

**IMMANUEL WITH HIGHWORTH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
SWINDON**

“Sharing the Love of Jesus, Serving the Community”

CONSTITUTION

&

CHURCH HANDBOOK

Please note:

Each section of this document may comprise text both in italic script and “normal” script. The italic text is the formal constitution of Immanuel, drafted in line with URC legal advice purely to meet the relevant legal provisions applicable to local URC congregations and to registered charities. The “normal” text expands these basic statements where appropriate to give more detail about the life of Immanuel with Highworth and the procedures introduced to manage it.

INTRODUCTION

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 by the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England. Since then the United Reformed Church has continued to express its deep commitment to the visible unity of the whole Church. In 1981 it entered into union with the Re-formed Churches of Christ and in the year 2000 with the Congregational Union of Scotland. The United Reformed Church is in frequent dialogue on unity with other traditions and has more than 400 Local Churches united with other denominations.

Though one of the smaller of Britain's 'mainstream' denominations, the United Reformed Church stands in the historic Reformed tradition, whose member denominations make up the largest single strand of Protestantism with more than 70 million members world-wide.

Along with other Reformed churches the United Reformed Church holds to the Trinitarian faith expressed in the historic Christian creeds and finds its supreme authority for faith and conduct in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under guidance of the Holy Spirit. The United Reformed Church's structure also expresses its faith in the ministry of all God's people through the structure of Councils by which the Church is governed.

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The members of Immanuel with Highworth United Reformed Church, Swindon, assembled in Church Meeting on 15th September 2024 have adopted the following updated Constitution (the italicised text) and Handbook (the “normal” text):

1. THE LOCAL AND THE WIDER CHURCH

- 1.1. Immanuel with Highworth 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 shares in activity with other faith communities, on an ecumenical basis.*
- 1.2. In January 1969 Immanuel, together with Christ Church and St Mary's (Anglican) and Bath Road Methodist Church undertook to work together in the first ecumenical parish in the country when the Old Town Ecumenical Parish was created. In 2000 this project subsequently changed its constitution and name and is now The Old Town Partnership of Churches.*
- 1.3. Immanuel Church (formerly Immanuel Congregational Church) was until 31st December 2023 a constituent Local Church within the South West Synod of the United Reformed Church; having voted by a majority of 79% of the members present at a special meeting duly convened for the purpose, on 3rd October 1971, to enter into the National Church which was created on 5th October 1972. On 1st January 2024 Immanuel entered into a joint association with Highworth United Reformed Church to allow worship to continue in both locations, and took on the new name of Immanuel with Highworth United Reformed Church.

2. 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:

	<i>Principal provisions of the Basis of Union (B) or Structure (S)</i>	<i>Related clauses of this constitution</i>
a) <i>assigns the immediate oversight of the Church to the Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting</i>	<i>S1(3), 2(1), 2(2)</i>	<i>6</i>
b) <i>provides for the membership and functions of the Church Meeting (in particular, in the Call of a Minister) and for non-voting attendance</i>	<i>S2(1)</i>	<i>5</i>
c) <i>provides for the membership and functions of the Elders' Meeting</i>	<i>S2(1)(viii), 2(2)</i>	<i>5 and 6</i>
d) <i>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</i>	<i>S1(2)(a), 1(3), 2(1)(vi), 2(3), 2(4), 2(6) and 5</i>	
e) <i>provides for consultation in decision-making</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>--</i>
f) <i>contains (in the Basis of Union) a statement concerning the Faith of the United Reformed Church</i>	<i>B10, 12-18</i>	<i>--</i>
g) <i>provides for the celebration of the Gospel sacraments</i>	<i>B14, 15; S2(2)(ii), 2(4)(A)(xx)</i>	<i>--</i>
h) <i>provides for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, for the ministry of other Elders, and for Ministers' and Elders' ordination and induction</i>	<i>B19, 20, 21, 23, 25; S2(1)(vii), 2(2),</i>	<i>5</i>

	2(4)(A)(vii)	
i) 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)	--
j) 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. PROPERTY TRUSTS AND ADMINISTRATION

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

3.1.1. 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;

3.1.2. the general funds of the Church, governed by trusts declared in a resolution of the Church Meeting on 14th May 2009, which provides that the qualified members of the Elders' Meeting are charity trustees and that Trustees are to act in accordance with procedures laid down by the Church Meeting.

3.2. 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

3.2.1. the uses to be made of the property in 3.1.1, and

3.2.2. procedures for proper administration of the general funds of the Church.

