



AULDHOUSE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Church Handbook (2019 edition)

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Introduction.

Welcome to our **Church Handbook**. While this handbook is available for anyone to read, it's essential purpose is to be a single reference document that can be read and accessed by members of our church and those considering joining the church officially as participating members.

Therefore, in this document you will find a summary of who we are: our purpose, mission, vision, core beliefs and values. You will find here a description of the kind of church we are seeking to be, as we are led and directed by the Holy Spirit. You will also find details of how we are governed, our basic policies, guidelines and general procedures, as well as what is involved in becoming a member of Auldhouse Community Church (hereafter referred to simply as ACC).

The Handbook can also be referenced by the church leadership at times when clarification is needed with regard to matters affecting the administration and direction of our journey together.

The most up to date version of the handbook, at any time, will be available on-line. Any significant amendments to the handbook will be made annually, prior to the church AGM, and intimated to our members.

The handbook complements the church's legally-adopted **Constitution** that records the details of our Declaration of Trust and establishes our charitable status and the formal administration of the church and its assets. Copies of our Constitution are available upon request.

Thank you for taking the time to read our handbook. Please keep this document in a safe place where you can access it for future reference. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our Pastor or one of our Leadership Team.

All Bible references are from the New International Version (2011 Edition), unless otherwise stated. Where alternative translations are used, it is to better clarify our understanding of the matter/topic being discussed.

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Church Leadership Positions, Staff Members and Office Bearers:

Church Pastor:

Don Palmer

Leadership Team:

Alison Devenish

Colin McKerracher

Charlie Meiklejohn

Graeme Muir

Don Palmer

Peter Marriott

Trustees:

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Peter Marriott

Colin McKerracher

Adrian Smith

Chris Stewart

Deacons:

John Bertram

Sara Craig

Vini Gohil

Craig Harrow

Rena McLellan

Farhad Sadeghineko

Community Worker

Clare Malloy

Youth & Schools Worker:

(Currently vacant)

Church Secretary:

Colin McKerracher

Church Treasurer:

David Smith

Who we are – Our Vision.

ACC is a community-focused church whose roots are in the Christian Brethren movement and within the Evangelical tradition. We seek always to be grounded in the “good news”, which for us is found in a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and is founded on the authority of the Bible as the written Word of God. For us therefore, having **a relationship with Jesus Christ, a faith founded on the Bible and to be involved in sharing this good news with the world** are the essential marks of being a Christian Church.

The various groups of believers within the Christian Brethren movement, were united in their desire to return to the simplicity, openness, commitment and spontaneity of the very first Christian communities. They longed to rediscover a church like that found in the New Testament - and one, in particular, that was built on the foundations of Acts 2:42-47 (teaching, fellowship, worship and prayer) - which in turn leads to effective outreach and expressions of social compassion to others.

The basis for their unity was expressed in what they referred to as their “common life” in Christ. Each local congregation looked to Jesus Christ as its *head*, was autonomous (self-governing) and was led by a plurality of leaders (called *elders and pastors*). They encouraged each member to serve in and through the various ministries of the church using the gifts and abilities given by the Lord, through the Holy Spirit.

While not operating directly under any denominational body today, we nevertheless seek to function *inter-dependently* with all churches who seek to follow Jesus and are in general agreement with our statement of faith and our core values. Specifically, we are an official participating member of the Scottish Network of Churches, as well as maintaining close working and supportive relationships with a number of national Christian organisations (such as ALPHA, Scripture Union Scotland, TEAR Fund, The Leprosy Mission Scotland, Street Pastors and Glasgow City Mission) as well as other networks of churches here in the city of Glasgow.

We observe two sacraments (or ordinances): **Communion** (or The Lord’s Supper) which we currently celebrate on the first Sunday morning of each month and occasionally on Sunday evenings; and **Baptism**, customarily by immersion, for any who profess faith in Jesus Christ. For more details on either of these, see the sections entitled *Church Membership* and *General Procedures*.

Our Vision

The essential vision of ACC is to be a living expression of the love of God in all we do within our locality on the Southside of Glasgow, as well as throughout our city, our nation and across the world by all means consistent with the teaching of the Bible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We want to be a modern, progressive church that embraces change when necessary and always makes faith relevant to its members and the communities we seek to serve, placing their needs before our own. Specifically this means that (a) we desire to live our lives daily out of an experience of worshipping God and dependence upon him in prayer; (b) we desire to be constantly growing together as a community in faith and love; and (c) as we move out into our wider communities, to do so in word and deed, empowered by the Holy Spirit. As we do so, our vision is to see God’s presence and rule come in tangible ways within our wider communities and for social, moral and spiritual transformation to take place.

We rejoice in the fact that God continues to bring us into contact with new individuals and families so that we can share with them the good news of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf and what he is continuing to do every day in our lives and in his world.

Our Mission.

