

# Caversham Park URC

We meet at Caversham Park Primary School  
Queensway, Caversham Park, Reading, RG4 6RP  
(Every Sunday)



## Constitution

This constitution was adopted on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2022 to replace the previous Constitution of Caversham Park Church (Local Ecumenical Partnership) and came into effect on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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## 1.0 THE LOCAL AND THE WIDER CHURCH

Caversham Park United Reformed Church ('the Church') is a local association for the public worship of God, Christian witness and service in accordance with the principles and usages of the United Reformed Church ('the URC'). Admission to the full responsibilities and privileges of membership confers membership simultaneously in the Church and in the URC. The Church supports the wider councils of the URC through giving and participation, and may share in activity with other faith communities on an ecumenical basis.

## 2.0 BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

### 2.1 As a local church of the URC

The Church is governed by the Scheme of Union of the URC ('the Scheme of Union') and those constitutional decisions of General Assembly binding on Local Churches. This constitution supplements the provisions of these as they affect the Church. In the event of any conflict between those provisions and this constitution, those provisions prevail.

### 2.2 The Scheme of Union:

Ref source: <a href="https://urc.org.uk">https://urc.org.uk</a>	Principal provisions of the Basis of Union (B) or Structure (S)	Related clauses of this constitution
assigns the immediate oversight of the Church to the Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting	S1(3), 2(1), 2(2)	6
provides for the membership and functions of the Church Meeting (in particular, in the Call of a Minister) and for non-voting attendance	S2(1)	5
provides for the membership and functions of the Elders' Meeting	S2(1)(viii), 2(2)	5 and 6
provides for councils of the wider church, for the Church's direct or indirect representation upon them and for appeals from more local councils to a council having wider responsibility	S1(2)(a), 1(3), 2(1)(vi), 2(3), 2(4), 2(6) and 5	
provides for consultation in decision-making	S4	--
contains (in the Basis of Union) a statement concerning the Faith of the United Reformed Church	B10, 12-18	--
provides for the celebration of the Gospel sacraments	B14, 15; S2(2)(ii), 2(4)(A)(xx)	--
provides for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, for the ministry of other Elders, and for Ministers' and Elders' ordination and induction	B19, 20, 21, 23, 25; S2(1)(vii), 2(2), 2(4)(A)(vii)	5
provides for the ministry of Church-related Community Workers and for their commissioning and induction	B19, 22; S2(1)(vii), 2(2), 2(4)(A)(vii)	--
provides for the admission of baptised persons to the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership	B14; S2(1)(ix), 2(2)(vi)	4

This constitution makes further provision for these matters in the clauses indicated.

### 3.0 PROPERTY TRUSTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Property is held upon trust for purposes which include the charitable purposes of the Church. This includes:

- a) land and buildings governed by trusts set out in Schedule 2 to the United Reformed Church Acts 1972 and 1981 ('the URC Acts'), which provide that the statutory power of appointing new trustees and certain powers of direction are vested in the Church Meeting.
- b) The general funds of the Church, comprising all assets and funds held by and on behalf of the Church (other than land and buildings held under the trusts declared in Schedule 2 of the URC Acts and those held on other specifically declared trusts), which are held upon trust for the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the public in accordance with the Scheme of Union and whose charity trustees are the members of the Elders' Meeting qualified to serve as such, acting in accordance with procedures laid down by the Church Meeting.

The Church Meeting, after considering the recommendations of the Elders' Meeting and any guidance issued under the authority of councils of the wider URC, will review

- a) the uses to be made of the property in 3.1.a, and
- b) procedures for proper administration of the general funds of the Church

The charity trustees of the general funds of the Church are responsible for presentation of an annual set of accounts to the Church Meeting and, where Charity registration has been completed, for preparation and submission of the annual Trustees report.

### 4.0 MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Admission to membership of the Church on profession of faith takes place when a person

- a) is considered by the Elders' Meeting able to make a meaningful profession of faith.
- b) has received preparation that the Elders' Meeting considers adequate.
- c) is accepted by the Church Meeting on the advice of the Elders' Meeting.
- d) makes during public worship the profession of faith prescribed in the Basis of Union; and
- e) if not previously baptised, is baptised.
- f) is not eligible for admission by transfer.

4.2 Admission to membership of the Church by transfer takes place when a person

- a) is a member of another local church of the URC, or of a Church with which the URC General Assembly has declared pulpit and table fellowship and....
- b) is accepted by the Church Meeting or (by delegation) by the Elders' Meeting.