3.3. 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 for preparation and submission of the annual Trustees report.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1. All those persons in membership of Immanuel on 5th October 1972 and whose names were entered on the "active list" of church members were deemed to be members of Immanuel within the United Reformed Church. Those persons in membership of

Highworth at 31st December 2023 are now similarly deemed to be members of Immanuel with Highworth United Reformed Church.

- 4.2. *Admission to membership of the Church on profession of faith takes place when a person*
 - 4.2.1. *is considered by the Elders' Meeting able to make a meaningful profession of faith;*
 - 4.2.2. *has received preparation that the Elders' Meeting considers adequate;*
 - 4.2.3. *has in most instances been confirmed into membership of the Ecumenical Partnership of Swindon Old Town;*
 - 4.2.4. *is accepted by the Church Meeting on the advice of the Elders' Meeting;*
 - 4.2.5. *makes during public worship the profession of faith prescribed in the Basis of Union; and*
 - 4.2.6. *if not previously baptised, is baptised;*
 - 4.2.7. *is not eligible for admission by transfer.*
- 4.3. Normally those people, regardless of age, who indicate a desire to become a member of Immanuel will have been members of a scheme of membership training, and in all cases the Church Meeting needs to be assured of the adequate preparation for membership.
- 4.4. It is the responsibility of the Elders, together with the Minister, to be assured of the sincerity of candidates and of their understanding of the Christian Faith.
- 4.5. After acceptance by the Church Meeting, candidates shall be publicly admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the church at a Service of Holy Communion on a subsequent Sunday according to the forms prescribed in the URC service book.
- 4.6. *Admission to membership of the Church by transfer takes place when a person*
 - 4.6.1. *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*
 - 4.6.2. *is accepted by the Church Meeting or (by delegation) by the Elders' Meeting.*
- 4.7. *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.*
- 4.8. New members received after 5th October 1972 shall be accepted under the following procedure:
 - 4.8.1. Persons desirous of becoming church members shall indicate their wish to the Minister or to an Elder either personally, or by letter or through the introduction of some other member of the church.
 - 4.8.2. Every candidate for church membership shall be nominated by the Elders' meeting and shall be commended by the Minister or (in the event of a pastoral vacancy) by the Interim Moderator. In the case of persons applying for a transfer of

membership to Immanuel from other Christian Churches, a Letter of Transfer, Certificate of membership or Demission or other credentials may admit them. The Minister with the Elders shall consider the credentials and make their recommendation to the Church Meeting. Following acceptance by the Church Meeting such candidates will normally be received into membership at the most convenient communion service following the church meeting.

4.8.3. In every case, admission to the full roll of membership shall be solely by a vote of the majority of members present at a Church Meeting.

4.9. *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:*

4.9.1. *on transfer to another church of the URC;*

4.9.2. *at the written request of a member wishing to relinquish membership;*

4.9.3. *by resolution of the Church Meeting on advice from the Elders' Meeting;*

4.9.4. *on death.*

4.9.5. The church roll shall be revised annually by the Elders' Meeting and copies will be displayed in the church.

4.10. Letters of Transfer of members removing to other Churches are sent in the name of the Church Meeting but such transfers may be dealt with by the Elders' meeting who will report their actions to the next Church Meeting for confirmation.

4.11. Under a locally agreed procedure of the Church, members may, with the agreement of the Elders' Meeting, be placed on a 'retained list' for pastoral reasons, and will no longer be 'full members' of the local church and will have no right of vote at Church Meetings.

4.11.1. Any member who has removed from the district shall be placed on the church "Retained List".

4.11.2. Similarly, for pastoral reasons, it may be deemed appropriate to place on this retained list names of members who are no longer active in the life of the church. When such recommendations are made to the Elders' Meeting for its approval, it shall normally be after notification and with the acquiescence of the member(s) concerned.

4.11.3. Members whose names are on the retained list are no longer 'full members' of the local church and have no right of vote at Church Meetings. For pastoral reasons, the Minister and Elders shall attempt to keep in touch with these people with a view to reintegrating them into the life of Immanuel or commending them to the attention of other churches where they may have settled.

4.11.4. A person whose name has been 'retained' for pastoral reasons may, on request, and with the acceptance of the Elders' Meeting, have their name reinstated as a full member.

4.11.5. The Retained List ruling does not apply to members of HM Services nor to members on other forms of temporary service that remove them from the area, nor to students or members on active Christian Service abroad.

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

5.1.1. *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.*

5.1.2. The calling of a Minister shall be strictly in accordance with the regulations laid down in the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church. Any candidate shall be informed of Immanuel with Highworth's life within the Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches and must accept a full commitment to all the implications involved.

