

**Constitution
of
Holywood
Baptist
Church**

The Background

In April 2005 Hollywood Baptist Church merged with Strandtown Baptist Church to form a single church as a result of declining numbers in the Hollywood congregation. This merger took place with a view to re-establishing the church in Hollywood in the near future.

In June 2006 morning services were recommenced in Hollywood, the two congregations still forming part of the combined church meeting on two sites.

On April 5 2009 Hollywood Baptist Church was reconstituted as an independent, self-governing, financially self-supporting congregation.

Our Vision

To see Hollywood Baptist Church re-established as a vibrant and independent worshipping and witnessing community, serving the people of the town.

Our Purpose

By working in partnership in the Gospel to help people of all ages and from all backgrounds become fully devoted followers of Christ by:

- Reaching out with the Good News of Jesus to others
- Building one another up in our faith
- Caring for others both in the church family and the local community

Constitution of Hollywood Baptist Church

1. Introduction

The Church shall be known as Hollywood Baptist Church hereafter referred to as “the church”.

2. What We Believe

As a member church of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland we affirm the following **Doctrinal Statement**.

1. The Scriptures

The verbal inspiration and total inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given by God; their sole-sufficiency and final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

2. God

One God in three persons, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-equal, co-eternal, sovereign and active in creation, providence and redemption.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ

The essential deity and perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and men; His virgin birth, sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross as the only substitute for sinners; His burial, bodily resurrection and ascension to heaven; His high priestly ministry and personal return.

4. The Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the sinner and indwelling, sanctifying and empowering the believer.

5. The Devil

The personality of the devil; his evil activity and final doom.

6. Humanity

The creation of humanity, male and female, in the image of God, equal in value and complementary in role; the creation ordinance of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman; the entrance of sin through Adam's disobedience; the fallen and totally depraved state of all humanity; their subjection to God's wrath and condemnation; their responsibility to repent and believe the Gospel.

7. Justification

The justification of the sinner by God's grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus

Christ alone;
the eternal security of the believer.

8. The Church

The church, the body of Christ, made up of those drawn from every tribe, language, people and nation throughout history who are added to it by the work of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the scriptural expression of the church in the world as the local company of baptised believers gathered under the headship of Christ for worship, fellowship, instruction and evangelism, in separation from all systems of belief that do not adhere to the Scriptures and are unfaithful to the gospel of salvation by grace alone; the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: baptism being the immersion of believers on profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a symbol of their identification with Him in His death, burial and resurrection; the Lord's supper being a remembrance of Christ until He comes and a renewal of commitment to Him; the offices of elder and deacon; the gifts of evangelist and pastor-teacher; the priesthood of all believers and their unity in the Body of Christ; the separation of church and state.

9. The Future State

The unconditional immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the body; the eternal joy in heaven of the believer; the conscious eternal punishment in hell of those who die impenitent.

10. Christian Behaviour

The responsibility of all believers to obey and serve the Lord and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives; the duty of each church to exercise godly discipline in a loving and caring fashion.

This Statement was last updated and approved by the churches in May 2016

3. Membership

3.1. Composition

The membership shall be composed of those who:

- a. profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,
- b. are baptised by immersion upon the profession of their faith,
- c. are seeking to live in harmony with that profession
- d. assent to the Church's Doctrinal Statement as stated in Section 2 above
- e. assent to all other matters contained in the Constitution and agree to be bound by them.

3.2 Responsibilities of Membership

Those admitted to membership shall promise with the help of the Holy Spirit to:

- a. Participate as frequently as possible in Sunday services, the Lord's table, prayer and other meetings and business meetings of the church.
- b. be regular in private Bible reading and prayer
- c. support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving as the Lord prospers them
- d. endeavour to order their family life in accordance with the principles laid down in the Scriptures.
- e. actively seek to cultivate friendship with one another so that they may better be able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require. Members shall seek to develop a spirit of unity in the church and must refrain from speaking ill of one another.
- f. keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the Church.
- g. seek to use every opportunity to bear witness to their faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and testimony and by active involvement in the work of the church as they are able.
- h. grant to one another liberty of conscience in those practices which God has not expressly forbidden in His Word.
- i. recognise and submit to the Scriptural authority deposited in the Office Bearers of the Church.

3.3 Acceptance into Membership

- a. Applicants for membership shall be given a copy of the Church Constitution for consideration and shall be interviewed by two members (of whom at least one shall be an Office Bearer).
- b. If the applicant is, or has been, a member of another church of like faith and order, a letter of enquiry concerning the person's standing will be sent to that church before their name is placed before the Church
- c. Applicants considered satisfactory by the Office Bearers shall be recommended by them for acceptance on the vote of the Church.
- d. If the application is approved by a two thirds majority of those present at the meeting, the person will be received into membership at a public meeting of the Church.

3.4. Termination of Membership

Membership of the church may be terminated as follows:

- a. A member in good standing who wishes to join another Baptist church (or a church of like faith and order) shall, if requested, be given a letter of commendation following the approval of the Church.
- b. A member may resign their membership by letter to the Secretary. This letter should state the reason for the resignation. Such a letter will be read to the Church except where the Eldership considers it judicious not to do so.

- c. Any member who is persistently absent from the services of the Church and who fails to honour the responsibilities of membership shall be interviewed by representatives of the Elders. If a satisfactory reason cannot be given, the facts shall be communicated to the Church with a view to the termination of membership.
- d. Any member who falls into grievous sin and, after appropriate pastoral care declines to repent, shall, on the recommendation of the Office Bearers, be subject to the disciplinary removal of their name from the membership roll by vote of the Church.