4.3 There shall be a Roll of Members on which persons admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership in the Church, whether on profession of faith or by transfer, are to be entered. Names are to be removed from this roll

- a) on transfer to another church of the URC
- b) at the written request of a member wishing to relinquish membership
- c) by resolution of the Church Meeting on advice from the Elders' Meeting
- d) on death.

A member by transfer shall be welcomed in public worship at an early opportunity but enjoys the full privileges and responsibilities of membership from the passing of the accepting resolution.

#### 4.4 Church Meeting

- a) The functions of the Church Meeting are set out in the URC Manual (Section B 2(1)).
- b) A Church Meeting is required at least every quarter. The Church Meeting normally meets bi-monthly except during August and December.
- c) The Minister chairs this meeting but in his/her absence the Secretary or a nominated Elder shall take the chair with the permission of the Minister.
- d) All Church Meetings are open meetings but only Church Members may vote. Voting is by show of hands except when Elders are elected, or a Minister is called when voting shall be by secret ballot.
- e) A secret ballot may be held at other times at the request of a member, and with the agreement of the Church Meeting by simple majority.
- f) A 'Quorum' at any meeting shall be 25% of the registered Membership or 8 whichever is the higher. If membership falls below 8 members, then the quorum of the church meeting shall be 50% of the members and consideration of closure shall be brought to the next scheduled meeting.
- g) Should there be an equality of votes the 'Chairperson' will have a second or casting vote.
- h) The Elders meeting shall propose, and the Church Meeting shall appoint such committees, temporary or permanent, as is deemed necessary by the Church Meeting for the proper running of the Church's affairs. Such committees shall be chaired by the Minister, the Church Secretary or a nominated Elder. These committee meetings should prepare minutes and report back to the Secretary, Elders' Meeting and Church Meeting.

#### 4.5 Elders' Meeting

The functions of the Elders' Meeting are set out in the URC Manual (Section B 2(2)). The Elders' Meeting normally meets bi-monthly except during August (Refer to clauses in 5.3, b).

#### 4.6 Church and Elders Meetings – Special Circumstances

- (a) Where the Elders meeting consider that special circumstances make it impossible or inadvisable for a Church or Elders meeting to be held in person or make it impossible or inadvisable for some members to be present in person at a Church Meeting, they may convene the meeting as a virtual or hybrid meeting. A virtual meeting is one in which members participate online or by telephone; a hybrid meeting is one in which members may be present in person or may participate online or by telephone.
- (b) If the Elders meeting determine that a Church or Elders meeting shall be held as a hybrid meeting or a virtual meeting, the notice of the meeting shall:
  - (i) include a statement to that effect.
  - (ii) specify the means of attendance and participation at the meeting (Including voting) and any access, identification and security arrangements; and
  - (iii) state how it is proposed that persons attending or participating in the meeting should communicate with other attendees during the meeting.
- (c) A member shall be considered to be present at a remote or hybrid meeting if he or she can hear the proceedings, speak and be heard at the meeting. A member so present shall be counted as part of the quorum.
- (d) If the meeting is held as a hybrid or virtual meeting and the electronic means being used to host the meeting experiences technical issues, the chair may decide to adjourn the meeting.

(e) If the meeting is held as a hybrid or virtual meeting, any inability of a person to attend or participate in the meeting by electronic means shall not invalidate the proceedings of that meeting.

## 5. LEADERSHIP

The exercise of the total caring oversight by which Christ's people grow in faith and love is the special concern of elders and ministers, which may be complemented by the work of a Church Related Community Worker ['CRCW']. Before a call can be issued by a Church Meeting to a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a CRCW the procedures to be followed shall have been agreed by the Church Meeting after considering the recommendations of the Elders' Meeting and any guidance issued under the authority of councils of the wider United Reformed Church.

### 5.1 MINISTERS

A Local Church may, at any one time, have one or more ministers in pastoral charge; these are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

### 5.2 CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

A Local Church may at any one time have one or more Church Related Community Workers. They are called to a ministry of caring, challenging and praying for the community.

