

SUTTON BONINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

HANDBOOK 1985

(Agreed 21st October 1985)

1 WHO WE ARE

1.1 This local Church is known as SUTTON BONINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH. It is a member of the East Midlands Baptist Association.

1.2 Membership is open to all who profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and whose lives bear evidence of their profession.

2 WHAT WE BELIEVE

2.1 Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equal in one eternal, sovereign Godhead. (Matt 3:15-17; John 10:30; 14:26; 2 Cor 13:14)

2.2 The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin as the Son of God; He retained His Deity; He lived a sinless life as perfect man; He died on the cross as our representative and substitute; He rose bodily from the dead; He ascended into Heaven; He makes intercession for his people; He will personally return in glory. (Luke 1:26-35; Matt 16:16; Heb 7:26; 2 Cor 5:15; Rom 8:34; Tit 2:11-14)

2.3 Man has a fallen, sinful nature and is subject to God's wrath and condemnation. (Isa 53:6; John 3:36; Rom 3:23; 8:7-8)

2.4 The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given are divinely inspired, infallible and our supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:21) and are not to be added to in any way whatsoever.

2.5 Salvation is of God's grace only through individual faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every true believer receives eternal salvation and all unbelievers are eternally lost at death. (Rom 8:22-26; Matt 25:46)

2.6 The Holy Spirit's work is essential in an unbeliever, leading to the new birth, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He indwells and guides the believer, (John 3:3-8; Rom 8:9-11) and gives gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11-13). The continuing fullness of the Spirit shall be the aim of every believer. (Eph 5:11)

2.7 The true church is a spiritual body and priesthood comprising all genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 4:4-6; 1 Peter 2:4-9)

2.8 Believer's baptism is a scriptural command but it does not convey regenerating grace. (Matt 28:19)

2.9 Believers are to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ by the observance of the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine do not change in substance, neither do they in any way become a sacrifice for sins. (Luke 22:19-20; Cor 11:23-26)

3 HOW WE SHOULD BEHAVE

3.1 Living in holiness and brotherly love, endeavouring to encourage one another to love and good works. (Col 3:12-17; Heb 10:24; Gal 5:22-23)

3.2 Praying for one another, and studying the Scriptures personally and together. (Eph 3:14-19; 6:10; 2Tim 2:15; Col 3:16)

3.3 Showing understanding to one another. (Eph 4:30-32)

3.4 Endeavouring to avoid divisions. (Acts 2:42; Eph 4:3; Heb 10:25; 1 Cor 12:25-26)

3.5 meeting together often (Heb 10:25)

3.6 Praying for and supporting the Pastor and other leaders in the church. (Eph 6:18-19)

3.7 Avoiding criticism of members of the fellowship, especially in the presence of our children. (Gal 6:7; Jam 1:19; 3:1-18; Heb 13:17)

3.8 Wisely using as faithful stewards all the gifts, talents and possessions that God has entrusted to us (Matt 25:14-30; 1 Cor 12:14-25), practising the principle of tithing. (1 Tim 6:17-19; 2 Cor 9:6-7; Mal 3:10)

3.9 Witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed, taking part in the evangelisation of the world at home and abroad. (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

4 HOW WE OPERATE

4.1 The ultimate authority within the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. He grants His authority to His Body, the Church. The Church's leaders are to be called of God, be acknowledged by the Church and both receive the authority and accept the responsibility of leading and serving.

4.2 Those wishing to join the church shall apply to the pastor, an elder or a deacon (i.e the church officers). Thereafter the pastor, and elders will arrange an interview with the applicant. Subject to approval by the church officers reception into membership will take place at a service of worship.

4.3 Membership is also extended to those studying at local colleges or universities even though they may retain a membership with their home church.

4.4 Any member of the church whose conduct is inconsistent with scriptural principles shall be visited by the pastor and / or elders, lovingly counselled and, if necessary, cautioned. If such conduct is continued the matter may be brought to the Church meeting.

