

# Horsham Churches Together Constitution 2019

## 1 Introduction

There are many different Christian churches and denominations but all have the same basic calling: ...to worship God, to share the good news about Jesus Christ and to work for the good of all people.

In order to do this, churches need to work together often and to co-ordinate the work that each does separately and when so doing act as “Horsham Churches Together”. Each member church commits to deepen its fellowship with the others without losing what makes each distinctive. The purpose of this constitution is to provide a framework within which these things can happen.

## 2 Basis

Horsham Churches Together unites in pilgrimage the member churches, acknowledging God’s revelation in Christ, confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, in obedience to God’s will and in the power of the Holy Spirit commit themselves:

- 2.1 to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is His body; and
- 2.2 to fulfill their mission to proclaim the Gospel by demonstrating God’s love by common witness and service in the world; to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## 3 Aims

The aims of Horsham Churches Together shall be:

- 3.1 to enable the churches, to develop healthy relationships of respect and cooperation between local congregations;
- 3.2 to enable the churches to live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take further steps to express the unity that we have in Christ;
- 3.3 to enable the member churches to respond to the needs of their local communities and to witness to the Gospel together;
- 3.4 to co-ordinate, where appropriate, activities designed to release resources into the community.

## 4 Area

Horsham Churches Together aims to serve Horsham and its surrounding area as defined for the time being on the map (see Appendix A).

## 5 Relationships

Horsham Churches Together is in association with Churches Together in Sussex and Churches Together in England.

## 6 Membership

6.1 The criteria for membership of Horsham Churches Together are:

- i any local church in the area which is affiliated to a church or association of churches which is a full member of Churches Together in England and which affirms the Basis and commits itself to promote the aims of Horsham Churches Together.
- ii any non-affiliated local church in the area which affirms the Basis and commits itself to promote the aims of Horsham Churches Together.
- iii any local church which, on principle, has no creedal statements in its tradition and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the *Basis* (see 2 above), provided that it satisfies 75% in number of those full member churches which subscribe to the *Basis*, that it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and it is committed to the aims and purposes of Horsham Churches Together and that it will work in the spirit of the *Basis*.

A church is not eligible for membership if that church is a member of an association of churches which is excluded from Churches Together in England.

### 6.2 Procedure for accepting a new church:

- 6.2.1 Following a request to join HCT, a written submission will be requested from new church leader(s) to HCT Executive to introduce the new church, its structure, affiliations and responses to the constitution of HCT in particular the Basis and Aims.
- 6.2.2 The Executive will then invite the leaders/ministers of the existing member churches to express their views.
- 6.2.3 HCT Executive will consider the written submission, together with any feedback from the leaders/ministers of existing member churches.
- 6.2.4 If the Executive is satisfied that the criteria for membership of HCT have been met and there is no serious unresolved reservation or fellowship breach they will submit the application to the Forum for consideration and approval.
- 6.2.5 A 75% majority vote in favour of those present by the Forum is required.

### **6.3 Termination of Membership**

- 6.3.1 At least one representative of each member church is expected to attend the Forum meeting.
- 6.3.2 Where there is no representation from a member church for two consecutive meetings, without a good reason, then it will be contacted to discuss its future membership.
- 6.3.3 Where there is no further representation from the church in question for a further two consecutive meetings (that is a total of four consecutive meetings) then that church will be deemed to have terminated its membership of HCT.
- 6.3.4 Should a member church fail to meet the criteria for membership then the HCT Executive will consider the situation and may recommend to the Forum, suspension or termination of membership.

## **7 Officers**

7.1 **Number, Positions & Length of Service** —The officers of Horsham Churches Together shall be a Moderator and a Deputy Moderator, a Treasurer and a Secretary, to be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Forum (see 8.3 below). Officers shall serve for an initial period of two years and may be re-elected if willing to serve for further terms normally not exceeding two further terms. Where possible, to ensure continuity the Secretary and Deputy Moderator shall be elected one year and the Treasurer and Moderator in alternate years.

