

# CONSTITUTION

## The Church in Binley Woods

Approved at the Church Members' Meeting 8th October 1997

### Anglican - Baptist Local Ecumenical Partnership

*This constitution has been formulated with particular reference to the 1993 Guidelines for Constitutions for Local Ecumenical Projects (Interim Document) in anticipation of the final version planned for 1995.*

#### Name

The Local Ecumenical Partnership is known as The Church in Binley Woods. It is a partnership between the Church of England and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

#### Area

The Ecumenical Partnership primarily serves the community/neighbourhood of Binley Woods and those who associate with it and benefit from its ministry. For the parish church of St Bartholomew, Binley, the area of ministry shall be the civil parish of Binley Woods within the ecclesiastical parish boundary.

#### Sponsoring Body

The Partnership looks to the Coventry and Warwickshire Ecumenical Council for support and oversight.

The Sponsoring Body shall in conjunction with the participating denominations and the Partnership indicate the membership and terms of reference of a Local Advisory Group liaising between the Local Ecumenical Partnership and the Sponsoring Body.

#### Baptism and Membership

Baptism shall be administered according to the rite and/or practice of one of the constituent denominations, or according to an ecumenical rite approved by the Sponsoring Body, and shall be set, in normal circumstances, within an act of congregational worship.

A service of Commitment/Confirmation shall normally be administered at a joint act of worship according to an ecumenical rite adopted by the Sponsoring Body.

Preparation shall be undertaken jointly and shall include specific denominational teaching and instruction.

The ecumenical rite in use in the Church in Binley Woods includes orders for Baptism, Renewal of Baptismal Vows, Anglican Confirmation, and a Public Declaration of Faith, within the one order of service, to be used as each occasion requires. Those undertaking both Believers' Baptism and Anglican Confirmation at such a joint service are thereby communicant members of all participating denominations.

Membership of the Church in Binley Woods Members' Meeting is on the basis of Christian Baptism and a personal and public declaration of faith, regardless of denomination. It is the practice in the Church in Binley Woods for formal reception into membership of the Local Church (that is, the Ecumenical Partnership) to take place within the context of the main Sunday service. Such a reception into membership is available to those who are already baptised and who have already declared their faith (such as at Confirmation or Believers' Baptism). This act will not affect their denominational membership.

Membership implies certain responsibilities and duties: regular attendance at worship including eucharistic worship; active sharing in the life of the church, including attendance at meetings of the church and congregation; regular sacrificial giving; witness to God's love in the world by word and deed.

The Meeting of Church Members may define categories of membership with reduced responsibilities in the local church, which do not carry the qualification to vote at the Members' Meeting. Such categories of membership will include a definition of the circumstances under which each would apply. Members whose circumstances cause a change in their membership category will be registered in their new


category at the first Church Meeting subsequent to their change in circumstances, and notified by the secretary as soon as possible afterwards.

There shall be a Common Roll, including joint members. Note shall be included of denominational membership and of the membership category in the Church in Binley Woods.

Members shall not cease to be subject to the membership discipline of the denomination to which each belongs, following its own procedures.

## **Minister**

The Minister of the Church in Binley Woods shall be appointed by the participating denominations after reference to the Sponsoring Body.

Denominational procedures shall be followed in the employment of the minister. Recognising, however, the importance of continuity, the Partnership expects that those responsible for the appointment of the Minister will select a person who will continue the Partnership ecumenically. To this end, the Meeting of Church Members shall appoint members to a Staffing Consultative Group, and all bodies involved will follow the **appended procedure** in each and every case. 

The Minister shall not cease to be subject to the normal discipline of the denomination to which he belongs.

## **Worship and the Eucharist**

The Partnership shall respect the faith and practice of its member denominations.

Worship shall safeguard and present the doctrines, practices, traditions and developing traditions of each participating denomination as relevant to the context of the Partnership, and be conducted in accordance with denominational practices and/or using ecumenical rites adopted by the Sponsoring Body.

Ordained priests, ministers or other duly authorised persons shall preside at the Eucharist as permitted by denominational legislation.

Admission to Communion is open to all members, and to all communicant members in good standing with churches in membership with Churches Together in England.

In arranging services due consideration shall be given to the participation of lay/local preachers and readers.

## **Decision Making**

Decision making for the Partnership shall be by means of the Meeting of all church members.

There shall be a leadership team working with the Minister and under his authority, consisting of members elected by, and from, those on the Common Roll. The number of members, their terms of office, and the procedure to be followed at elections are laid down in Orders documented separately.

The leadership team's chairperson shall be the Minister.

The leadership team may establish such committees as are necessary for the life of the Partnership.

Denominational/Church Councils or other committees shall be constituted as required for certain purposes.

The Parish Church shall limit its independent decision-making with respect to the area of the Partnership to matters related to its legal obligations, noting that the PCC and/or incumbent are by law the final authority in certain matters.

The Meeting of church members, which shall consist of all on the Common Roll, shall meet at least three times a year.

The role of the Meeting of Church Members, acting within this constitution, is to elect the leadership team and to elect to other positions of responsibility within the church as determined by the Meeting, and to establish matters of Church policy. Details concerning the calling and conduct of meetings are laid down in Orders documented separately.

The Partnership shall maintain a proper relationship to the appropriate local and regional bodies, fulfilling necessary constitutional requirements. These bodies are: the Church of England Deanery and Diocese, and the Baptist District, Association and Union.

### **Premises**

The premises comprise the Manse only. It is subject to an Equity Sharing Loan from the Church Commissioners of the Church of England. Details of the agreement are available.

### **Finance**

Out of the income there shall be discharged:

- (1) The expenses of ministry and of the administrative costs of the Partnership.
- (2) Financial obligations to the central and other funds of the participating Churches/denominations, as agreed with the respective Church/denominational authorities.
- (3) Gifts to other societies and charities as determined by the Church Members' Meeting.

If the Ecumenical Partnership is discontinued for any reason, then decisions on the disposal of the Partnership's assets shall be made jointly by the Baptist Area Superintendent and the Bishop of Coventry.

### **Wider Participation**

Other churches in or near the neighbourhood of the Partnership may negotiate for participation in the Partnership at any time, subject to the agreement of the Sponsoring Body and of the appropriate denominational authorities.

### **Review**

The Sponsoring Body shall ensure that every seven years, or sooner, the Partnership shall be evaluated with reference to its objectives.

### **Continuity**

The Partnership may be terminated only with the approval of the Sponsoring Body and the appropriate denominational authorities.

### **Amendments**

The Constitution of the Partnership may be amended only by the assenting vote of at least two-thirds of all church members qualified to vote, at any Meeting of church members notified of that purpose, followed by the approval of the appropriate denominational authorities and of the Sponsoring Body. The Orders setting out current practice within the church may be amended only by the assenting vote of at least two-thirds of all church members qualified to vote, at any Meeting of church members notified of that purpose.

*(Signed and dated by the regional Church representatives and leaders: Bishop, and Superintendent.)*