



How we do church together

February 2023

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Introduction

This booklet describes the way we have agreed to do church together at Kingfisher Church. This statement is not final and changes may be recommended by the elders when deemed appropriate.

Kingfisher Church is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) and was planted by St Neots Evangelical Church in 2013. These two churches seek to maintain a close gospel relationship.

Vision Statement

Kingfisher Church comprises of Christians who have committed to meet together to obey all the Bible's instructions for a church. This is our vision statement:



Living

...together as the place of God's presence,
guarding it, according to God's Word.

Expanding

...the church through God's Word.



The place of God's presence

We are seeking to live as the place of God's presence and fill our communities with that presence.

for the glory of God

Basis of Faith

We affirm the classic Christian creeds and confessions which summarise the historic message of the gospel and God's Trinitarian nature, and we rejoice in the summary statement of the Protestant Reformation – that salvation is revealed in Scripture alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, to the glory of God alone. As such, we consider the 1689 Baptist Confession¹ a faithful and helpful summary of the Bible's teaching.

All of our members joyfully affirm their agreement with and commitment to the following statement of faith, which we consider essential for biblical Christianity.

1. God

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

2. The Bible

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. The Human Race

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

5. Salvation

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. The Church

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

8. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

9. The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

¹ See kclp.uk/1689 (with some exceptions noted)

Membership

A church is a local gathering of Christian believers who are called 'members'. We recognise members of the church in order to strengthen personal faith, evangelise the world, expose false gospels, to edify the church, and to glorify God. Therefore, we expect every Christian associated with the church to be formally recognised as a member.

We recognise members by making doctrinal and relational commitments to one another, according to what is expected of every Christian. The doctrinal commitment is to accept the church's basis of faith and to consent to this statement. The relational commitment is described in the members' covenant.

Members' Covenant

All new members are required to make the following commitment to the church family. From time to time the church family will reaffirm this commitment to one another.

We believe that by God's grace we have been united with Jesus Christ through faith, and so, have fellowship with God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, relying on his gracious help, we promise to live together as Kingfisher Church.

We will welcome and test biblically instruction from the Scriptures, seeking to grow together into Christ.

As Christ has loved us, we will seek to love one another.

We will care for one another, humbly seeking to encourage, teach, and admonish as occasion may require.

We will share our joys and sorrows, and with gentleness seek to bear one another's burdens.

We will keep meeting together, sharing in the Lord's Supper, submitting to our leaders and remembering to pray for ourselves and others.

We will be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will work together to continue the evangelical ministry of this church. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of this church both financially and otherwise.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant us to live in such harmony with one another, that together we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bible references: John 13:34-35; Romans 12:5, 10; 14:19; 15:14; 1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; Ephesians 4:2, 3, 32; 5:21; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:9, 12-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:15; Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:24-25; James 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1 Peter 4:9; 5:5.

Recognising Members

All baptised² Christians attending the church will be asked by one of the elders to consider being recognised as a member. They will be given a copy of this statement and then visited by two elders (or their nominees). The purpose of this visit is to ascertain the applicants standing in the faith and acceptance of the basis of faith. The visit also gives opportunity for questions to be asked about the church. After this visit the elders will bring the applicant to the members who will be given a month to raise any concerns with the elders. After this month the members will be asked to recognise the new member as part of the church family and commit to them in the manner described in the members' covenant, this will happen formally during a convenient Sunday service. When someone is baptised by the church then, at the time of their baptism, they will be recognised as a member of the church having followed the process described here.

Church Discipline

The purpose of church discipline is to expose sin, warn of God's judgement, save sinners, protect other believers, and present a good witness for Jesus in the world. If a member's beliefs, conduct or commitment to the church wilfully and persistently deviates from clear biblical teaching and therefore calls into question their profession of faith, the church will take steps to encourage their repentance and restoration, in accordance with biblical principles. Formal church discipline should only be considered after individual private admonition has failed. If all efforts to resolve such matters are unsuccessful, then the elders will recommend to the church that the person's membership and access to the Lord's Supper be suspended or terminated. Any objections must be made according to biblical principles.

The following references are to guide our thinking and practice in this matter: Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-13; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11.

Church Family Meetings

Members should make every effort to attend the annual Members' Covenant Service and monthly Church Family Meetings at which matters relating to the life of the church are raised for discussion and prayer. All Church Family Meetings will be led by an elder.