“The most important commandment,” said Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 22:29-31)

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

We see our mission, our calling and our purpose to be rooted in the above passages, generally referred to as “The Great Commandment” and “The Great Commission”. In seeking to fulfil our mission as an evangelical, community-focused church therefore, we want to:

- Demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ in everything we do
- Be visible in and accessible to our wider communities
- Provide services that are sustainable and meet people’s needs
- Enable and equip people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

We believe will achieve these aims, and so much more, by being:

1. **A caring community** - where people love God first and love their neighbours second; where concern for others is demonstrable; where inclusion and love for one another leads to unity.
2. **A changed community** – where people pray and are inspired by a fuller understanding of God’s will leading to personal change and a renewed passion to see God’s kingdom established.
3. **A learning community** – where we value the Bible as God’s inspired word and where people of every age and ability are encouraged to seek God’s will, to grow in their knowledge and understanding and to be changed in the process.
4. **A worshipping community** – where we acknowledge that our most basic reason for living is to give glory to God and to enjoy him forever - where we are free to express our love for God and where God can use our worship, personal and corporate, to draw us closer to himself.
5. **A missional community** – where the great commission to “go and make disciples”¹ influences the way we live our lives, shaping our words and our actions; where we are motivated to live the life of Jesus and to take the good news about him out of our buildings and comfort zones to meet people where they are.
6. **A giving community** – where, in following the example of Jesus and the early Christian faith-communities, we are prepared to give sacrificially of our time, our abilities and our resources.
7. **A growing community** – where our commitment to following Jesus and our openness to the Holy Spirit results in transformed lives and people being added to the Kingdom of God.

¹ Matthew 28:18 (see also, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)

Our Core Foundations & Purpose.

“They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord’s Supper and prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. All the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, as well as meeting in homes. They shared their meals with great joy and generosity, all the while praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their numbers those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47 NLT)

From this passage we see the **six core foundations** that the early Church were committed (or “devoted themselves”) to. We identify with and refer to these as *worship, learning, prayer* and *care* –which lead to and equip us for *service* and *outreach*. Together these form what we understand to be the Mission of God for the Church in our world today.

1. **Worship**...we seek to practice a contemporary style of worship, while continuing to incorporate more traditional elements – and to offer space for participation by all. We view the whole of our lives to be acts of worship to God, not just on a Sunday.
2. **Learning**...we seek to embrace the Bible as our supreme guide for faith and life - and believe we are built up through inspired, relevant, biblical teaching. We also seek to help one another grow together in our discipleship through our personal study, careful reading and interpretation of and active obedience to its message.
3. **Prayer**...we seek to commit ourselves to earnest, believing and persistent prayer as the primary means through which the Holy Spirit changes us, our community and ultimately the world. We desire to incorporate such prayer within our personal lives, our small groups and our services.
4. **Care**...we seek to build a community of faith where everyone feels accepted, cared for and loved. We also seek to equip and develop each person that they may realise their full potential and wholeness in Christ. One of the key vehicles for providing such care and fellowship within our church is our small group ministry.

From these four foundational bases, flow our acts of service and outreach.

5. **Service**...we seek to involve every member in ministry, which means that every individual within the “body” has a part to play in the overall health, ministry and mission of our church. This occurs as each one recognises their God-given gifts and abilities and serves one another accordingly in the power of the Holy Spirit.²
6. **Mission**...we seek to be effective and sensitive in our outreach, through word and deed, extending from each one of us into the wider community and out to the world. As we engage in this we desire to introduce others into a relationship with Jesus Christ and to see God’s Kingdom come increasingly and his will be done.

These six statements, together, comprise a foundation, enabling us to live by & realise our purpose:

“Changing Lives – Changing Communities”

² See Romans 12:1-8 & 1 Corinthians 12:1-31.

Our Core Beliefs.

In our contemporary culture it is easy to be overly absorbed with our own personal experience, preferences, history, beliefs and church background. When we do this we are in danger of putting God on the sideline and approaching life with ourselves in the driver's seat. Moreover, we often tend to promote our own individualised viewpoint and fail to join hands with all who love and follow Jesus Christ and embrace the truth that is found in him.

As a church, we want to ensure that this does not happen by seeking to understand together who God is, how he has acted in our world and what he is doing now. We need to learn to listen to God and interact with him as well as with one another. In other words it is very important, especially for those who claim to know and follow Jesus Christ, to become more theologically aware. Theology can become an undervalued and neglected discipline in any church and time. The word itself simply means "a word or instruction about God". When we use the term to describe our belief structure we are referring to a systematic outline of the truth about God, humanity and the world that has been revealed to us in Scripture and preserved through the ages in Christian Tradition. ACC is founded upon and remains committed to such truth as expressed in historic, orthodox Christianity.

The Church is a living organism of believers and the primary means whereby the Kingdom of God is extended in the world. It was built on the person of Jesus Christ and the early teachings of the first Apostles about him (cf. Ephesians 2:20). It is not a melting pot for different ideas or preferences, nor is it driven by the majority's wishes or the minority's rights. Rather, in each generation we seek to interpret Scripture in our own time and culture to better understand what God has said and is saying - as the basis of what we should believe and how we should live.

As a Christian community, we will ultimately be strengthened by aligning ourselves with God and his Word as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and in the Bible. If we do this, we will find a common place of unity and a deep sense of oneness. As we seek to grow together, we pray that God grants us the grace to do just this.

The following caution of the Apostle John is very fitting in regard to this when he says:

"Anyone who gets so progressive in their thinking that they walk out on the teaching of Christ, walks out on God. But whoever stays with the teaching, stays faithful to both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9, The Message)

Having said this we want to recognise two other important supplementary points:

1. That theology (or belief) without *love* and *action* is lifeless, cold and potentially divisive (cf. James 2:14-26). God speaks to us in Scripture not merely to educate our minds, but rather to shape our characters, our attitudes, our behaviours and ultimately to change our lives. The vital doctrines listed here must be ignited by the Holy Spirit. Only he can enlighten our minds to understand and receive these truths and empower us to live by them.