### 5.3 ELDERS

#### a) Election of Elders

- i) Elders are ordained for life and shall be trustees of the church. Elders are inducted for a term of service which is 3 years. After 2 consecutive terms of service, Elders shall stand down for one year or be co-opted if no other Elder comes forward.
- ii) The church Secretary is an ordained Elder, whose term of service is 5 years, the church Secretary is chosen from within the serving Elders, nominated by the Elders meeting and approved by the church meeting. After 2 consecutive terms of service church Secretary shall stand down for one year or be co-opted if no other Elder comes forward. If the church meeting does not accept such nomination, Elders need to seek an alternative selection.
- iii) The church Treasurer is an ordained Elder, whose term of service is 3 years, the Treasurer is chosen from within the serving Elders, nominated by the Elders meeting and approved by the church meeting. After 2 consecutive terms of service church Treasurer shall stand down for one year or be co-opted if no other Elder comes forward. The church Treasurer may, with the authorisation of the Elders meeting appoint another member, external person or organisation to assist with their duties, for which they themselves remain responsible.
- iv) The church Secretary and the Treasurer should not normally be the same person.
- v) Elders are elected at the Annual General Meeting which shall be held within 4 months of the end of the financial year. All members of the local church who are over 18 years of age and have been in Membership of the United Reformed Church for at least 12 months are eligible to serve as Elders. At the Church Meeting prior to the Annual General Meeting Members will be informed of Elders who are standing down and those who do not wish to seek re-election. Members will be invited to nominate new Elders subject to their willingness to stand for

election. All nominations must have a proposer and seconder and be submitted to the Church Secretary two Sundays in advance of the Annual General Meeting. Voting shall be by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. A two thirds majority of members present, and voting is required to be elected. For the avoidance of doubt, any member abstaining (or absent) will not be included in this calculation. Two scrutinisers shall be appointed by the Church Secretary to count the voting slips. The results will be handed to the Minister or the nominated chairperson if no Minister is available for whatever reason to declare the results.

- vi) An Elder shall be a Member of the Church and shall not be under any legal disqualification from being a Trustee of a charity, and shall cease to be an Elder if he or she leaves the Church or becomes disqualified.
- vii) Exception to iv) above. If the number of Elders falls below that required, or the Elders' Meeting considers that additional Elders should be elected, it shall arrange for an election of Elders to take place at the next Church Meeting.

#### b) Meetings of the Elders

The Elders may regulate their proceedings as they think fit, subject to the provisions of this constitution. In particular they may meet by video conference or partly in person and partly by video conference, provided that all those participating can see and hear each other (Refer to clause 4.5 and 4.6).

- I) The Elders shall meet regularly at least six times per year.
- II) Any Elder may request an additional meeting of the Elders should an urgent reason arise and the secretary must convene a meeting of the Elders if requested, or explain that non-urgent items can wait till the next scheduled meeting.
- III) Questions arising at a meeting must be decided by a majority of votes.
- IV) In the case of an equality of votes, the person who chairs the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.
- V) No decision may be made by a meeting of the Elders unless a quorum is present at the time the decision is purported to be made.
- VI) The quorum shall be either: two or the number nearest to one third of the total number of Elders, whichever is the greater; or such larger number as may be decided from time to time by the Elders
- VII) An Elder shall not be counted in the quorum present when any decision is made about a matter upon which they are not entitled to vote.
- VIII) If the number of Elders is fewer than the number fixed as the quorum, the continuing Elders or Elder may act for the purpose of calling a Church Meeting but for no other purpose.
- IX) If the chair is unable or unwilling to preside or is not present within ten minutes after the time appointed for the meeting, the Elders present may temporarily appoint one of their number to chair that meeting.

### c) Trustee Benefits

- 1) No Trustee (Elder) or any person connected with a Trustee (Elder) may receive from the Charity any payment of money or other material benefit (whether direct or indirect) except by way of:
  - i) reasonable remuneration or stipend paid to any Trustee (Elder) who is a minister of the church.
  - ii) reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses (including hotel and travel costs) actually incurred in the administration of the Charity.
  - iii) interest at a reasonable rate on money lent to the Charity.
  - iv) reasonable rent or hiring fee for property let or hired to the Charity.
  - v) an indemnity in respect of any liabilities properly incurred in or about the administration of the Charity (including the costs of a successful defence to criminal proceedings).
  - vi) benefits received by the Trustee (Elder) as a member where such benefits are no different in nature or extent from those received by other Members; and
  - vii) payment for employment or services authorised under clause 5.3, c (2).
- 2) The Trustees may employ, or engage under a contract for services, such of their number or any person connected to a Trustee as they may determine provided that:
  - i) the procedure set out in clause 5.3, c (3) is followed.
  - ii) the Trustees are satisfied that it is in the interests of the Charity to employ or engage under a contract for services (as the case may be) the Trustee or connected person concerned.
  - iii) the Trustees are satisfied that the terms of employment or engagement are reasonable and will be subject to regular and objective review; and
  - iv) at no time may a majority of Trustees benefit directly or indirectly from payments made under this clause.
- 3) Whenever a Trustee or a person connected to a Trustee has a personal interest in a matter to be discussed at a meeting of the Trustees or any committee, the Trustee or connected person concerned must:
  - i) declare an interest before discussion on the matter begins.
  - ii) withdraw from the meeting for that item unless expressly invited by the chair to remain solely in order to provide information.
  - iii) not be counted in the quorum during that part of the meeting; and
  - iv) withdraw during the vote and have no vote on the matter.
- 4) For the purpose of clauses 5.3, c (1) a to 5.3, c (3) a person is connected with a Trustee if that person is, inter alia:
  - i) a child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother or sister of the Trustee; or
  - ii) a spouse, civil partner or co-habitee of the Trustee or of any person falling within (1) above.

