



Churches Together in Hitchin

Constitution

approved at Annual General Meeting 15 November 2012

1. Basis

Churches Together in Hitchin unites in pilgrimage those churches in and around Hitchin which, acknowledging God's revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and, in obedience to God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit, commit themselves

- to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body
- to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world

to the glory of the one God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

2. Aims

The aims of Churches Together in Hitchin shall be:

- a) to enable the churches as pilgrims together, to explore the Christian faith together, to develop mutual relationships, to seek a common mind, and to make decisions together
- b) to encourage churches to worship, pray and reflect together on the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of its mission, each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition
- c) to enable churches to live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take steps towards fuller unity
- d) to enable churches to respond to the needs of society and to witness to the Gospel together.

3. Relationships

Churches Together in Hitchin shall be in association with Churches Together in Hertfordshire and Churches Together in England.

4. Membership

Membership of Churches Together in Hitchin shall be open to:

- a) any local church in the area which is affiliated to a church or association of churches which is a full member of Churches Together in England
- b) any other local church in the area which affirms the Basis and is committed to the aims of Churches Together in Hitchin, provided that it satisfies 75% of those full member churches which subscribe to the Basis.
- c) any local church which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the Basis, provided that
 - it satisfies 75% of those full member churches which subscribe to the Basis
 - it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures
 - it is committed to the aims of Churches Together in Hitchin
 - it will work in the spirit of the Basis.

5. The Council and its membership

The representative body of Churches Together in Hitchin shall be called the 'Council of Churches Together in Hitchin' (hereafter 'the Council') and shall consist of up to five members of each church, of whom one shall be the principal minister or leader.

6. Meetings and proceedings of the Council

- a) The Council shall meet at least three times a year, of which one meeting shall be the Annual General Meeting.
- b) Other meetings of the Council shall be held as deemed desirable by the officers or at the written request of three representatives of member Churches, at least two weeks written notice having been given to members of the Council.
- c) The Council may, at its discretion, open any of its meetings to members of participating churches.
- d) Only the members of the Council present at a meeting shall be entitled to vote.
- e) Decisions shall normally be taken by a simple majority.
- f) Attendance by one third of the total membership of the Council, provided there is at least one representative of two thirds of the member churches, shall constitute a quorum.

- g) Decisions about policies or priorities, which are determined by the Council to be sufficiently major, must be referred to member churches' own decision-making bodies; in such cases
- each church shall have three months to make its decision and report this to the Secretary who will then advise the Council
 - agreement by **75%** (previously 'three quarters') of the member churches will be regarded as support for the decision.
- h) The Council may set up specialised groups which shall be accountable to it and shall report to it when required.

7. The Annual General Meeting

- a) The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the autumn of each year. At least two months' notice of this meeting shall be given to the members.
- b) The Annual General Meeting shall
- receive reports;
 - elect the office-holders;
 - agree the annual report to the participating churches;
 - receive the audited accounts;
 - elect an independent examiner;
 - conduct any other business as may be appropriate.
- c) Members of participating churches who are not members of the Council may attend the Annual General Meeting and shall have the right to speak but not vote.

8. Office-holders

The office-holders of Churches Together in Hitchin shall be:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Faith and Learning Officer
- Mission and Outreach Officer
- Local Community Officer
- Justice and Peace Officer
- Publicity Officer
- Minutes Secretary

9. Election of office-holders

- a) The office-holders shall retire at the Annual General Meeting but, subject to paragraphs e) and f) below, shall be eligible for re-election.
- b) Nominations for the office-holders shall be made by two Council members and must carry the consent of the person nominated.
- c) Nominations for the office of Chair and Vice-chair must be received in writing by the Secretary fourteen days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.
- d) The Chair and Vice-chair, one of whom shall be a minister and the other a lay person, shall stand for a period of one year, commencing with the date of the Annual General Meeting at which they are elected.
- e) The Chair and Vice-chair shall be eligible for re-election to the same post for a second year but shall not be eligible for re-election following the second year, nor within four years following their retirement.
- f) Other office-holders shall be eligible for re-election to the same post for a maximum of six years unless an extension is agreed by the Council.
- g) Where more than one person is nominated for any office-holder post, election shall be by a simple majority following a secret ballot.

10. Executive Committee

There shall be an Executive Committee of Churches Together in Hitchin (hereafter 'the Executive') to implement the decisions of the Council and to conduct business between Council meetings.

The elected office-holders of Churches Together in Hitchin shall comprise the Executive, together with a representative of the Ministers' group (see 12 below).

11. Meetings and proceedings of the Executive Committee

- a) The Executive shall meet at least three times a year, not less than two weeks ahead of each meeting of the Council, and shall report to each meeting of the Council.
- b) The quorum of the Executive shall be half those eligible to attend.
- c) The Executive shall have the power to propose to the Council that decisions before the Council are sufficiently major to be referred to the decision-making bodies of member churches.

12. Ministers' group

There shall be a meeting of clergy and ministers of churches in and around Hitchin which acts as a consultative group, advising the Executive and Council on issues under discussion and assisting in the implementation of decisions taken by the Council.

13. Finance

- a) Each participating church shall contribute yearly to the expenses of Churches Together in Hitchin.
- b) The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the financial affairs of Churches Together in Hitchin.
- c) The accounts shall be independently examined annually.

14. Amendment of the Constitution

- a) The Council shall have the power to amend the Constitution at the Annual General Meeting.
- b) Any proposed amendment shall be submitted to the Secretary at least four calendar months before the Annual General Meeting and be supported by at least five Council members.
- c) At least three calendar months before the Annual General Meeting, the Secretary shall send details of any such proposals to the participating churches, as well as to all the members of the Council, for their consideration.
- d) Voting in the Annual General Meeting shall be by a two-thirds majority of those attending and eligible to vote.

15. Standing Orders

- a) The Council may make Standing Orders regulating its proceedings and governing the conduct of its business.
- b) Standing Orders may be varied by a majority decision of the Council at the Annual General Meeting.

16. Review

In order that Churches Together in Hitchin shall reflect the developing life of the Churches in the town, a Review Group shall be appointed by the Council at least every five years to work with the Ecumenical Development Officer of Churches Together in Hertfordshire, reporting on the present life of the organisation and making proposals for desirable changes

Schedule

On 15 November 2012, the participating Churches in Churches Together in Hitchin are as follows:

Bethesda Parish, Redeemed Christian Church of God, St John's Community Centre, Hitchin

Christchurch, Bedford Road, Hitchin

Church of God of Prophecy, meeting at Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Road, Hitchin

Covenant Praise Church, meeting at Strathmore Infants School, Hitchin

Hitchin Christian Centre, Bedford Road, Hitchin

Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Road, Hitchin

The Hub Church, meeting at the Radcliffe Arms, Hitchin

International First-born Church of the Living God, meeting at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Hitchin

New Testament Church of God, Hampden Road, Walsworth

Our Lady Immaculate & St Andrew Church, Nightingale Road, Hitchin

Religious Society of Friends, Paynes Park, Hitchin

St Faith's Church, Woolgrove Road, Walsworth

St Mark's Church, Lancaster Avenue, Hitchin

St Mary's Church, Hitchin Town Centre

Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin

Walsworth Road Baptist Church, Walsworth Road, Hitchin

Wymondley Baptist Church