

POLICY COVERING THE USE OF CHURCH PREMISES BY EXTERNAL GROUPS

1. INTRODUCING OURSELVES

- 1.1 Worcester Park Baptist Church is an evangelical Christian church which follows the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Declaration of Principle and Five Core Values – appended to this policy.
- 1.2 Our emphasis is on trusting and following Jesus together in Christian discipleship. Our identity as Christian people is determined by the life of Jesus. We believe that this involves living in radical commitment to him. We are called to follow him, doing as he did and giving ourselves to God's loving purposes in the world. We exist to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the world, to share in his mission, to make known his faithful and saving love for all creation, and to express his concern for the wholeness and harmony of all that he has made.
- 1.3 So this is our Christian identity and ethos; the values – who we are and what we stand for - which affect and shape our behaviour and attitudes to each other, to society and to those whom we serve.
- 1.4 It follows that the church premises exist primarily to promote, practice and teach the Christian faith - namely the worship of God, Christian teaching and learning, church family life and Christian outreach.
- 1.5 However, one of our priorities is to build and develop new links with, and areas of service to, the local community and one way of working towards those aims is to encourage greater community use of the church premises; hence the publication of this policy document.

2. THE POLICY

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to encourage and develop external uses of our church premises which support our overall aim of serving the local community.
- 2.2 Rooms will be available for use by external groups when no church groups are on the premises.
- 2.3 The church's own requirements for accommodation will take priority. This means that, on rare occasions, it may be necessary to cancel a booking by an external group if an emergency, unforeseen need by the church for accommodation occurs (eg a funeral).

2.4 The church will have absolute discretion to decide which external uses to allow and those to refuse. We will impose restrictions on the uses of our church premises by external groups so as to –

- (a) not conflict with the purposes of our church (see Section 1 above);
- (b) comply with the doctrines or beliefs of our church (see Section 1 above);
- (c) avoid causing offence to our church members and family for whose Christian belief and faith (in the Baptist tradition) the premises are held; or
- (d) avoid causing conflict with the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the followers of the Christian faith (in the Baptist tradition).

2.5 Decisions on which external uses to allow or disallow will also take into account the need for good stewardship of resources; the limitations on available cleaning, caretaking and administration time; and potential community benefit.

2.6 On the basis of paras 2.4 and 2.5 above, the more obvious restrictions will include

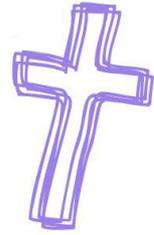
- (a) no meetings by or for political parties
- (b) no worship sessions by other faiths
- (c) no parties (adults or children)
- (d) no “purely” commercial uses (eg market research)
- (e) no lettings after 2pm on Saturdays or at any time on Sundays (except for the current arrangement with the Korean Church for Sunday afternoons)

2.7 We prefer and will encourage regular (as opposed to one-off) lettings.

2.8 The external use of the church premises is only permitted following the receipt of a completed application form (which includes the acceptance of the terms and conditions of hire) and the prescribed fees.

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APPENDIX

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN'S DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE AND FIVE CORE VALUES

1. Declaration of Principle

That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.

That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.

That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

2. Five Core Values

A Gospel People called to be a prophetic, inclusive, sacrificial, missionary and worshipping community.