5.1.3. The Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches shall be represented at discussions within the Elders' and Church Meeting (if these bodies so desire) which lead to an invitation being sent to any candidate to consider the pastorate at Immanuel. As a matter of courtesy, the senior clergy within the Partnership shall be invited to meet with any prospective candidate prior to a call being issued by the church.

5.1.4. No Minister may be invited to 'preach with a view' to the pastorate without approval of at least two thirds of the members of the Eldership.

5.1.5. The calling of a Minister shall finally rest with a Church Meeting specially convened for that purpose, each member having been given notification of such a meeting. The name of only one candidate shall be submitted to the meeting and voting shall take place by secret ballot. No call shall be deemed valid which receives less than two thirds of the votes of the members present. Only members at the meeting duly convened for the purpose have the right to vote. The quorum for such a meeting shall be not less than one half of all members whose names are on the Membership Roll (excluding those on the Retained List)

5.2. CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

5.2.1. 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

5.3.1. The church meeting shall adopt such methods of electing Elders as it shall from time to time see fit and determine how long elected Elders shall serve and whether or not there must be an interval between the completion of a period of service and election for a subsequent period.

5.3.1.1. The Elders' Meeting at Immanuel shall consist of the minister and twelve elders (or any such number as the Church Meeting, advised by the Elders' Meeting, may hereafter decide).

5.3.1.2. All members of the church who have reached the age of 18 years and have been in membership of Immanuel for a minimum period of one year, shall be eligible for election to the Eldership and for ordination to this office of responsibility. The ordinary election of elders shall take place at the Annual Church Meeting.

5.3.1.3. Elections of elders may also be called between Annual Church Meetings if the elders so decide, following the church rules dealing with the election of elders (see below). The elders will make a recommendation to Church Meeting as to how the normal three year period of service should be adapted for elders to be elected in each such mid-year election.

5.3.1.4. The normal term of office for an elder is for a period of three years. At the AGM those elders who have served for three years shall retire but are eligible for re-election if they so desire.

5.3.1.5. Having served for two terms of office (six years) all elders shall be required to stand down for a period of one year before accepting nomination for a further term of office. An exception to this rule will be for a church secretary, appointed to this role within their second 3 year period as a serving elder, who can be re-elected to serve for one further term of three years, or such shorter period that he or she remains church secretary.

5.3.1.6. Nominations for the position of Elder must be made to the Minister or Church Secretary in writing. The consent of the nominee need not be gained prior to the nomination. The Minister or an appointed elder will approach nominees to ascertain if it is their will that their name go forward to the ballot.

- 5.3.1.7. The period for nominations shall close four Sundays prior to the date of the relevant Church Meeting to enable the preparation of ballot papers. Each member may vote for as many candidates as there are places to be filled, or less than that number if he/she so desires.
- 5.3.1.8. The names of candidates duly nominated will be published or announced two Sundays prior to the relevant Church Meeting and a ballot paper shall be made available for any member who is unable to attend the meeting due to illness or other sufficient reason. This ballot paper shall be returned to the General Church Secretary in a sealed envelope, clearly marked "Ballot", before the start of the meeting. Such envelopes shall be handed to the tellers to be opened by them and included in the count.
- 5.3.1.9. Where there are more candidates than places available and two candidates receive the same number of votes, they shall be informed and, unless one desires to withdraw, fresh ballot papers will be issued for voting upon this vacancy.
- 5.3.1.10. Such ballot papers shall be issued in accordance with the instructions above, and the votes counted at the next Church Meeting. The same tellers may superintend the voting if they are available, or otherwise new tellers may be appointed at the meeting
- 5.3.1.11. In the event of there being insufficient nominees to fill the vacancies, a ballot shall still be taken. For a nominee to be elected, he/ she must win two thirds of the total votes cast.
- 5.3.2. *The Church Meeting shall make such rules and regulations relating to the calling and conduct of Elders' Meetings as they shall from time to time think fit.*
 - 5.3.2.1. There will normally be about ten formal 'minuted' meetings of the Elders' Meeting during the year.
- 5.3.3. Elders shall share with the minister in the pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership of the church.
- 5.3.4. The office of Elder within the United Reformed Church is one of high responsibility and honour. Elders share with the minister in pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership. They are also associated with ministers in all the wider councils of the Church; thus the elders' meeting serves the church locally and through its relation to the wider councils of the URC, represents the whole Church to Immanuel. The minister (or Interim Moderator) shall normally preside over the Elders' Meeting but on occasion, if circumstances so require, the elders may nominate one of their number to chair meetings.
- 5.3.5. The functions of the Elders' meeting are varied:
 - 5.3.5.1. to foster in the church concern for witness and service to the community, evangelism at home and abroad, Christian education, concerns represented in

the local Ecumenical Partnership and in other bodies as well as the wider responsibilities of the wider Church

