

Magdalen Road Evangelical Free Church, Oxford

The Church Rules

1. The Church

The church shall be known as "Magdalen Road Evangelical Free Church, Oxford". It shall be affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, and shall consist of those individuals who have become Members in the manner shown below. The Church Constitution is contained in a document approved by the church on 9th February 2010 as amended by the church meeting on 1st October 2013.

2. Membership

Membership shall be open to all who profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession.

3. Enrolment of Members

a) Those wishing to join the church shall apply to the Elders, upon whose recommendation they shall be received into Membership at a Sunday Service.

b) Young people may apply for Junior Membership, normally on or after their 15th birthday, and may apply for transfer to full voting Membership on their 18th birthday, subject to qualification in clauses 2 and 3a above.

c) Members of the church who are commissioned by the church to serve Christ in other locations, but who remain the pastoral responsibility of the church, and in accordance with the church's mission policy maintain fellowship with the church, shall be designated Missionary Members; such members to be able to vote when present at a church meeting, but to be discounted from the calculation for a quorate meeting as detailed in 18(b), and excused such duties as their distance from the church shall make impractical.

4. Transferred Membership

Members may be received from other Christian churches by letter of transfer, subject to qualification as in 2 above. If no letter of transfer is received, the procedure shall be the same as in the case of a new Member.

5. Duties of Members

Members are expected loyally to attend church services, to contribute regularly towards its support, whether present or not, and to take part in church activities, and with God's help to live lives regulated by the teaching of and inspired by the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

6. Associate Members

Members who are considered by the Eldership only to have attended intermittently over a three month period, or longer, will be transferred to a non-voting register and be classed as Associate Members (see clause 18c).

7. Withdrawal of Membership

At the discretion of the Eldership, Membership may be withdrawn where conduct is incompatible with Church Membership.

8. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once a month, and on such other occasions as the church desires, and all who love and follow the Lord are invited to participate. Members are expected to do their utmost to be present.

9. Believers' Baptism

Upon request, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of conversion, are admitted to Believers' Baptism upon the recommendation of the Eldership.

10. Appointment of Pastoral Office Holders

a) Pastoral office holders shall be elected at a church meeting, on a vote taken by ballot, and shall retain office at the discretion of the church. The vote of at least 75% of the Members present shall be required for Pastoral office holders to be elected.

b) The duties of pastoral office holders shall be to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer, and with the Elders to provide spiritual and pastoral oversight within the church.

11. The Eldership

a) There shall be an Eldership comprising the Pastor and at least three other male Members of the church. The Elders will be ultimately responsible for the life of the church, particularly its spiritual and pastoral oversight and its teaching ministry, in liaison as necessary with the Diaconate.

b) Nominations for Elders shall come from the existing Eldership (unless a constitutional Eldership does not exist, in which case the Elders and Deacons shall jointly nominate). The church shall be notified of nominations not less than fourteen days before the date of the relevant church meeting

c) Elders shall be elected by ballot at a properly constituted church meeting. A vote of at least 75% of the members present shall be required for an Elder to be elected.

d) No Elder (with the exception of pastoral office holders, in which case clause 10 applies) shall continue in office for more than three years without a renewed mandate from the church (see clause 12c).

- e) An Elder's appointment can be terminated, during the period of office, only by a vote of at least 75% of Members present at a Church Meeting.
- f) Elders will be required to seek re-election annually after their 70th birthday.

12. Office holder status

a) The relationship between the Church and the Elders, including any Pastoral office holders, is not an employment relationship. An employment relationship is a master-servant relationship – the employer being the master and the employee being the servant. We believe that such a relationship is incompatible with the role of Elders within the Church. The Elders are appointed by the Church to provide direction, leadership, teaching and pastoral oversight. The Church may remove the Elders in accordance with the provisions set out in these Rules and the Constitution but, during the time that the Elders hold office within the Church, their master is not the Church nor any representative of the Church, but the Lord Jesus Christ. The Elders are not controlled by the Church, as we believe that this would be incompatible with them being ultimately answerable to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Elders hold office within the Church but there is no intention for the Church to enter into any contract

with the Elders and they are not intended to become employees of the Church.

b) All Elders are "full-time" in the same way that all parents are parents all of the time regardless of what they are doing. Some parents may have full-time paid jobs outside the home and serve their family outside normal working hours, others may have part-time jobs outside the home and are able to serve their family during working hours on some days as well as outside working hours on other days, others are able to devote their whole time and attention to serving the family. In the same way, within our Church family, some Elders will be able to devote their whole time and attention to fulfilling the responsibilities of their office, some Elders will have part-time jobs outside the Church and others will have full-time jobs outside the Church.

c) To reduce the need for Elders to have to take up paid employment to support themselves and their families, the Church may compensate Elders for carrying out the responsibilities of their office. Such compensation must be in accordance with the procedures for payment set out in the Constitution.

d) In order to clarify how much time an Elder is able to devote to fulfilling the responsibilities of his office, the Elder and the Church may draw up a memorandum recording the understanding between the Elder and the Church outlining the normal hours that the Elder expects to be able devote to the office, the level of stipend, rest and holidays or any other similar matter.