2. What you will find here is what we would term our *Core Beliefs*. The Bible does not provide us with a blueprint for every belief. God is not after uniformity and certainly does not want to clone us either by how we look or how we think. We recognise there are many areas of biblical teaching on which believers hold divergent views. Our ultimate unity is based on our common *life* in Christ. This should not lead to despair, division or confusion, but rather enhance our beautiful diversity as God's people. We believe that the following statement is a wise motto that we should strive to live by: **"In essentials - unity. In non-essentials - liberty. In all things - charity."**

Statement of Belief.

*We believe in one **God**, the Father Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of all things, who eternally exists as a community of three persons sharing one essential nature.*

*We believe in **Jesus Christ**, his only Son, our Lord;*

...that he came into our world as the promised Saviour and King of Israel,

...that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary,

...that he lived a life of perfect obedience to God and love towards others,

...that he suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all humanity,

...that he was buried, and descended into the place of the dead, but on the third day he rose again – having conquered death, sin and all the powers of evil,

...that he ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God his Father, at the place of all authority, where he prays for and represents us before God,

...that he has established his Kingdom on earth and will come again to fully consummate this Kingdom and to judge all who are alive as well as those who have died.

*We believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the Author and Giver of life;*

...who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

...who is given freely to all who believe in Jesus Christ,

...who enables and equips us fully for life and service.

*We believe in one, holy, apostolic and universal **Church**, the fellowship of all Christians both now and through all ages;*

...in the gift of the forgiveness of sins,

...in the promise of the resurrection of the body,

...in the gift and promise of eternal life.

The Bible

We also believe that God, through the Holy Spirit, used human agents to record and preserve the integrity of the contents of the 66 books which we call the Holy Bible. We believe that, because the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is the written Word of God, is without error in all that it affirms and is therefore authoritative, trustworthy, complete and relevant for life in every generation and age. God, who gave us these Scriptures, still speaks powerfully and directly through them today, as they witness to Jesus Christ who is the living Word of God, and through whose life and teaching we interpret the rest of Scripture. The supreme reasons why the Scriptures have been given are: to reveal to us who God truly is, to teach us about his purpose in human history, and to instruct us how we may know him and show us how we should now live.

Our Core Values & Practices.

Our Values define the conduct, attitudes and behaviour we expect from our members. We will, at all times, seek to act with:

- **Integrity** – We are committed to God in the Way of Jesus³
- **Responsibility** – We are committed to God's world
- **Impartiality** – We are committed to the Church in all its forms
- **Selflessness** – We are committed to one another in love.

Members of ACC hold in common the following basic core values and several practices that flow from them. We regard these as basic Christian guidelines or rules which should shape our lives as we seek to follow Jesus Christ today.

1. Commitment to God in the Way of Jesus (Living with integrity).

We are committed to acting justly, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.⁴ In the words of Jesus, we seek to live by the Great Commandment: *Loving God and loving our neighbours* – including those who might be considered “the least of these” and even our enemies. We understand the gospel to be centred in the person of Jesus Christ and in his message of the Kingdom of God - a message offering reconciliation with God, humanity, creation, and oneself.

We are committed to what one might refer to as a *generous orthodoxy* in our faith and practice – by which we mean affirming the core tenets of the historic, Christian faith while at the same time heeding closely the biblical encouragement to love one another even when differences and disagreements may sometimes arise between us. We also seek to embrace the historic spiritual practices, including prayer, meditation, contemplation, study, solitude, silence, service, and fellowship, believing that a healthy theology cannot and should not be separated from a healthy spirituality.

PRACTICES:

- As Christ-centred people - to understand the gospel in terms of Jesus' radical, profound, and expansive message of the Kingdom (or rule) of God.
- As people seeking to be formed spiritually in the Way of Christ - to learn historic Christian spiritual practices (or disciplines), and to use them for the development of character, integrity, and virtue which flow from experiencing true communion with God.
- As participants in the historic Christian faith - to be humble learners, to stimulate learning in others, and to give priority to love over knowledge, while still highly valuing such knowledge of God and his activity in our world.
- As lovers of God and God's truth - to seek wisdom and understanding, which are the true goals of theology, and to engage in respectful, thoughtful, sacred conversation about God, the world, and the Church.

³ The first Christians were known as “People of The Way” (cf. John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23)

⁴ Micah 6:8

2. Commitment to God's world (Living responsibly).

We seek to practice our faith *missionally* – that is, we do not isolate ourselves from this world, but rather, we follow Christ into and within our world.

We seek to fulfil the mission of God in our generation, and to pass the baton faithfully to the next generation.

We believe the Church exists for the benefit and blessing of the world at large; we seek therefore not to be blessed *to* the exclusion of everyone else, but rather *for* the benefit of others.

We see the earth and all it contains as God's beloved creation, and so join God in seeking its good, its healing, and its blessing.

PRACTICES:

- To build relationships with our neighbours and to seek the good of our neighbourhoods, our communities and our cities.
- To seek reconciliation and make peace with those who might oppose us.
- To encourage & cherish younger people and to honour & learn from older people.
- To honour creation, to protect it and work towards its healing.
- To build friendships across gender, racial, ethnic, economic and other boundaries.
- To be involved in issues or causes of peace and justice.

3. Commitment to the Church in all its forms (Living impartially).

We are committed to honour and serve the Christian Church in all its forms. Rather than favouring some forms of the Church and critiquing or rejecting others, we recognise that every form of the Church has both weaknesses and strengths, both liabilities and potential.

We believe the rampant injustice and sin in our world requires the sincere, collaborative, and whole-hearted response of all Christians in all denominations, from the most historic and hierarchical, through the range of local and congregational churches, to the most spontaneous and informal expressions of Church.