- 5.3.5.2. to see that public worship is offered both regularly and appropriately and that the sacraments are duly administered.
 - 5.3.5.3. to ensure the pastoral care of the members of Immanuel and the congregation. In this task 'pastoral coordinators', 'pastoral visitors' as well as 'church friends' will join elders and minister.
 - 5.3.5.4. to nominate from among its members one or more General Church Secretaries and a Church Treasurer, each of whom will be elected by the Church Meeting to serve both the Elders' meeting and the Church Meeting. The Treasurer shall normally be nominated from the members of the eldership but if occasion demands he or she may be elected from the membership of the Church. The Church Secretary or Secretaries shall provide support to the Minister, the Elders and the Congregation.
 - 5.3.5.5. to call for the election of elders and to advise on the number required.
 - 5.3.5.6. to ensure that the pulpit is supplied during a vacancy and at other times when the minister may not be available to lead services, although one person may be delegated to carry out this task.
 - 5.3.5.7. to keep the membership Roll in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and in consultation with the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership and advise on all matters relating to membership.
 - 5.3.5.8. to be responsible for the institution and maintenance of work among children and young people as well as other organisations within the life of Immanuel with Highworth.
 - 5.3.5.9. to act on behalf of the Church Meeting and to bring concerns to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church.
 - 5.3.5.10. to advise the Church Meeting on matters relating to our life within the Old Town Partnership of Churches.
 - 5.3.5.11. to support the Partnership through the governance structure in place from time to time in the Partnership.
 - 5.3.5.12. to recommend to the Church Meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance and improvement of the buildings and grounds as well as the general oversight of the finances of the church.
 - 5.3.5.13. to arrange for the proper stewarding of the church at all services and meetings and all other matters relating to the good ordering of our life and worship at Immanuel.
 - 5.3.5.14. to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibilities for the common life of the church.
- 5.3.6. The Pastoral Function of the Elders' Meeting

- 5.3.6.1. The elders, collectively, share with the Minister in the pastoral oversight of the members of the church and congregation, the children and young people, and others associated with the life of Immanuel with Highworth, as well as the care of people who appeal to the church for help. In this respect a system has been devised whereby the name of virtually everyone having a contact with the church appears on a 'pastoral list' and is allocated to an elder or a person designated by the elders for oversight purposes.
- 5.3.6.2. In addition some people, especially the housebound, have an allocated 'pastoral visitor' or 'church friend'. The pastoral care of the congregation is the joint responsibility of the serving elders assisted by non-serving elder volunteers.

6. HONORARY OFFICERS, REPRESENTATIVES AND COMMITTEES

6.1. The Church Meeting shall:

- 6.1.1. *consider the candidates nominated by the Elders' Meeting for the office of Church Secretary, and by the charity trustees of the Church's general funds for the office of Treasurer. If a candidate for Church Secretary is not acceptable to the Church Meeting then a fresh nomination is to be sought from the Elders' Meeting.*
- 6.1.2. *elect a Church Treasurer*
- 6.1.3. *elect a person or persons to represent the Church on the Synod as appropriate. These shall normally be members of the Elders' Meeting*
- 6.1.4. *elect such other honorary officers and representatives to external bodies as it sees fit.*

6.2. Church Meeting Procedures

- 6.2.1. The Church Meeting consists of all those persons whose names are on the roll of members having been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership.
- 6.2.2. The Church Meeting may invite associates who worship regularly at Immanuel to attend on any occasion; such associates have the right to speak on any topic but only members whose names are on the roll have the right to vote. The Church Meeting also welcomes observers from other constituent churches in the Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches
- 6.2.3. The Church Meeting shall be held at least once every quarter (and at other times deemed necessary) and the minister or the Church Secretary shall normally preside. In the event of a ministerial vacancy then it will normally be the Interim Moderator who presides.

