

The Beloved Family Internet Church



**A handbook about the Beloved
Internet Church Family and
how to start your own**

A Takk Trust production

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Introduction by Rev Jim Smith

Internet churches have been have become common now and David Farey, leader of the Towers intercessory ministry and Jim Smith international director of the Serving Africa mission have been developing Internet churches for a few years. Jim also has the experience of planting three physical churches in his Africa work and is about to plant three more.

Beloved family Internet churches offer an informal framework of worship, prayer and teaching, both for existing church members and for those who feel a little disenfranchised from the established churches.

David and Jim both attend local physical churches. The beloved Internet church family is structured in such a way as not to be in competition with Sunday worship in physical churches.

David, with his wife Pat runs the Beacon fellowship and Jim runs the Serving family and the Growing family. Worship, teaching, prayer and fellowship are part of the content of these churches. They seem to be meeting a need and now David and Jim have produced a basic constitution that our churches operate by. We want to be sure that churches within the family of churches are running in the same channel although each one can be very different in their working.

We now believe that others might like to start their own Internet churches, but either they do not know how to do so or feel a little isolated in going it alone. So David and Jim in offering guidance for those who want to start an Internet church gives opportunity to be part of our bigger family. We can offer help, encouragement, direction and the involvement in something bigger which might be very useful.

We have a small brochure on how to begin which anyone can download whether they want to join us or not.

(or – What follows is a guide on how to begin which anyone can use whether they wish to be a part of our internet church family or not.)

THE BELOVED INTERNET CHURCH FAMILY HANDBOOK

A guide on how to set up your own church group within our family of churches

Introduction

I began the servant family Internet church partly because I wanted to link together the various parts of my work and partly because I became aware that there were many who were unhappy with the established church, been ejected from it in some way or another, or were unable to get to church. But I was still part of an established church and I didn't want to be seen to be in opposition. So I started to think how I might run an Internet church and what the timings might be.

David began the Beacon because he wanted to gather people around him who would enjoy good worship and teaching which he could provide. His church has a more pastoral emphasis and mine a more teaching and worship emphasis. The Growing family church will have a strong teaching emphasis which is what is missing from the area where I work.

I think the lesson we have learned is that in our hearts there has to be a desire and an understanding of the purpose of the Internet church we are going to establish.

A question to ask is, “Who is the Internet church for and who will join?” It takes time for the group to form who will enjoy your church. We started with very few and it stayed very few for quite a long time. We were sure the churches were right so we did not get discouraged. Just a few will be enough to get started and it might stay just a few for a long time.

A lesson we learn very early is that only two or three may come at the time we broadcast but many will look at it afterwards. This is the way of the media these days. For example, My first broadcast of the church this morning had three people on it but by lunchtime 33 people have viewed it. This is very much the way it is with Internet churches.

Rev Jim Smith

The ‘how to’ guide

What form of meeting do you have in mind?

Each of our Internet churches has a very different style which takes time to develop and establish confidence. Each of us is unique and bring our own qualities to that church group.

David and Jim both include praise and worship because they are musicians. They write their own material to avoid copyright issues on Facebook or YouTube, but the human voice is a totally sufficient instrument if you do not have any musical skills. The Bible is full of words to praise God and simply saying a Psalm is praising Him.

We each have times of prayer and times of teaching. We invite and encourage those who are following us to send in prayers and thoughts and try to include them.

Interaction is an important part of any church gathering, either physically or digitally, and encourages fellowship together as everyone gets to know the others on the channel.

Which channel?

Facebook is the most accessible. It can be a public group or you can have a closed one only open to those you wish to include. This makes for more personal interaction between members. Live streams are permitted when the page has been open for 60 days and has a 100 followers.

YouTube provides a way by which meetings can be saved but is more difficult to access. You have to have a Google account. You can apply to stream and enable use of the webcam facility of a laptop or similar. Permission usually takes 24 hours. The live chat facility is a great way of interacting with those attending the service.

Caution should be exercised where the live stream has public access. It is important to be able to moderate comments. YouTube generally needs two people at least, one to present and the other with an eye on the comments. We specify that only subscribers can take part in the live chat and we have included in settings a number of words and phrases that are banned. This weeds out the obvious attempts to disrupt, but if any creep though the moderator can delete and block the offender.

We have also found that WhatsApp is a valuable resource. It supplements the live events and helps to build up the fellowship between members. It is also possible to have 'live' prayer events, say for half hour, where people can join in with prayers on a specific subject. It is also an essential device for sharing any immediate prayer requests when there is a crisis.

We have stipulated that there should be no third party material from websites or pictures as there is a risk of virus infection, even with the WhatsApp security measures.

Building the church

Each of us has our own network of people that can be invited to join. Links to upcoming events in the internet church network can be shared, and especially for events in your own network.

Numbers can be added as people are met who could benefit from what is on offer. What is offered via the internet channel should only ever seek to supplement members' own participation in their local churches. Occasionally we come across those whose local churches have closed, with no other options, or those unable to get to church because of physical limitations. That is when what we have to offer in giving Christian fellowship is invaluable.