We seek to be peace-loving and inclusive toward all our Christian sisters and brothers, rather than elitist and critical. We own the many failures of the Church as *our* failures, which humble us and call us to repentance, and we also celebrate the many heroes and virtues of the church, which inspire us and give us hope.

PRACTICES:

- To be actively and positively involved in and fully supportive of our local congregation. We will also seek to build sincere friendships with believers from all other Trinitarian Christian traditions, working with such churches, so that together we may live out an authentic Christian faith in true Christian community
- To seek peace among all followers of Christ, and to offer critique only prayerfully and when necessary, with grace, and without judgment, avoiding rash statements, and repenting when harsh statements are made. To speak positively of fellow Christians whenever possible, including those with whom we may disagree.

4. Commitment to one another in love (Living selflessly).

In order to strengthen our shared faith and resolve, and in order to encourage and learn from one another in our diversity through respectful, sacred conversations, we value time and interaction with other friends who share this rule and its practices.

We identify ourselves as members of this growing, global, inclusive community of brothers and sisters seeking to follow the Way of Jesus.

We welcome others into this friendship as well.

We bring whatever resources we can to enrich this shared faith and resolve.

PRACTICES:

- To give one another the gift of our presence at regular gatherings whenever possible (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25).
- To publicly self-identify with our church where appropriate and to represent our church well whenever we can; to exemplify the best of what our church strives to be and do.
- To invite others to participate with us and always welcome new participants.
- To seek to be positive and constructive in caring for our church friendship. To find specific ways we can help build the circle of friends in our church.
- To stay reconciled to one another. To give one another the gift of commitment - not to give up on, betray, slander or reject one another, but instead, to encourage, honour, edify and care for one another.
- To stay informed about and involved in the mission of God locally and globally.

Summary

These values and practices underpin the services we provide and the organisation of which we are a part. We are, therefore, committed to:

- **People** – putting others before ourselves, valuing each other and enabling everyone to achieve their full potential.
- **Excellence** – continuously monitoring and improving what we do.
- **Empowerment** – trusting people and supporting a positive approach to change and problem solving.
- **Partnerships** – working with others to promote sustainable well-being in the church and in the wider communities.
- **Learning** – encouraging everyone to grow in knowledge, understanding & love and to be constantly changed through this process.
- **Equality** - treating everyone (both inside and outside our church) with grace and unconditional love irrespective of their own diverse background or needs.

Church Governance.

Every church, as an organisation, needs a structure to provide the framework within which their activities are conducted and decisions are taken and overseen. Successful organisations, including modern churches, have grasped the need for having decisive, effective as well as humble, sensitive leadership that aims to be inspirational in its envisioning and courageous in its decision making.

Our conviction is that successful and growing churches have invested such leadership authority and responsibility in the role of the Pastor. This individual, accountable to the Trustees (who are the key guardians of the “Trust”, i.e. our church) and working in close harmony with the Leadership Team, is called to lead as Jesus did, setting out a picture of the future that excites and encourages those who follow to be passionate about their individual contribution. This church seeks to follow this approach and entrust the Pastor and the Leadership Team to lead with love and compassion and to structure and oversee the work of the church with wisdom and experience that results in us fulfilling our purpose of - “Changing Lives and Changing Communities”.

Our Leadership and ministry support structure look something like this:



“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13 NLT)

The Role of Pastor

The current staff role of Pastor is a paid position (cf. 1 Timothy 5:18). The Pastor has both the authority and responsibility to lead the church. They are also a member of the Leadership Team, and their essential role is to lead the team by serving and serve the team by leading, much like a captain on a sports team.

The Pastor shall attend and lead all Leadership Team meetings, except when they meet in closed session. All decisions made by the Leadership Team should involve the consensus of all members, where possible. If they are unable to reach consensus, a decision may be carried only by a simple majority vote.

On very rare occasions, where no progress is being made, the Pastor will be expected to take responsibility for arriving at a decision that not all individual team members have signed up to. As a pattern of this *type* of leadership from the life of Jesus, in love and humility he often listened to what his disciples said, reconciled their differences, resolved their concerns and answered their questions, but ultimately he knew where God was taking them and his often unthinkable decisions led them to the Cross, and subsequently out into the world as his witnesses.

The Pastor of ACC shall fulfil the following roles and responsibilities, in accordance with their job description and contract of employment:

1. To provide strategic leadership, oversight and direction, working closely within the Leadership Team in all areas of church ministry. At all times, they should act as a servant leader being held to account for the leadership they offer to the team and the church.
2. To communicate the vision contained in this document, and any other ways God may speak to them, and to empower, enable and encourage the Leadership Team and all church members to follow such a vision by using their gifts, experiences and personal qualities toward changing lives, changing communities.
3. To plan and coordinate the preaching/ teaching ministry of the church. The expectation is that the Pastor should cover a minimum of 60% of the preaching/ teaching in our services.
4. To oversee the pastoral care of all church members and adherents. To be available for such areas as counselling, visitation, marriages, funerals, baptisms and child dedications. To set in place appropriate structures and processes to meet the needs of church members and those who seek the support and care of the church.
5. To oversee the mission and outreach activities of the church, beginning in our local communities and extending beyond this around the world.
6. To represent the church with integrity and enthusiasm in our wider local community, and to establish, as appropriate, contacts, partnerships and relationships with other church leaders, community representatives and community organisations.
7. To mentor, guide and support the Leadership Team and any other staff members the church may employ, whether full or part time. And to act as the line manager for such staff on behalf of the Leadership Team.

