decision to a named individual or to one or both of their Council Representatives.
- f) If a Member Church fails to respond to the Secretary before the Annual General Meeting or has delegated their decision to people who do not attend the AGM, they will be deemed to have delegated the decision to their Council Representatives (if at least one of them is present at the AGM). If their Council Representatives are not present, the church will be deemed to have accepted the resolution (including any revisions that may be made by Council).
- g) Council, in debating any proposed amendment at the AGM, may discover small errors (eg: typos, grammatical errors or potential ambiguities). Minor revisions to correct these errors may be accepted into the text, provided all the original proposers and Council Members present at the AGM agree that they do not materially alter the proposal.
- h) The (revised) proposal shall then be voted upon by each Member Church:
 - The Secretary shall read out the decisions of those churches who have responded in advance;
 - Delegates who have been identified to the Secretary will be asked for their church's decision;
 - Church Representatives who are present at the meeting, but whose churches have not made a decision or a delegation (or their delegate is not in attendance), will be asked to decide for their church;
 - Any remaining churches will be recorded as accepting the proposal in absentia;
- i) Member Churches who have responded to the Secretary by registering an abstention, will be recorded as such.

The proposal will be accepted if 67% or more of the Member Churches accept it. If 34% or more of the Member Churches reject it, the proposal will be rejected. If neither of these decisions is possible, Council must not accept the proposal, but may set up a working group or take other action to resolve the issue, and may request that a second vote is held at the next Council meeting

16. Dissolution of the Churches Together Group

- a) A motion to dissolve the Churches Together group must be circulated in writing (both electronically and as a hard copy) to Member Churches at least three months before it can be considered by a special meeting of Member Churches when the support of at least 75% of Member Churches is required for the motion to be successful. It will be the responsibility of Council Members to discuss the proposal for dissolution with their nominating bodies.
- b) Any residual funds should be allocated to Christian charitable organisations designated by the Council.

17. Review

In order that Churches Together for Chipping Barnet shall reflect the developing life of the Churches in the town a Review Group shall be appointed by the Council at least every five years to work with the Ecumenical Facilitator of Churches Together in Hertfordshire, reporting on the present life of the organisation and making proposals for desirable changes.

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Schedule

On 24 February 2022, the participating Churches in Churches Together for Chipping Barnet were as follows:

Barnet United Reformed Church, Wood Street, Barnet

Christ Church, St Alban's Road, Barnet

Mary Immaculate & St. Gregory the Great, Union Street, Barnet

St. Andrew's Chesterfield Road United Reformed Church, Barnet

St. John the Baptist Church, Wood Street, Barnet

St. Stephen's Church, Bell's Hill, Barnet

St. Mark's Church (Barnet Vale), Potters Lane, New Barnet

St. Mary the Virgin, Monken Hadley

St. Peter's Church, Arkley

Underhill Baptist Church, Elton Avenue, Barnet

Wesley Hall, Barnet Brookside Methodist Church, Staplyton Road, Barnet