4.5 Members who move away from the area or who for other valid reasons are unable to attend church services or business meetings regularly will be transferred to Associate Membership, by the church officers. Full membership will be restored, if their circumstances change, at the discretion of the church officers.

4.6 Voting membership shall comprise all members of the church who are eighteen years of age and over, who have not been transferred to Associate Membership.

4.7 The ordinance of Believer's Baptism, by immersion, except when prevented by a physical condition, is practised by the church. Before a candidate is baptised the pastor and elders shall be

satisfied that he or she is a true believer professing repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4.8 When the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is observed all true believers who profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are seeking to walk in obedience to him, shall be invited to participate.

4.9 The membership shall meet for Christian fellowship and for the transaction of the business of the church at least three times a year. Thirty per cent of the total voting Membership shall constitute a quorum at any church meeting. A special church meeting shall be called at the discretion of the pastor or elders, a majority of the church officers, or at the written request of twenty five per cent of the voting members. Notice of such meetings shall be given at both services on the two previous Sundays and an agenda shall be posted on the previous Sunday. Items of any other business may be raised by any member but at the Chairman's discretion need not be discussed immediately.

4.10 A voting member may make arrangements with the secretary to record his vote in writing prior to the meeting in relation to any matter of business.

4.11 Deacons shall be appointed as required , elected by the church meeting from among the members of the church who are baptized as believers and over twenty - one years of age, to execute the business of the church. Nominations of persons who consent to stand for election shall be handed to the secretary or pastor at least fourteen days before the meeting at which the election shall take place. A list of nominations shall be posted on the church notice board on the two Sundays before that meeting. A member of less than six months standing shall not be eligible to stand for election. A nominee shall be elected if he obtains a vote in favour of not less than seventy five per cent of the Voting Membership present at that meeting (including postal votes) in a secret ballot. He shall hold office for up to three years and be eligible for re-election.

4.12 The appointment of an Elder is to be recommended to the church by the pastor and existing elders from among the membership of the church. He should be a baptized believer. The appointment of an elder shall be ratified if not less than seventy-five per cent of the total Voting Membership present at the meeting (including postal votes) support this appointment in a secret ballot. An elder shall hold office for up to five years and be eligible for reappointment.

4.13 The pastor shall be elected at a Special Church Meeting on the unanimous recommendation of the church officers. He shall be appointed if not less than seventy-five per cent of the total Voting Membership present at the meeting (including postal votes) vote in his favour.

4.14 The Pastor and elders are responsible for the appointment of leaders of all organisations in the church.

4.15 A secretary and treasurer shall be appointed biennially from among the deacons and elders and approved at the Annual Church meeting.

4.16 All persons appointed to an office in the church can be removed in a similar manner to that by which they were appointed.

4.17 A statement of audited church accounts, for the preceding calendar year, shall be presented at the Annual Church Meeting. The auditor to be appointed by the church officers.

4.18 These rules may be altered only at a special church meeting called for that purpose. One month's notice shall be given in writing of such proposed alterations and the opinion of the church officers shall be made known to the church before a decision is taken. This shall require not less

than seventy-five per cent of the total Voting Membership present at the meeting (including postal votes), to be in favour of the change.

5 APPROACHING WORSHIP

5.1 Prepare yourself by praying before you come to the House of God.

5.2 Be early for the service.

5.3 Bring your Bible with you. (Psalm. 1:2, 119:6, 2 Tim. 3:14-16)

5.4 Bring your children with you to the service. It is your duty and privilege to take care of them. (Deut. 6:4-9)

5.5 Enter reverently and joyfully: pray fervently: listen attentively; give praise from a grateful heart; worship God in the beauty of holiness. (Ecc. 5:1-6; Psalm 29:2)

5.6 Make the church your spiritual home. (Psalm. 3:1; Psalm. 84:1-3)