### **7.2 Eligibility**

- 7.2.1 Anyone standing for the position of an officer must be a serving member of the Forum.
- 7.2.2 The Moderator should normally be a church leader and the Deputy Moderator, a lay member, subject to the support and approval of their churches.

## **8 Forum**

### **8.1 Composition**

- 8.1.1 Each church shall be represented by its senior minister (or his/her deputy) and up to two other representatives, the three of whom shall be voting members of the Forum.
- 8.1.2 The Forum may co-opt others; such co-options not exceeding 25% of the total number of representatives appointed by the member churches. Those co-opted onto the Forum shall not have a vote.
- 8.1.3 The Forum is open to any member of a member church but they may not vote.

## 8.2 Meetings

- 8.2.1 The Forum shall meet not less than three times annually, one of which shall be the Annual General Meeting (see 8.3 below)
- 8.2.2 Other meetings of the Forum shall be held as deemed desirable by the Executive (see 9 below) or at the written request to the Executive of any three member churches.
- 8.2.3 Notice of Meetings —At least two weeks notice in writing of any meeting of the Forum shall be given.
- 8.2.4 Quorum —Attendance by one representative of at least 50% of the member churches shall constitute a quorum.
- 8.2.5 Attendance of meetings. See 6.3.
- 8.2.6 Decisions —Decisions for action shall require a quorum and the approval of 75% of those representatives present.

## 8.3 Annual General Meeting

- 8.3.1 Date —The Annual General Meeting shall be held in July or within two months of July.
- 8.3.2 Agenda —the audited accounts shall be presented, Officers and Executive members elected and annual reports submitted.

# 9 Executive

- 9.1 **Function** —The Forum shall appoint an Executive whose functions shall be to carry out the day to day running of Horsham Churches Together and to enable the member churches to make decisions in common and to serve as a reference point for the Forum.
- 9.2 **Composition** —The Executive shall comprise the officers of the Forum, up to four lay people, and up to four church leaders appointed by the member churches. Where possible, the membership of the Executive should proportionately reflect the membership with regard to the various Christian traditions and denominations in membership. Members shall be appointed for a period of two years. And may be re-elected if willing to serve for further terms normally not exceeding two further terms.

Ex-officio non-voting members of the Executive to include:

- Development Worker, Horsham Churches Together
- Chief Executive, Horsham Matters

- 9.3 **Co-options** —The Executive shall be empowered to co-opt others as necessary, such co-options being non-voting members. The Executive shall report all co-options to the Forum for approval.
- 9.4 **Working Parties** —The Executive shall be empowered to set up such working parties as deemed necessary. All working parties shall be accountable to the Executive and, through the Executive, to the Forum.
- 9.4 **Quorum** —Attendance by at least 50% of eligible voting members shall constitute a quorum of the Executive.

## 10 Finance

- 10.1 **Membership Fee** —Each Member Church shall pay such annual sum to Horsham Churches Together as shall be agreed at the Forum.
- 10.2 **Financial Year** —The financial year shall be from January to December.
- 10.3 **Signatories** —Cheques shall require the signature of any two of the four officers. An honorary auditor/inspector shall be appointed at the Annual Meeting.

## 11 Constitution

The constitution and any subsequent amendment to it require the written approval of 75% of the member churches.

## 12 Relationship with other Christian Agencies

- 12.1 **Horsham Matters:** Horsham Matters is an action arm of HCT. Therefore, Horsham Churches Together is in active working partnership with this organisation. Two trustees from the HCT Executive to be appointed to the Board of Horsham Matters.
- 12.2 **Other Christian Agencies that are endorsed by HCT:** eg. Oasis Crisis Pregnancy Centre, HDAS (Horsham Debt Advice Service), Horsham Y Centre (Sussex Central YMCA), Streetlight UK, Anchor Ministries, Horsham Children Contract Centre. See Appendix B for full current list of Christian Agencies endorsed by HCT.

Written reports to be requested from each agency prior to each Forum meeting and circulated with meeting papers. Full contact details of each agency to be made available to all Horsham Churches Together members.