It is important that all decisions taken by the church are taken responsibly, in a way which is loving, God-honouring, and endeavours to build up the body of Christ and encourage fellow members. In particular, nothing should be said or done which would cause unnecessary hurt or embarrassment to any member. It is our desire to move forward in unity but where, after an appropriate period of time for prayer and consultation, complete unity cannot be reached on a matter, it is the elders' responsibility to decide how to proceed.

Kingfisher Church Little Paxton as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation sits alongside the church. Its trustees will report to the church from time to time.

² As a church our conviction and practice is that the New Testament teaches that baptism follows conscious faith as a believer. However, we recognise the diversity of interpretation among evangelicals in this matter and respect the right of others to hold a view different from this position, and so welcome all baptised Christians into membership.

Leadership and Staff

Elders

The biblical pattern for church leadership is a group of mutually accountable men called elders. These elders are given to the church as under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus who is the head of the church, their commission is: “Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). They are responsible for:

- setting an example in godly living, both personally and in family life,
- ensuring the church is faithfully taught in the Bible, through public teaching, small groups, and personal mentoring, and to guard against false teaching – the elders will use the 1689 Baptist Confession as a teaching standard for the church³,
- praying regularly for the whole church family,
- equipping the whole church for works of service,
- to rule in the church with humility, exercising their authority according to the Scripture and Christian love, and so are ultimately responsible for organising all the church’s activity.

Elders are members of the church who are identified by their desire, character, and gifting as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

As part of their responsibility to encourage the use of the gifts of all members, the eldership is expected to work actively to identify and examine those suitable for the role of elder. Church members are encouraged to assist in this task by making suggestions.

Potential elders will be proposed to the members. It is our desire to move forward in unity but where, after an appropriate period of time for prayer and consultation, complete unity cannot be reached, it is the elders’ responsibility to decide how to proceed.

If the elders then feel it is right to proceed, the identification of new elders will be confirmed at a Church Family Meeting. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to his church and set apart as elders.

An elder may end their term of office at any time by resignation or removal. An elder will be removed from office by becoming biblically disqualified due to heresy, gross incompetence, or immoral conduct. Such matters will be investigated by the elders and notified to the members.

At the annual Members’ Covenant Service, with mutual confirmation, the elders will reaffirm before the church their commitment to continue in office. This provides a regular opportunity for the elders to consider their roles in the changing circumstances of their lives.

Employed members

When the need for a full-time worker is recognised by the church, the elders will prayerfully consider the matter and recommend to the church the way to proceed. In the case of an external candidate the membership must be allowed adequate opportunity to assess their suitability. Any full-time worker will be (or become) a member of the church.

³ See kclp.uk/1689 (with some exceptions noted)

If the employed member is a full-time elder their responsibilities are the same as for other elders but in addition they may have particular responsibility for certain areas such as the teaching of the church or aspects of leadership. The procedure for appointing a full-time elder is the same as for all elders. A full-time elder ceases to hold the office of elder when he leaves employment of the church.

Appendices – Positions adopted by the church

1 - Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We practice only the baptism of Christian believers in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). We believe this is best expressed by immersion in water but recognise the validity of other modes of administration. It is the responsibility of the elders to ascertain the genuineness of a candidate's profession of faith in Christ.

We will regularly observe the Lord's Supper together in obedience to his command (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). All those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, who are in good standing with this or another Christian church, will be welcomed to participate.

The inclusion of children is outlined in the church's guidance note: kclp.uk/children

2 - Ecumenicalism

As a member of the FIEC, Kingfisher Church agrees to abide by their statement on Gospel Unity.

<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/gospel-unity-statement>

3 – Women in Ministry

As a member of the FIEC, Kingfisher Church agrees to abide by their statement on Women in Ministry.

<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/women-in-ministry-statement>

At Kingfisher Church two roles in the church life are only for suitably qualified men: elders and preaching to the gathered church. All other activity may be conducted by suitably qualified women and men.

4 - Same Sex Marriage

As a member of the FIEC, Kingfisher Church agrees to abide by their statement on Same Sex Marriage.

<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/same-sex-marriage-statement>

5 – Safeguarding

Our Safeguarding policy and associated procedures, including our Complaints Procedure, are all available at kclp.uk/safeguarding.