We also have a **Pastoral Care Group**, comprised of men and women from our church, who seek to assist the Pastor and Leadership Team in the various aspects of the work of pastoral care, including praying with people, welcoming newcomers, helping others find the support they may require during times of difficulty, need or crisis, home and hospital visits etc. Currently one of our Leadership Team heads up this group.

In the event of a **Pastoral Vacancy**, a chair of the Leadership Team shall be appointed from within the Leadership Team, and approved by a show of hands at a special church meeting. This position should be revisited and approved at the subsequent AGM(s).

A call to fulfil the role of Pastor (and any other staff ministry position) shall only be issued if at least 66% of church members vote and, of those who vote, at least 66% vote in favour of calling the preferred candidate to the role.

As means permit, the Pastor shall serve for a five year term of office. Thereafter they may continue to serve for further five years terms, and this shall be approved by a 66% vote of no less than 66% of church members who vote.

Where there are performance or conduct matters involving the Pastor (or any staff members), or a significant breach of their contract, it is the responsibility of the Leadership Team and Trustees to address such concerns and, at their discretion, to call in an appropriate independent advisor/ consultant of their choice, and if necessary remove the Pastor from office.

The Role of the Leadership Team

The **Leadership Team** comprise of men and women, who are ultimately responsible for the spiritual oversight of the church. Mature church members, in good standing, may serve in this role. Together, they serve and lead the church as “shepherds”, acknowledging Christ alone as the *head* of the Church and the “Chief Shepherd”, whom they represent (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-2).

The Bible refers to such leaders as “elders” (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7). We do not believe that this expression was ever meant to imply that they were to be, exclusively, elderly men. For practical purposes, therefore, we refer to those who fulfil the role of an “elder” as our Leadership Team. The character qualities and competencies listed in this same passage are still very much relevant and describe the role or function that such a person fulfils within the church. Working closely with the Pastor, their primary responsibility is to oversee the vision, direction and ministries of the church as well as caring for all its members.

Process of selection:

Nomination - The names of church members with the qualities and potential to serve on the Leadership Team may be nominated by members of the congregation or by the Leadership Team.

Review of nominations - After review by the Leadership Team, the names of proposed and supported Leadership Team candidates will be submitted to the congregation for consideration, endorsement and then, if approved by 66% of those voting, that person will be invited to join the Leadership Team.

Tenure – It is expected that members of the Leadership Team will serve for a maximum of seven years. Three months before the AGM, each member will be given the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment and willingness to serve for another year. This will be reported at the AGM.

After serving for the full term of seven years, it is expected that a member will step down for a year's sabbatical. Such a person may be invited to join the Leadership Team after this period, via the regular nomination process.

The Role of the Deacons

The **Deacons**, comprised as a team of men and women, take their direction from the Leadership Team, whom they seek to work closely with and support. Their primary responsibility is to oversee all the practical aspects of our church life, as well as our facilities.

Process of selection:

Nomination - The names of church members with the qualities and potential to serve as Deacons may be nominated by members of the congregation or by the Leadership Team

Review of Nominations - After review by the Leadership Team, the names of proposed and supported future Deacons will be submitted to the congregation for consideration, endorsement and then, if approved by 66% of those voting, that person will be invited to join the Deacons.

Tenure - Members of the Deacons will serve with no maximum restriction of tenure. Three months before the AGM however, each member will be given the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment and willingness to serve for another year. This will be reported at the AGM.

Other Staff Positions

Until recently we have also employed a **Youth & Schools Worker**. This too is a paid position, the tenure of which will be based on agreed contract terms. *This position is currently under review.*

The Role of the Youth & Schools Worker

1. To represent the church with integrity and enthusiasm in the wider community amongst young people and parents, including school and inter-church/organisational contexts. This role will involve working in a chaplaincy capacity, where invited, in Tinto Primary and Hillpark Secondary schools, as well as creating and maintaining links with local and national projects.
2. To plan and co-ordinate, alongside the wider church curriculum, a teaching programme tailored for young people, that will allow them to: come to faith, deepen their faith, engage with the wider church family and share their faith in the communities in which they find themselves.
3. To provide opportunities for young people to invite their friends to be part of the church community in social and educational contexts, giving opportunities for young people to share their faith, and their friends to hear about the beliefs of the church. Opportunity will also be sought for young people to meet, engage and worship with other Christian young people locally, nationally, and, where possible, internationally.
4. To maintain a safe place in the church that young people can come in to and be welcomed, regardless of background.
5. To oversee the care, discipleship and support of young people in the church & the community.
6. To equip and encourage the wider congregation in their service of young people, to represent young people to the leadership and the congregation, and to represent the leadership and congregation to the young people.

The Youth & Schools Worker shall be accountable to the Pastor for line management issues and to the wider Leadership Team for oversight and direction.

Any future staff positions will be considered as means are available and needs arise.

It is also our expectation that the Youth Worker and Church Treasurer serve as ex-officio members of the Deacons team, and attend their meetings when necessary.

The Office Bearers

The office bearers of the church shall normally be the **Pastor**, the **Church Secretary**, the **Treasurer** and the **Trustees**. The Church Secretary should normally also be a member of the Leadership Team.

The Role of the Trustees

Trustees are those primarily responsible for guarding the “Trust” (i.e. our church). They will be mature church members, in good standing whose experience and integrity will allow them to oversee the progress of the church and hold the Pastor and Leadership Team to account for the Purpose and Direction of the Trust – specifically, this could include matters of salary or contract in relation to the Pastor and any other staff member.