13. The Managing Trustees

Managing Trustees have responsibilities set out in the Church Constitution. Managing Trustees shall mean Elders and those other people appointed to be Managing Trustees (additional Managing Trustees) as follows:

- a) Nominations for additional Managing Trustees ('AMTs') shall come from the existing Eldership (unless a constitutional Eldership does not exist, in which case the Elders and Deacons shall jointly nominate) subject to the conditions of clause 6(1) in the Church Constitution. The church shall be notified of nominations not less than fourteen days before the date of the relevant church meeting.
- b) AMTs shall be elected by ballot at a properly constituted church meeting. A vote of at least 75% of the members present shall be required for an AMT to be elected.
- c) No AMT shall continue in office for more than three years without a renewed mandate from the church (see clause 13b).
- d) For the purposes of Clause 16(6) of the Constitution, an AMT's appointment can be terminated, during the period of office by a vote of at least 75% of Members present at a Church Meeting.
- e) Managing Trustees will be required to seek re-election annually after their 70th birthday.

14. The Diaconate

- a) There shall be a Diaconate open to all Church Members. The number required shall be agreed between the Eldership and the current Diaconate, who will announce the number of vacancies at least six weeks before the relevant church meeting. The Diaconate will have the role of managing the financial and practical matters within the church, in liaison as necessary with the Eldership. An Elder shall attend full Deacons' Meetings (with no voting rights).
- b) Deacons shall be elected from among Members of the church of not less than six months standing and not less than twenty-one years of age.
- c) Any Church Member may nominate a candidate to the Diaconate, previous consent having been received in writing from the nominee, and with the support of a seconder. Nominations, in writing, must be given to the Church

Administrator not less than fourteen days before the date of the relevant church meeting (see clauses 16 and 18).

d) All nominations will be considered by the Eldership and the Diaconate. A candidate will only be recommended to the Church if a majority of the Eldership and the Diaconate (excluding those Deacons standing for re-election) support the nomination.

e) Deacons shall be elected by ballot at a properly constituted Church Meeting. Candidates who obtain the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected, provided they also personally obtain the approval of 75% of the Church Members present.

f) No Deacon shall continue in office for more than three years without a renewed mandate from the church (see clause 14e).

g) A Deacon's appointment can be terminated, during the period of office, only by a vote of at least 75% of Members present at a Church Meeting

h) Deacons will be required to seek re-election annually after their 70th birthday.

15. Other Church Appointments

Other appointments may be made by the Eldership in liaison with the Diaconate. The Eldership will make an annual assessment. Both the Eldership and The Diaconate may co-opt Church Members with special skills and experience, either for a set period or for occasional attendance at meetings. Co-opted members will not have voting rights.

16. Annual Church Meetings

Clause 17 of the Constitution provides that an Annual Church Meeting shall be held each May at which a full statement of accounts shall be presented for the previous church financial year.

17. Other Church Business Meetings

At other times throughout the year the church may meet for Christian fellowship and the transaction of church business as may be considered necessary. A special meeting shall be called at the discretion of the Eldership, or a majority of the Diaconate, or at the written request of 25% of the Membership.

18. Notice and Conduct of Church Meetings

a) Within the fourteen day notice period required by Clause 17(5) of the Constitution, notice of all Church Meetings shall be given at all Sunday services

b) No business may be transacted at a meeting unless there are at least 50% of members present.

c) Associate and Junior Members (see clauses 3 and 6) not being Members as defined in clauses 2, 3 and 4, may attend but shall not be entitled to vote.

d) All Church Meetings shall be chaired by the Pastor or a designated officer.

e) Any Member wishing to bring forward any business may do so on giving notice, in writing, to the Church Administrator not less than seven days before the date of the relevant church meeting.

f) Decisions (except as provided for in clauses 10, 11, 13, 14 and 20) shall be reached by a majority vote of those present, the Chairman may cast a second or casting vote only if there is a tied vote.

19. Church Activities

Activities and Meetings shall only be held on church premises with the permission of the Elected Officers and upon such conditions as they may decide.

20. Amendment of the Church Rules

The Members shall have full powers to add to, revise and amend these Church Rules from time to time, as may be necessary or expedient, at a properly constituted Church Meeting or a meeting expressly called for this purpose. Any change shall require approval by 75% of the Members present and must be consistent with the Constitution.

October 2013