

Hexthorpe Methodist Church: Policy & Aims

1. General

Our church exists as a local expression of the body of Christ in order:

1. To worship God in a manner which is worthy and fitting
2. To make disciples by effective evangelism and nurture
3. To provide biblical teaching which will enable people to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ
4. To be a fellowship that offers love, support and encouragement
5. To serve one another and the community in practical ways.

We endorse the evangelical basis of faith as outlined in the Deed of Union, 'The doctrines of the Evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based on the Divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledged this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice'.

We believe that growth is God's desire for our church and we commit ourselves to pray for this, and to order the life of our church and actively pursue all means whereby spiritual and numerical growth may be encouraged. To this end our VISION is:

To be a church which is growing:-

1. In numbers through sustained evangelism
2. In the quality of our individual and corporate life
3. In the commitment of every member to do the work of God within the body of Christ
4. In involvement with the world church
5. In positive influence within the community.

2. Membership

We regard church membership as a sign that a person, having committed themselves to Jesus Christ, now wishes to demonstrate their commitment to the local expression of his church, and thus to the wider Christian Church. Membership should be seen as demonstrating a desire to be identified with the members and leaders of the local church, to be loyal to them, and to accept the responsibility to play a full part in the life of the church.

AIMS

1. We will encourage all those who are born again believers to express their commitment to Hexthorpe Methodist Church by becoming members, and to testify to their faith at the Membership Recognition Service.
2. We will continue to encourage converted young people between the ages of 13 and 16 years to become Junior Members. This status may continue until they become adult members or they reach the age of 18.
3. We will continue to affirm the principle that those who are received as new members of our church are converted people who have been baptised.
4. We will endeavour to maintain a realistic and accurate membership list and will constantly review the names of those who should be asked to become members.
5. We will continue to require that all those who hold office within the church shall be church members.
6. When people transfer their membership to our church there will be an introductory meeting at which the responsibilities of membership will be

explained and they will be publicly welcomed during a Sunday service when they will give a testimony by whatever means are suitable.

3. Baptism

We will baptise both infants and adults in the appropriate circumstances following the procedures agreed by the Church Council. In the case of infants, a Service of Thanksgiving will be offered for children from non-Christian homes. They may be baptised later, in suitable circumstances, following attendance by the parents at a baptism preparation course. Infants from Christian homes will be baptised, though the parents may opt for a service of dedication.

AIMS

1. To offer proper preparation and follow-up for the parents of children who are baptised
2. To prepare those unbaptised adults who wish to be baptised. When adults are baptised they will simultaneously become church members having gone through suitable preparation for that.

4. Ministry and structure

We seek to establish the principle that ministry is the responsibility of the whole of the church, within which a variety of gifts and functions may be recognised and exercised.

AIMS

1. To enable the exercise of leadership over the whole of the life of the church by a Leadership Team, consisting of the minister, lay worker(s), church stewards, and any others whom the Church Council appoints. Such leadership will recognise the value of consensus, but will seek to give a clear lead under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It will endeavour to envision, to encourage, to guide and to advise. The Church Council may give it power to act on its behalf.
2. To enable all members of the church to discover their gifts and ministry which God is giving them and encourage them to exercise their ministry in an appropriate way.
3. To maintain such a level of fulltime and part-time ministry as is appropriate and available and to secure the maximum level of ministerial input.
4. To organise much of the oversight of the general work by appointing Teams for that purpose.
5. Regularly to examine the organisational and administrative aspects of the Church's life and to revise them, where appropriate, in order to match the organisational and decision making system to our developing needs.
6. To keep under review the effectiveness of internal communications.
7. To provide suitable training for the roles and responsibilities which people have and to provide role definitions.
8. To build a multi-ethnic leadership.

5. Pastoral care

We desire that all members of the church should receive the quality of pastoral care that will allow them to develop in their Christian experience and to feel loved and accepted by the church fellowship. In this we recognise that pastoral care will often be

offered and received on an informal basis, but that there is a place for an efficient formal framework.

AIMS

1. To enable class leaders to discharge their responsibilities conscientiously and to encourage members to feel that their class leader is available to them in the first instance.
2. To encourage the practice of classes meeting (many classes are based on fellowship groups).
3. To recognise and develop the gifts of those who could exercise a counselling ministry. To provide training and support and find creative ways of making their gifts accessible to those in need.
4. To be open to ways in which the ministry of healing can be appropriately exercised within the life of the church. To continue to make known the willingness of the minister and stewards to pray for the ill, lay on hands and anoint with oil. To designate certain services in each quarter when there will be ministry for healing.
5. To exercise an appropriate discipline amongst the membership, which will enable individuals to learn to grow and feel the security that such a framework brings, and which will protect the reputation of the church and encourage holiness of life. The principles of Matt. 18 ; 15-17 and 1Timothy are especially commended.
6. The Leadership Team will prayerfully deal with any serious matters in a biblical and, wherever necessary, confidential way.

6. Worship

In worship we seek to express the praises of God's people as a culmination of our shared life during the week. The services need to be a fitting offering of praise to the Living God, and they should speak to the aspirations, needs and circumstances of the congregation. We seek to exercise control over our worship so that it is appropriate for our situation. In all aspects of our worship we endeavour to use scripture as the touchstone, so that in its ordering, conduct and content it is faithful to the teaching of the Bible. Within our worship we seek to achieve a blend of the traditional evangelical with the charismatic approaches and to include a mixture of old and new. However, we seek to avoid all archaic language and speak to the needs of today. We want to leave room for both form and freedom and allow for spontaneity.