The Trustees of a church have certain legal duties under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005; and the statement made about liability and membership earlier does not apply to any personal liabilities they might incur if they are in breach of these duties. They would not be liable for errors of judgement etc. as long as they have taken appropriate advice before making decisions. Other duties of the Trustees at ACC are as listed in our Church Constitution.

The Trustees have a legal responsibility for all income, expenditure and the funds of the church. Such income and expenditure must be incorporated into the church’s annual financial statements, potentially as restricted funds. This includes all organisations and events within the church if their income and expenditure is material. If there is the possibility of a church organisation or event incurring a material deficit that will require a subsidy from general funds, this should be requested from the Trustees and approved by them beforehand.

Process of selection:

Nomination - The names of church members with the qualities and potential to serve as Trustees may be nominated by members of the congregation or by the Leadership Team.

Review of nominations - After review by the Leadership Team, the names of proposed and supported future Trustees will be submitted to the congregation for consideration, endorsement and then, if approved by 66% of those voting, that person will be invited to become a Trustee.

Tenure – It is expected that Trustees should serve for at least five years. Three months before the AGM, each Trustee will be given the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment and willingness to serve for another year. This will be reported at the AGM. They may, of course, choose not to have their names put forward for continued service prior to any AGM.

There should be a minimum of *three* Trustees in position at all times up to a maximum of *seven*. The majority of currently serving Trustees shall also be members of the Leadership Team. Trustees should meet a minimum of two times each year.

A Trustee who has a personal interest in any transaction or arrangement which the church is proposing to enter into, must declare that interest at the relevant church or Trustees meeting. They will not vote on that issue. A Trustee will not be debarred from entering into an arrangement with the church in which they have a personal interest.

Misconduct

Any person in a leadership position in the church may be requested by the Leadership Team to step down from their position due to inappropriate behaviour or misconduct in either fulfilling their duties or in their private life. This decision must have a majority of serving members of the Leadership Team vote in favour, before it is carried. If any member of the church has a grievance with a member of staff, and is unable to resolve such with the person in question, they should approach a member of the Leadership Team with a view to having the matter resolved.

The Annual General Meeting

An AGM (Annual General Meeting) shall be held each year within six months of the end of the church's financial year. Business shall include a statement of the church's audited accounts, consultation about the church's work, ministry and policy, a membership update and business remitted from the Office Bearers and other Trustees. In order for an AGM to take place, there should be no less than a quorum of 50% of church members present. A Special Church Meeting may be called at any time by the Leadership Team, Office Bearers or by a minimum of 66% of the church members.

Membership

Introduction to membership.

In our contemporary culture, so often people are suspicious of organisations which require them to become official members and are reluctant to join and commit themselves to such groups. This is partly due to them, perhaps, having bad experiences in the past when the organisation did not turn out to be what they expected or fulfil the promises and obligations they made. However, this can also be due to a modern desire to be independent, autonomous and in control of one's own life.

Sometimes in church we hear people say things like, "I can be just as involved or committed to something without signing a piece of paper or having my name added to a roll." Or "I know people who regard themselves as members of this organisation who do a lot less than I do." Both of these statements have some validity and are often true.

Here at ACC we do not regard "Church" to be primarily an organisation, a society or club for religious people or just a building that we meet in. Rather, it is a family of people who are joined together as a community by their common life and faith in Jesus Christ and who are all at different stages on that journey of faith.

What does the Bible say about membership?

In both the Old and New Testaments, knowing God and following Him involves being part of a specific community of people whom God had called out to belong to Him and to one another. For Israel this is expressed over and over again as something very important that they were never to forget: "You are a special people, belonging to the LORD your God, whom he has chosen out of all peoples on the earth to be his treasured possession." (Deuteronomy 7:6)

The people were united to one another by their faith in the God who had delivered them from slavery, who loved, guided and protected them. They were also united by how they worshipped God, how they lived their lives together and even by what they avoided doing

Why was this so important? For two reasons: (a) Firstly because this is what we believe God is like. The God revealed in the Bible lives in a perfect community of three persons, all sharing the same essence, dwelling together in unity, in love and always acting in harmony with one another, never independently or alone. (b) Secondly because the one thing which the Creator says clearly, back in the beginning, that is "not good" about his creation is when someone is alone or acts independently (cf. Genesis 2:18). We are therefore literally made for community - to belong to God and to one another.

Similarly in the New Testament, Jesus initially called together twelve disciples that they might be "with him" and that he might send them out to share the good news of him with others. When the Spirit came upon the first believers, it says they "devoted themselves to...fellowship" or, sharing their lives together and also with others. The early church saw themselves as being "members of one another" in a community of faith (cf. Ephesians 4:25).

There are two images used for all of this in the New Testament. Firstly there is the organic image of a limb as a member of the human body. We see Christians described in this way in passages such as Ephesians 5:30, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. This image reminds us that we are all joined together by God because of our relationship with Jesus Christ and the presence of the Spirit within us. Secondly there is the political image of a citizen as an active member of a specific community (a household, a city or a nation). We see this described in passages such as Ephesians 2:19, Colossians 1:12-13 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.

What does this look like at ACC?

- Belonging to the community
- Being part of the family
- Serving others as part of the body

We see membership at our church like a set of concentric circles, each one representing a different stage an individual might find themselves in at various times in their lives.

1. The outer circle we might describe as “the community”. Because it’s the largest of the circles, this would include anyone who feels they belong to ACC, whatever that means for them.

They may be investigating the Christian Faith, or just checking us out as a church. Maybe they have been attending for sometime, or are part of one of the various groups or events we organise, but due to personal circumstances, don’t feel ready just yet to move further in towards the centre.