6.3. The Functions of the Church Meeting

- 6.3.1. to further the Church's mission in the locality as a member of the Old Town Partnership of Churches
- 6.3.2. to share fully in ecumenical relationships through the Old Town Partnership of Churches and in all other ways open to the church.
- 6.3.3. to further the Church's ministry of caring and compassion in the locality and throughout the world
- 6.3.4. to consider and support the wider work of the Church at home and abroad
- 6.3.5. to consider public questions in relation to the Christian Faith
- 6.3.6. to bring concerns for consideration by the Elders' Meeting and the wider Councils of the Church

6.4. Administration and Discipline

In accordance with the Basis of Union,

- 6.4.1. to call a Minister with the concurrence of the South West Synod of the URC
 - 6.4.2. to elect elders and officers, to determine their number and period of office and to appoint representatives to the wider Councils of the Church
 - 6.4.3. to admit and transfer members in accordance with the procedures set out , to maintain standards of membership and to remove or suspend names from the membership roll on advice from the Elders' meeting.
 - 6.4.4. to receive and adopt financial reports, including an annual budget and the annual accounts and to approve all measures pertaining to the financial responsibilities of Immanuel
 - 6.4.5. to receive reports and recommendations from the Elders' meeting, Ecumenical Council, Synod and General Assembly as well as those from church groups and committees, and to authorise appropriate action
 - 6.4.6. to make or provide for the making of arrangements for the proper maintenance and improvement of the buildings and grounds on the recommendation of the Elders' Meeting.
 - 6.4.7. generally to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church within the Ecumenical Partnership of Churches.
- 6.5. According to standing orders of the meeting, church organisations are required to give an annual report of their doings and these reports are spread throughout the year.
- 6.6. The ordinary meetings of the church shall be held as deemed appropriate from time to time and shall be determined by Standing Order or the Church Meeting.
- 6.7. In order that annual audited accounts and an annual secretary's report be submitted formally to the church prior to submission to the Charity Commissioners, the Annual General Meeting of the Church for the election of Elders, Officers and all annual

business shall be held in March or April of each year (dependent on the due date of Easter).

6.8. Special Business Meetings

6.8.1. Special meetings of the church may be convened by the General Church Secretary or Secretaries, either on the recommendation of the elders, or if a requisition calling for such a meeting is signed individually and personally by not less than one tenth or twenty members, whichever is the less, of those names on the church roll.

6.8.2. Notice of any special meeting of the church shall be given at each service on at least two Sundays prior to the meeting being held, and a statement of the purpose of such a meeting shall be included in the notice.

6.9. Quorum

6.9.1. The quorum for the Annual General meeting, without which no voting shall take place, shall be 25% of the membership of the church

6.9.2. *The Church Meeting and Elders' Meeting may each establish such committees or ministry groups as they see fit, prescribing their method of appointment, terms of reference and frequency of reporting to the parent body. The Church Meeting may determine to which council of the church (itself or the Elders' Meeting) any committee or group established by it is to report.*

6.9.3. *Control of a delegated budget, with or without the competence to make online payments or sign cheques drawn on church funds, may be delegated by the charity trustees of the funds concerned to committees, ministry groups or individual officers.*

6.9.4. The Elders' Meeting shall, as of right, be able to send representatives to any meeting of the committee of any such society, club or organisation established as a 'church' organisation. Normally it is advisable that an Elder be a member of any such committee.

6.10. Currently a number of church committees exist within the life of Immanuel as follows, each of which has determined its terms of reference:

6.10.1. Finance Committee

6.10.2. Buildings and Grounds Committee

6.10.3. Worship and Outreach Committee

6.10.4. World Concerns Committee

7. EMPLOYEES AND PAID CONTRACTORS

7.1. *To avoid doubt, this clause does not apply to the appointment of stipendiary ministers or church-related community workers.*

- 7.2. *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:*
- 7.2.1. *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.*
- 7.2.2. *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.*
- 7.2.3. *Another church committee may act in lieu of the Elders' Meeting under the foregoing paragraph but only by express delegation from the Elders' Meeting.*
- 7.3. *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.*
- 7.4. *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.*
- 7.5. *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.*
- 7.6. *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.*
- 7.7. *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.*
- 7.8. *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.*
- 7.9. *Immanuel currently has no employees.*

8. 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.

8.1. Amendments and Alterations to the Church Handbook

8.1.1. Amendments to the Handbook will from time to time be agreed by the Elders and notified to Church Meeting.

8.1.2. All other rules, bye-laws and regulations heretofore in force in this church shall be and hereby are revoked, either by the force of this constitution, or by the provisions of the Basis of Union and Act of Parliament which received the Royal Assent on 29th June 1972 and was unanimously approved by the uniting Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

9. CLOSURE AND DISSOLUTION

9.1. *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.*

9.2. *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).*

9.3. *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.*

10. INTERPRETATION AND MISCELLANEOUS

In this constitution:

- 10.1. *'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.*
- 10.2. *'Minister' refers also, where the context allows, to the Interim Moderator during any vacancy.*
- 10.3. *'Synod' refers to the Synod of the URC on which the Church is, or was last, represented.*
- 10.4. *'Church Secretary' or 'General Church Secretary' refers to the person or persons for the time being serving as Church Secretary.*