Members may suggest others they know who might benefit, but it is a useful guide to only include those who you feel will not only benefit but also contribute. Churches, in whatever form, are meant for every member to be active and not just a passenger. Giving, as well as receiving is an important part of being within the church, be it a physical or a digital one.

Occasionally it may be noticed that things in the channel are getting stale and we should not be afraid of 'refreshing' every so often by opening a new channel and inviting people to join. Then you can close the channel that has gone off the boil and your new channel will have those happy and willing to engage.

Who is going to run it with you?

Running the meeting every week, keeping your members happy and up to date and meeting any needs is demanding. Help will be needed, so seek out those close to you who can support you in the task. As part of our family of internet churches we are available to give encouragement and advice where appropriate.

Maintaining standards

In our experience starting an Internet church is quite easy but keeping it going is not so easy. Maintaining the standard of teaching and music is challenging over many months. Stopping members dragging the church into areas that it doesn't want to go into can be a challenge.

Sometimes a member might post a picture or link to something which has to be deleted. Exercising this prerogative is crucial to maintain the stream. Similarly if someone posts something which entices people off at a tangent at a crucial moment people need reminding of what the theme is at that moment and urge them not to be distracted.

The Takk Trust and it's offshoots are not political bodies and so it's an area that should be avoided. There should also be sensitivity to other beliefs but without compromising our own.

Finally

Being a church is a roller coaster of activity! The Lord calls us together to be in fellowship with him and with one another. Only as we meet together, worshipping, praying and studying the Bible, do we grow. It is an exciting journey and we all make mistakes along the way, but that is how we learn. Together we honour our Lord and as we grow in our understanding of His love for us so we give him ever greater glory.

Appendix

Takk Trust – Internet Church Constitution

Introduction

The Takk Trust is committed to proclaiming Christ faithfully in the world. It's basis of belief are grounded in the Bible as the received word of God, the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, and the teaching of the church grounded in it's traditional beliefs and practices.

Our network of internet churches is an important part of the Takk Trust's work in promoting the Gospel and equipping Christians in their everyday life. It is important for those operating or engaging in these churches to engage appropriately with anyone else accessing our channels.

The areas of operation for these internet churches is YouTube, Facebook and/or WhatsApp.

The churches of the Trust are not independent but belong to the whole family. This way they will not be orphans and they will not die for lack of care and resource. To keep all the churches in one family requires good oversight.

This Constitution is intended to provide a basis for the establishing and running of communities of faith via the internet under the authority of the Takk Trust.

The Mission of the Takk Trust Internet Church organisation

To foster Christian community and fellowship within those who access the facilities offered.

To provide opportunity for teaching, worship and prayers between members.

The Doctrinal Basis of the Takk Trust

The Takk Trust receives and accepts as its Doctrinal Basis the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.

The Takk Trust adheres to the principles of society embodied in the creation as a basis for family life and relationships.

It also accepts as faithful expression of this doctrine:

- The Christian faith as declared in the creeds known as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed;
- Such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures;
- It affirms the equality of men and women as created image bearers of God and that the ministry of men and women is equally valid, valuable and necessary in God's eyes.

Governance of the internet community

The heart of each internet church, operating via YouTube, Facebook or WhatsApp is to be a small community supporting each other in following Christ. The keywords are **belonging, sharing, growing**.

The sense of belonging must be strong in the churches. Members must want to come because they feel they matter and are important.

Sharing is a key - sharing love, sharing fellowship, sharing ministry and sharing what we have.

Growing is what the churches are meant to do. Standing still is not an option. Churches that stand still eventually die.

Serving is the very nature of the Trust. All of us are following the master as his servants.

While each new church needs independence and has its own leadership and style, they are not free of the authority of the apostles of the Trust. The Takk Trust Internet Church organisation will be under the authority of the Trustees, delegated to a governing body and confirmed by the Trustees.

Operating rules

All material used must be reverent and edifying and must not be contrary to or a departure from the doctrinal basis of the Takk Trust as set out in this constitution.

The output of our channels should bring value to our audiences, answer their questions, help and engage with them.

Each church will be open to all and will acknowledge its function under the authority of the Takk Trust. Membership and attendance is at the discretion of the Pastor and can gather members as appropriate.

Timing of any specific activities, ie services, should be sensitive to the timing of any members' own church services in their locality that they belong to. Our internet churches should not conflict with members' own existing commitment to their local churches.

Any images used should only be those produced "in house" and not from third party organisations. No links to third party sites or materials should be used. And to keep the channels in line with the Takk Trust and free of potential risks of hacking and other like dangers, no third party organisations materials or links to other websites or channels should be posted.

Confidentiality and data protection should always be in mind. Nothing about supporters or service users should be used or quoted without their express permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff, volunteers or supporters should be sensitive to the safeguarding requirements before using them.

The Takk Trust is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. The content of our channels should reflect this.

If any pastor becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to be detrimental to the Trust, they have authority to delete such content, or if repeated infringement can delete or block the offender.

Copyright law

It is critical that all staff, volunteers or supporters abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images, music or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

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