That’s fine, and if you are such a person, please know that we welcome you, want you to know you belong to us, and we want to give you the time and space you need.

2. The next circle we might describe as “the family”. Being part of any church family includes how we interact with one another, our leaders and the wider community. This section represents those who would definitely identify themselves as followers of Jesus and want to officially recognise that by getting more actively involved in our church family, building relationships with others and looking for opportunities to grow in their faith.

For those in this circle we would expect that they either are or commit themselves to being baptised, that they participate regularly in Communion and in our times of corporate worship together, that they seek to grow in their faith by joining a hub or a discipleship group and that they look for ways to start getting involved in one of our areas of ministry.

Also, those in this circle will be included on our official list of members and will have the opportunity to vote on key decisions in our church life. We would expect that such people would also contribute financially, as they are able, to the work of the church, and that they will be in alignment with our values, beliefs and practices and always seek to preserve the unity of the church.

3. The inner circle we might describe as “the body”, and those who are active at this level would be involved in serving or even in a leadership capacity within the church. It could mean leading (or co-leading) one or more of our key ministries within the church, or even serving on one of the leadership groups (Leadership Team, Deacons or Trustees). Paul uses this image of in Romans 12 & 1 Corinthians 12 to describe people who are discovering and using their spiritual gifts to serve one another as members of “the body of Christ”.

Those in this circle would also include members who are available to, or are involved in, discipling others in the Christian faith. We would also view people in this circle as ones who provide specific pastoral care towards others and helping them in their faith journey, though we recognise that it is also all of our responsibility to care for one another as members of the body.

Next steps to take in becoming a member.

Finally, and practically, what should someone do in order to affirm that they wish to be a member of ACC?

1. If they are unsure whether or not they are officially members, they should speak to the Pastor or one of the Leadership Team and indicate they would like to be recognised as a member.
2. If necessary or required, one of the Leadership Team will visit with the person/ family, share with them more about the structure, beliefs and values of our church, answer any questions they may have, and discuss ways they can be more involved in the life of our church.
3. At either the next Town Hall meeting or AGM we will announce publicly those who have become active members of the church.

Church Policies & Guidelines.

ACC has also agreed a number of policies and guidelines. These policies are there largely to promote the safety and wellbeing of all individuals. Currently they are:

- Child/ Vulnerable Groups Protection, and accompanying Good Practice Guidelines
- Data Protection, and Copyright Principles and Guidelines
- Health and Safety, and accompanying Good Practice Guidelines
- Food Safety Guidelines

Children & Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy

The church regards the protection of vulnerable groups and good working practice as a priority. Our policy meets all legal requirements, and is registered with the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service.

Everyone working with children, young people and vulnerable groups will:

- Be registered under the PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme, as administered by Disclosure Scotland
- Be adequately trained and supervised
- Understand and follow the Church's Child Protection Policy and Guidelines.

Data Protection Principles

The Data Protection Act 1998 is designed to provide privacy protection for individuals about whom personal, identifying data is kept. It lays down 'best practice' principles for those who keep the data and it applies to paper records as well as computerised information. The Act covers the whole of the UK, and all organisations, including churches, must comply with the rules on processing data.

Copyright Issues

The church will hold copies of a relevant copyright licence for playing of music or video clips as well as the display of song lyrics. Information on such current licences can be obtained from the church office.

Health and Safety

Here at ACC, we recognise and accept our responsibility to provide, so far as it is practicable, a safe and healthy environment, with a view to ensuring the healthy, safety and welfare of those who use the church premises. The church will, therefore, take all necessary steps within its power to meet its responsibilities so far as is reasonably practicable and operate within the statutory requirements the church has towards its employees and those who use its premises. **Risk Assessments** for all church activities that have elements of Health and Safety concerns will be completed and reviewed every two years, or if any significant changes take place to our facilities or programmes

Food Safety

Food Safety is dealt with by the Environmental Health Department. We state the relevant procedures which we seek to fully adhere to on the public notice in the kitchen.

To facilitate the implementation of these guidelines, the **Deacons** as a group are the designated persons to oversee and maintain health and safety responsibilities. In addition to this, all church members are expected to co-operate in putting the church's health and safety guidelines into practice. A **record book** is kept in the church office in which one can record any health or safety concerns or report any accidents that occur on the premises.

Financial Principles and Guidelines.

The following principles and guidelines apply to the financial affairs of the church. These do not form part of the constitution but are supplementary to it (hence their inclusion in this church handbook). They may be changed by a decision of the Trustees, except where full congregational approval is specifically required.

The Trustees of the church shall ensure that proper accounting records are maintained. The church's financial year shall end on 31st December. Prior to the AGM, the church accounts and the accounts of all church organisations, including details of salaries or other remuneration, allowances paid, or expenses reimbursed to the church staff and/ or other members of the church, shall be examined and/ or audited by suitably qualified persons in accordance with the requirements of current legislation.

Heritable property and assets

All heritable properties of the church shall be held on behalf of the church by the Trustees.

In the event of the church being dissolved or otherwise ceasing to exist, the assets of the church shall be applied for charitable purposes. In the absence of any contrary decision by a majority vote of 66% of members present and voting at a properly constituted Church Meeting, the assets shall become the property of whatever body or fund the Trustees decide to be applied in accordance with the charitable purposes of the organisation.