## 6. EMPLOYEES AND PAID CONTRACTORS

### 6.1 To avoid doubt,

this clause does not apply to the appointment of stipendiary ministers or church-related community workers.



## 6.2 Appointment to any employed position in the service of the Church

will be made by the charity trustees of the church funds from which the employee is to be paid. The charity trustees of the relevant funds will also be party to any contract with an independent contractor for services to the Church. Unless the services to be rendered are solely to assist the trustees in their function as such, the following rules will apply:

- a) The creation of a new permanent employed position or its permanent abolition requires a resolution of the Church Meeting acting on advice from the Elders' Meeting.
- b) The selection of an employee, the decision to vary contractual terms or terminate an employment (except for disciplinary reasons) or the decision to contract or terminate a contract with an independent contractor are matters for the Elders' Meeting, on whose directions the charity trustees are to act.
- c) Another church committee may act in lieu of the Elders' Meeting under the foregoing paragraph but only by express delegation from the Elders' Meeting.
- d) The charity trustees are to scrutinise the terms of any contract of employment or for services before it is concluded and may defer acting on a direction in order to allow the relevant Meeting or committee time to consider any concerns the charity trustees have.
- e) The charity trustees are at liberty to take, without receiving explicit directions, such other measures in relation to employees as good employment practice may indicate.

## 6.3 Charity trustees who employ or may employ staff on behalf of the church

will adopt and from time-to-time review, subject to the approval of the Church Meeting, written procedures for disciplinary cases and for the settlement of employee grievances. Disciplinary procedures are to provide for warnings when appropriate, emergency suspension when appropriate, a hearing if an employee so requests and for an appeal procedure.

## 6.4 Charity trustees may decline to act upon a direction to employ

one of their own number or to contract with a charity trustee for the supply of goods or services, they may only act upon such a direction if all requirements of charity law in relation to the remuneration of trustees are satisfied.

## 6.5 A charity trustee must be absent from the part of any meeting

at which his or her employment or remuneration, or any matter concerning a contract to which he or she is party other than as a trustee (including his or her performance in that employment or the performance of the contract) are discussed. He or she must not vote on any matter relating to his or her employment or the contract and must not be counted when calculating whether a quorum of charity trustees is present for that item of business.

## 7. AMENDMENT

Alterations of, or additions to, this constitution may be made by the Church Meeting, normally on the recommendation of the Elders' Meeting. They must be consistent with charity law and relevant trust instruments where applicable and with the provisions mentioned in clause 2.1 that affect the Church and must receive the support of at least 75% of the members present and voting at the session of the Church Meeting.



## 8. CLOSURE AND DISSOLUTION

### 8.1 Any resolution to close the Church must be passed by the Church Meeting

and approved by the appropriate wider council of the URC. When approved the resolution will have the effect of dissolving the Church as an association, at the date agreed between the Local Church and the Synod.

### 8.2 A direction may be given by the Church Meeting for unrestricted monies

Held as part of the general funds of the Church to be applied after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, in a specific manner determined by the Church Meeting (within the charitable objects set out in the relevant trust instrument).

### 8.3 If no such direction is given

the Church Meeting shall be deemed to have directed the trustees to apply the unrestricted monies held as part of the general funds of the Church, after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, as determined (within the charitable objects set out in the relevant trust instrument) by the Synod.

## 9. INTERPRETATION AND MISCELLANEOUS

In this constitution:

'Elder' refers to a serving Elder but 'ordained Elder' refers to any person ordained to the Eldership and includes ministers of word and sacrament who are on the Roll of Members but currently hold no active office in the URC. 'Minister' refers also, where the context allows, to the Interim Moderator during any vacancy.

'Synod' refers to the Synod of the URC on which the Church is, or was last, represented.

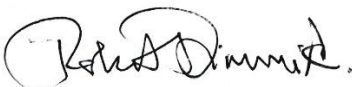
This constitution is formally signed by:

Dr Alison Johnston  
CPURC Secretary:



Date: 17/9/2022.

Robert Dimmick TSSF  
CPURC Treasurer:



Date: 17/9/2022

Clare Downing  
Moderator of URC Wessex:



Date: 17/9/2022

Ray Stanyon  
DSO-N URC Wessex:



Date: 17/9/2022