AIMS

In our worship we seek to enable people to express their worship of God in appropriate ways. We shall

1. Encourage increased participation in worship by:
 - a) Inviting people to share in different aspects of the worship
 - b) Asking groups to be responsible for the whole or parts of a service
 - c) Continuing to encourage the use of a variety of musical instruments
 - d) Welcoming and encouraging the gifts of dance, drama, mime and movement.
2. To use, encourage and develop the gifts of worship leaders and to give appropriate training.
3. To ensure that preaching and teaching in the context of Sunday worship is biblical and evangelical by continuing the practice of asking the Plan Committee

to invite appropriate preachers to take appointments not filled by our own minister and preachers.

4. To achieve a balance in styles and traditions of worship which is appropriate to our changing congregation.
5. To take account of the needs of children in our worship and to enable them to participate.
6. To plan the Lord's Supper at least twice in the mornings and twice in the evenings each quarter.
7. To encourage all members and junior members to receive communion whenever they are able. To encourage children to share in the service and, when the elements are distributed, to receive them. This is subject to parents' permission if they are Christians or to them having received clear teaching about the Lord's Supper in Sunday School and having received their parents' permission to receive. Otherwise children will be blessed.

7. Prayer and fellowship

We have an extensive network of small groups for prayer, teaching and fellowship.

AIMS We seek to:

1. Make prayer a priority in the life of the church, encouraging individual and corporate prayer by preaching, teaching and the guidance of the Prayer Co-ordinator.
2. Provide a variety of types and times of groups to meet the needs of as many members as possible, including children and young people.
3. Encourage all members to attend at least one fellowship meeting each week.
4. Ask groups regularly to review their purposes, membership and aims.
5. Hold a Church Prayer Night every 6 weeks and encourage all members to attend by closing other fellowship meetings for that week.
6. Seek to establish fellowship meetings outside Hexthorpe.
7. Publish printed information to be used for prayer.

8. Neighbourhood

Our church was established in Hexthorpe as the area was expanding just after the middle of the 19th Century and has always been a strong part of the community. We regard this area as our primary mission field and would encourage people who attend our church and who live elsewhere to consider living in this area. We would encourage all believers, who live in Hexthorpe, except those belonging to St Jude's, to join this church. We welcome very warmly those who join us from outside Hexthorpe.

We believe that we are called to be light (the message of the Bible / evangelism) and salt (social influence) in this area.

AIMS

1. We will encourage our members to be involved in the life of the community and to accept responsibility for it.
2. We believe it is our responsibility to raise local issues with the relevant authorities.
3. We will do all we can to help preserve harmony and unity in the community.
4. We will support any victims of injustice and racial harassment.
5. We will maintain the ongoing work of The Junction.
6. We will support the work of The Rock House Trust.

9. Evangelism

We regard evangelism as being of the utmost importance in the life of the church, and seek to find ways in which to bear witness to the Gospel and win people for Christ. We recognise that this must happen in personal contact, in worship and in preaching, through regular church activities and through special initiatives. We acknowledge that evangelism will only be effective when based on earnest prayer and therefore encourage people to pray for specific individuals to be converted.

AIMS

1. To stimulate all kinds of evangelism through the work of the Outreach Committee.
2. To provide training and resources to equip members for witness.
3. To give special attention to ways of reaching men and families for Christ.
4. To pursue different ways of making contacts and building relationships with those who are outside of, or on the fringe of, the church.
5. Regularly to consider schemes of evangelism which may be appropriate in our context.
6. Regularly to consider opportunities for reaching children and young people.
7. Actively to support town-wide initiatives.

10. Missionary

A missionary Committee will co-ordinate the various missionary concerns of the church, including the work of the Methodist Church Overseas. We recognise the need for the gospel to be proclaimed worldwide and seek to play a part in that.

AIMS

1. To encourage people to pray for the work of the gospel in other lands, particularly through attendance at missionary information and prayer meetings and through prayer spots in church.
2. To educate and inform the church about the work and needs of missionary organisations.
3. To stimulate giving for missionary work.
4. To provide opportunities for the call of God to come to serve overseas and to encourage and support those who respond.

11. Property

In property matters we aim to provide and maintain a suite of premises that is appropriate to the life and mission of the church and to keep it in a state of repair that is honouring to God and that provides an environment in which the various activities of our church may take place.

It is our aim to keep before us the possibility of extending the worship area, or increasing the range of ancillary rooms when this seems appropriate to our needs of further growth. It is not our practice to let out the premises to other users. Organisations in which the church members are involved may from time to time be given permission to use the premises. Church members may use them for private functions.

12. Finance

In financial matters we seek to

1. Trust God for financial needs to be met.
2. Conduct our affairs in a manner that is scriptural, that honours God, and is beyond reproach.
3. To promote tithing and to encourage the principle of direct giving in place of fundraising efforts.

4. Continue to give away 10% of the money given weekly in the collections and distribute it to organisations and causes agreed at the Church Meeting.
5. Make available to the membership information relating to the financial affairs of the church.
6. Encourage the largest possible use of Gift Aided giving.

13. Co-operation

We seek to discover and pursue ways in which we can co-operate with other Christian churches, especially those in our section.

We want to support and be actively involved in town-wide evangelical activity.

We seek to be open to any contribution we can make to the wider church, especially in our own Circuit, District and Connexion, and encourage people to do that as they are able.

We will carefully respond to the policies and decisions of our Circuit and of the Connexion, and consider what our response ought to be.

We will undertake to promote meetings and activities aimed at helping other Christians and encouraging them as well as ourselves.