

CHURCH CONSTITUTION of

TRINITY FREE CHURCH Trinity Road, Mistley, Manningtree

Introduction

The main purpose for which this constitution has been drawn up is as follows:-
To set out our beliefs founded upon the Scripture with regard to the faith and order of the local church known as Trinity Free Church, Trinity Road, Mistley, Manningtree, with the stated provision that because Scripture is our only authority then constant examination of the Church's beliefs and practices leaves it open to reform in the light of that Word.

FAITH

The minimum basis of faith to which all members of Trinity Free Church, Trinity Road, Mistley, Manningtree, are required to give unreserved assent is as follows:-

- a) The full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; their authority and sufficiency as not only containing, but being in themselves the Word of God. the reliability of the New Testament in its testimony to the character and authorship of the Old Testament and the need of the teaching of the Holy Spirit to a true and spiritual understanding of the whole.
- b) The unity of the Godhead and the divine co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Sovereignty of God in Creation, Providence and Redemption.
- c) The total depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall, and the necessity for regeneration.
- d) The true and proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His real and perfect manhood; the authority of His teaching, and the infallibility of all His utterances; His work of atonement for sinners of mankind by His substitutionary sufferings and death; His bodily resurrection and His ascension into Heaven I and His present priestly intercession for His people at the right hand of the Father.
- e) The justification of the sinner solely by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- f) The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, conversion, and sanctification: also in ministry and worship.
- g) The universal Church, the body of which Christ is the Head, embracing all the redeemed, called by God through the Gospel, born of the Spirit and justified by faith, the local church comprising such believers as the expression of the universal Church; and fellowship between such churches, manifesting the unity of the body of Christ.
- h) The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as being instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, but not in Baptism as conveying regenerating grace, nor in the Lord's Supper as being a sacrifice for sin, or involving any change in the substance of the bread and wine.
- i) The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.
- j) The resurrection of the body; the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

Doctrinal Position

The Doctrinal position of this church is that which is generally known as 'Reformed' being set forth in such confessions as 'The Westminster Confession' and the 'Baptist Confession of 1689'.

Whilst we welcome and desire fellowship and co-operation with other Evangelical Churches, we repudiate and reject the right of any external body or committee to govern this Church directly or remotely. Accordingly, this church shall not enter into any denomination or union which involves the loss of its independence and right of self government.

All those called of God and accepted by the membership to hold any offices in the church shall be required to hold to the stated doctrinal position.

The Sacraments

The Lord Jesus Christ while on earth instituted two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28 v.19-20, Matt. 26 v.26-27).

- 1) Baptism shall be administered by an Elder to Believers in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, upon open confession of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28 v.19-20, Acts 2 v.38 & 41).
- 2) The communion of the Lord's Supper shall be observed by the church on the first Sunday morning and the Third Sunday evening of each month and all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will be invited to take part in the sacrament, suitable Scriptural warnings being given to those who are yet in unbelief.

CHURCH ORDER

Membership

- 1) Acceptance into the membership of the church is particularly the responsibility of the Eldership under God.
- 2) The Eldership will admit to the membership only those who:-
 - i) Profess both repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 10 v.32, Acts 2 v.38 & 41, Rom. 10 v.9).
 - ii) Give evidence in their life that their confession is a work of God's grace (John 3 v.21 and James 1 v.26 & 27).
 - iii) Have been baptised in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28 v.19-20). (In exceptional circumstances believers holding the Paedo-baptist position out of a good conscience will be accepted into membership with the agreement of the Eldership).
 - iv) Accept without reserve the basis of faith agreed upon.
- 3) Application for Church membership should be made to the Church Officers Who will interview the applicant, and if the applicant is considered suitable, his/her name shall be put forward for approval at the next Church Meeting.
- 3a) Transfer of Membership. Applications for transfer of membership from other Evangelical Churches will be subject to the same procedure with consideration given to a letter of recommendation from the applicants previous minister.
- 4) Once accepted into membership the member will be subject to all the privileges, responsibilities and disciplines of the local church as seen in the revelation or Scripture.
- 5) Deprivation of membership is an undesirable and extreme measure which shall only be agreed to when admonition, exhortation and advice from the Elders and the church

has been totally rejected by the member and only when agreed by the unanimous decision of the church council (Matt. 18 v.15-22, Gal. 6 v.1 & 2, Titus 3 v.10-11).