4. Business Rules

4.1. Church Officers

4.1.1. Offices.

- a. The Office Bearers of the Church shall normally consist of Elders and Deacons in such numbers as the Church shall from time to time decide. Elders are responsible for the oversight of the affairs of the church. Deacons are to assist the Elders in carrying out of their responsibilities.
- b. The Church recognises the gift of Pastor to prepare God's people for service and that the Church might be built up. The man appointed by the Church as Pastor shall also serve as an Elder.
- c. Elders other than the duly appointed Pastor shall serve a term of five years and then be eligible for re-appointment.
- d. Deacons shall serve a term of two years and then be eligible for re-appointment. Deacons shall not normally serve for more than 2 successive terms.

4.1.2. Appointment of Elders and Deacons.

- a. Elders and Deacons shall be appointed by the Church on the basis of the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The office of Elder is open only to men and that of Deacon to both men and women.
- b. Members who are to be considered for appointment as Elder or Deacon shall have been in membership of the Church for a period of at least two years and be in good standing with the Church.
- c. The appointment of Elders and Deacons shall normally take place at the Annual Meeting of the Church. In exceptional circumstances such election may take place at a Special Meeting called for that purpose.
- d. When required, the Office Bearers of the church shall request nominations for the office of Deacon from the church at least two weeks before the Annual Meeting or Special Meeting at which Office Bearers are to be appointed. Proposals for Deacon can be made by any church member.
- e. Proposals for the office of Elder will be brought to the church by the serving Elders. Any member of the church may bring a name to the Elders for their consideration. This should be done at least 4 weeks before the Annual Meeting or Special Meeting at which Office Bearers are to be appointed, and before the individual is approached. The name of anyone to be proposed for the office of Elder will be brought to the members at least 2 weeks before this meeting.
- f. Proposals for Elder or Deacon must be made, seconded and signed by the nominee in writing.

- g. The appointment of Elders and Deacons shall be by secret ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of the members present.
- h. The Church Meeting will appoint scrutineers who are not nominees

4.1.3. Appointment of Pastor.

- a. A Pastor shall display the gifts required and also the qualifications of Elder set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and affirm the doctrinal statement of the Church.
- b. Persons suitable for nomination to the Church as Pastor shall be considered by a Nomination Committee.
- c. A Pastor shall be appointed on the acceptance of a call issued by a Special Meeting called specifically for that purpose. A call will not be issued by such a meeting unless a seventy five per cent vote of those present is obtained in favour of the person being considered.
- d. The terms of the Pastor's appointment shall be negotiated by the Office-bearers according to guidelines laid down by the Church. The Church shall approve the terms finally negotiated by the Office Bearers.

4.1.4. Secretary and Treasurer

- a. The Office Bearers shall commend two of their number for appointment by the Church as its Secretary and Treasurer.
- b. The Secretary shall be responsible for
 - i. maintaining the Church Roll;
 - ii. recording of Minutes of Church Meetings;
 - iii. all correspondence relating to the Church;
 - iv. relevant contracts of employment
 - v. the administrative procedures relating to the convening of Church Meetings, the election of Office Bearers, the Annual Report, the Church Calendar and the weekly announcements.
- c. The Treasurer shall be responsible for
 - i. the receipt and custody of all monies received by the Church;
 - ii. the preparation of books of account;
 - iii. the payment of all accounts;
 - iv. the operation of the Church bank accounts and cheque books;
 - v. the preparation of financial reports for Office Bearers meetings;
 - vi. the preparation and presentation of the Annual accounts; and
 - vii. the PAYE records relating to any person employed by the Church.
- d. Election shall normally take place at the Annual Meeting of the Church. In exceptional circumstances a Special Meeting may be called for the purpose.
- e. Election shall be by secret ballot vote. The election of Secretary and Treasurer shall not normally take place in the same year.
- f. Appointment will require a two thirds majority of the members present.
- g. In the event of no duly elected Office Bearers being able to accept either of these responsibilities, the Office Bearers shall nominate a person or persons from the membership for such appointment. In these circumstances election to such a post shall also confer the office of Deacon.

4.2 Church Meetings

- a. The church shall meet at least once a year to receive reports and to transact any business other than that requiring a "Special Business Meeting".
- b. Notice convening Business Meetings shall be given at the services on the two preceding Sundays. In the case of special meetings the precise business must be included in the notice and only that business may be discussed.
- c. Business shall be conducted according to the accepted rules of debate and under the control of a chairman who will normally be the Pastor.
- d. The secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings and the first business at each ordinary meeting shall be the receiving and confirming of the minutes of the previous ordinary meeting, and of any special meeting held in the interim period.
- e. The Office Bearers shall be responsible for the presentation of an Annual Statement of Accounts duly certified by Auditors appointed by the church and distributed to the members at least one week prior to the annual business meeting.
- f. When a matter relating to a member arises for discussion the person concerned, together with those closely related to him, shall be required to leave the meeting while the church discusses the matter.
- g. Special business meetings shall be required for
 - (i) the issue of a call to the Pastorate,
 - (ii) amendments to the Constitution and matters of extraordinary importance;
 - (iii) the transaction of urgent business between regular business meetings.

Decisions taken in special meetings shall require a two-thirds majority of those present, except in the case of meetings in category (iii) when a simple majority shall suffice.

5. Amendment of the Constitution

Amendments to the Constitution shall require notice of motion at a Special Business Meeting of the Church at least eight weeks before the Special Meeting at which the proposed amendment will be discussed. The full text of the proposed change shall be circulated in writing to all Church members at least four weeks before the proposed Special Meeting.