Treasurer

The Church Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the following:

Income

We encourage members to give to the church via a Standing Order. People may also give through weekly Sunday offerings or through one-off donations, which should be counted by a minimum of two persons and the amount recorded in the appropriate book. People may also make their donations to the church with Gift Aid or through the Charities Aid Foundation.

Stewardship & Tithing

Tithing (or giving one tenth of our income to God's work) is a principle set forth in Scripture and can be a helpful starting point for how we can learn to be good stewards of our money. It is referred to many times in both the Old and New Testaments. However, there has been considerable debate among Christians down through the ages whether this method of giving is required of Christians today, so we would encourage all members to give generously, first to God and his work through the local church, and then to others as they are able.

Authorisation of expenditure

The Treasurer or Pastor singly can authorise expenditure of up to £100, within budget.

The Treasurer, Deacons and Leadership Team together can authorise expenditure of up to £1000, within budget.

The Treasurer can authorise routine expenditure over this amount (ie. electricity, sundry repairs, and outstanding bills).

Non-routine expenditure over £1000 must be authorised by the Leadership Team and Trustees, within budget.

Major contracts or purchases must be authorised by the congregation as a whole at a special church meeting.

Payments

All cheques, bank transfers etc. must be signed or validated by two authorised signatures.

New bank signatories must be authorised by the Trustees.

The Treasurer is authorised to transfer money between the church's accounts.

Annual budget

The Pastor's, and other staff-members', salaries will be reviewed and considered by the Trustees without the pastor or any staff present.

The Trustees will approve the annual estimated expenditure before or within one month after the start of each financial year.

Annual financial statements

The annual financial statements (accounts) will be presented to the Trustees for formal approval before they are presented to the congregation at the AGM. Copies will be available to the congregation at least 14 days before the AGM. At the AGM members will have the opportunity to discuss and ask any pertinent questions about the financial statements.

External auditors and accountants

The church will conform to the requirements of the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator and other regulatory bodies concerning the format of the financial statements, the appointment of an external auditor and any other required procedures. Where an external auditor is appointed, this appointment will normally be for a maximum of five years after which the Trustees will normally seek new tenders for the work.

Liability of members

Members of the church have no liability to pay sums to help meet the debts (or other liabilities) of the church if it is wound up. If the church is unable to meet its debts, the members will not be held responsible.

Property

A special church members meeting will be required before the Trustees are authorised to purchase, sell or offer as security any land or buildings belonging to the church.

Booking and Using the Facilities.

Booking the church facilities for meetings or other activities can be arranged by contacting the Deacons with the date and time desired and the facilities are to be used. This may be done by telephone in the first instance but should be confirmed in writing. We keep a record book in the church office, in which all uses of the building, by members and guests, should be recorded in advance. Access would need to be arranged in advance with the Deacons.

Setting up the areas to be used and clearing up at the end of the activity is the responsibility of the group using the facilities. Please leave all rooms tidy and with furniture replaced.

We currently charge £15 per hour for non-members and £10 per hour for members. Appropriate rental forms are kept in the church office, and should be completed in advance of any bookings.

General procedures for services & use of the building.

Anyone wishing to have any special service in the church should approach the Deacons in the first instance who, after considering the request, will then discuss the details and date of the service with them and make any special arrangements for setting up the church.

Communion

Deacons are normally responsible to set up for Communion, whether this occurs during a Sunday evening or morning service. Communion supplies are kept in the cupboard in the small Sunday school room beside the Crèche.

Dedications

Parents wishing to dedicate their babies or infants publicly should consult with the Pastor. Dedications are normally performed during a Sunday morning service when the parents will be asked to join the Pastor on the platform, answer a few pre-arranged questions, and the child will then be dedicated to God and a special blessing pronounced over the child (1 Sam. 1:21-28; Luke 2:21-24). Please note we distinguish between *dedication* and *baptism*. This act does not make the child a Christian or a member of the church. If the dedicating parents prefer a guest or other church leader to do the dedication, they should consult with the Pastor and Leadership Team in advance.

Baptisms

Anyone wishing to be baptised in the church should approach the Pastor, Youth Worker or one of the Leadership Team in the first instance. A meeting will then be arranged with the candidate for baptism, at which the theological and practical significance of baptism will be discussed. If the leader is satisfied that the person understands and is ready for baptism, a date can be arranged and announced to the church. Normally baptisms occur during a Sunday morning service and are conducted by the Pastor, Youth Worker or member of the Leadership Team. Once a date has been arranged the Deacons will then be consulted regarding the practical details for setting up the church.

Weddings

Anyone wishing to be married in the church should speak to the Pastor who is licensed in Scotland to perform wedding ceremonies. Normally the pastor will want to meet on several occasions with the couple to do pre-marriage preparation classes. All the details for the day of the wedding service would be agreed and arranged after a consultation between the couple and the person marrying them. Normally a donation is given to the church for use of the building as well as to the person officiating at the ceremony. These details should be agreed upon with the couple and arranged beforehand.

If the couple wish someone else in (or from without) the church to marry them, then there are legal procedures which can be followed to allow this. Such a person must be registered for the actual day and get a licence to marry from the General Register Office in Scotland. This would be done in consultation the Pastor and Leadership Team.

Funerals

Anyone requesting that a funeral take place in the church should speak to the Pastor who normally officiates at funeral services. The Pastor will arrange to meet with family members prior to the service.

If the family request someone else in (or from without) the church to officiate at the funeral service, they should arrange this in advance in consultation the Pastor and Leadership Team. All the details for the day of the funeral service would be arranged in consultation with what the family require and the Pastor (or person officiating). Normally a donation, at the family's discretion, may be given to the person officiating at the service.

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