6) The church should in all but exceptional circumstances be informed of any offence caused against the church by a rebellious member and called upon to pray for the repentance and restoration of that member (2 Cor. 2 v.5-11).

6) (ii) If any Church Member shall absent themselves from the public means of Grace for six consecutive months, they shall be communicated with and if there be no reasonable excuse, and should they continue to absent themselves without good cause for twelve consecutive months, the Church shall require them to relinquish their membership, in a spirit of love, making every allowance for the circumstances and seeking the Spiritual Welfare of the Member and with particular reference to paragraphs 5 and 6 above.

7) Associate membership shall be open to any who desire to be attached to the church yet are unable because of occupation or duty etc. to fulfil the full requirements of membership e.g. students at university or missionaries on furlough.

Associate membership is only restricted in that there is no allowance to vote at church meetings but attendance is allowed.

Government

1) The sole Governor of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the body (Eph. 1 v.22 & 23).

2) The infallible means by which He governs His church is the Word of God i.e. the Bible (Eph. 2 v.20).

3) Christ's government in the local church is exercised through the oversight of Elders who teach and apply His Word, Bishops, Pastors or teachers according to their function of office to which reference is made (Acts 20 v.17, 1 Tim. 3 v.1-7, Tit. 1 v.1-5, 1 Tim. 5 v.17, 1 Thess. 5 v.12-13, 1 Pet. 5 v.1-5, Heb. 13 v.17, Acts 14 v.23).

4) Elders are assisted by deacons who exercise particular practical care in the organisation of all affairs that support the ministry of God's Word (Acts 6 v.1-6, 1 Tim. 3 v.8-13).

5) The Elders and deacons meeting together shall be called 'The Church Council', the chairman being the Pastor. This council shall meet at three-monthly intervals and shall discuss all matters relating to the faith and order of the church.

6) Prospective Church Officers must have been in membership for at least twelve months.

7) The number of Elders shall be determined by:-

a) the men having the Scriptural qualifications of Elders (1 Tim. 3 v.1-7, 1 Pet. 5 v.2-5)

b) those having the approval of the church membership.

In relation to this office:

8) All teaching materials used in the church including literature must be approved by the Elders.

9) All speakers invited to address meetings within the church must similarly have the Elders' approval.

10) All charges against an Elder shall be made to the chairman or deputy chairman of the church council and must be based on the evidence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5 v.19). Suitable action must then be taken immediately and the matter swiftly dealt with in accordance with Scriptural principle and procedure.

11) The Eldership shall meet regularly for prayer and fellowship.

THE MINISTER OR PASTOR

12) The regular ministry of the Word of God should be committed to an Elder who shall be full time unless financial consideration absolutely preclude it (1 Tim. 5 v.17, 1 Cor. 9 v.3-14, Gal. 6 v.6, Rev. 1 v.20).

13) He shall be known as the Pastor and as such be entitled to act as chairman to all meetings of the church excepting when his own position is under consideration.

14) The nomination of a Pastor shall be by the Officers, but the calling to the Pastorate must be by not less than 75% of members.

Termination of the Pastor's appointment shall be subject to three months' notice On either side unless mutually agreed otherwise.

15) The Pastor shall have the right under God to choose all who shall preach in his absence or otherwise the Eldership shall appoint the preachers as required.

16) If the Pastorate falls vacant the Eldership shall appoint a presiding Elder until another Pastor is appointed. If there are no Elders a presiding deacon will be appointed confirmed by the church membership.

17) The remuneration and material support of the Pastor shall be determined by the church council and reviewed at least once a year (I Tim. 5 v.17 & 18), (Gal. 6 v.6).

18) The deacons are appointed to office by the Elders but the right of nomination belongs to members of the church (Acts 6 v.1-6).

19) The function of the deacons is to release the Elders from administration responsibilities, the collection of money, secretarial duties and the care and maintenance of property and materials connected with the church combined with a care for any member in particular need, (Acts 6 v.1-6).

20) The qualifications for office are the call of God and the acceptance of this by the church (1 Tim. 3 v.8-13, Acts 6 v.3).

21) The appointment of deacons will come through the church meeting and re-election will be required after a period of three years.

22) The removal of deacons from office will be the same as for Elders.

Footnote:

The number of Elders and deacons will be determined by the needs of the church as it prospers or otherwise under the hand of God.

CHURCH BUSINESS

23) A church members' meeting should be held half-yearly whenever possible, at which the members shall consider together the life and work of the church.

24) An agenda must be produced if possible two weeks previous to the meeting to allow for prayer and thought concerning the business to be discussed.

25) Special meetings may be called by the Elders if necessary.

26) A church member has the right to ask for a meeting for any pressing need if having the support of one-third of the church membership.

27) A short report by the secretary and the treasurer will be required at members' meetings.

28) The proceedings of all church meetings shall be confidential and must not be discussed with those outside of the church membership, other than matters needing publicity.

29) All decisions relating to church business and to finance will be the responsibility of the church council, the membership being clearly informed on all matters and voting as necessary. A quorum being the necessary number required at any meeting before voting takes place (two-thirds membership).

29) (ii) No Church Member will be permitted to vote at any Church Meeting unless he or she shall have attained the age of Eighteen years, and further, shall have communed with the Church at the Lord's Table once at least during the period of six months preceding such meeting.

30) Detailed minutes shall be kept of the Elders', Deacons' and church meetings.

31) Leaders of any sort of church activity e.g. Sunday School etc. shall be appointed by the Eldership with the agreement of the church and reports of these activities will be given to the church from time to time.

Trust Deed

32) Nothing in this church constitution shall be interpreted so as to conflict in any particular with any trust deed that may be entered into in the future with regard to church premises and property.

Amendments, Additions, and members Notes

Amendment agreed 13th November 1980

Page 4. Paragraph 3a

Transfer of Membership. Applications for transfer of membership from other Evangelical Churches will be subject to the same procedure with consideration given to a letter of recommendation from the applicants previous minister.

Amendments to Constitution proposed 16th July 1981, passed 14th January 1982.

Page 4. Paragraph 6 (ii):-

"If any Church Member shall absent themselves from the public means of Grace for six consecutive months, they shall be communicated with and if there be no reasonable excuse, and should they continue to absent themselves without good cause for twelve consecutive months, the Church shall require them to relinquish their membership, in a spirit of love, making every allowance for the circumstances and seeking the Spiritual Welfare of the Member and with particular reference to page 4. Paragraph 5&6.

Page 8 Paragraph 29 (ii)

No Church Member will be permitted to vote at any Church Meeting unless he or she shall have attained the age of Eighteen years, and further, shall have communed with the Church at the Lord's Table once at least during the period of six months preceding such meeting.

The church's name to be changed to Trinity Free Church with effect from 1st October 2005, voted through at the AGM 13th July 2005.

For clarity, the usage of "Mistley" has been changed to "Mistley, Manningtree" everywhere to reflect the fact that the church serves the entire Manningtree catchment area.

**TRINITY FREE CHURCH,
Trinity Road, Mistley, Manningtree**

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP

(name)

**WAS RECEIVED INTO MEMBERSHIP OF THE
TRINITY FREE CHURCH,
Trinity Road, Mistley, Manningtree**

on

(date)

**to become subject to the privileges,
responsibilities, and disciplines of
the local Church in Mistley, Manningtree, Essex.**

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it."

Minister

Secretary