

[ **] BAPTIST CHURCH**

**CONSTITUTION**

1. Name

1.1. The name of the Church shall be the [ **] BAPTIST CHURCH.**

2. Membership

2.1. Membership shall be open to all who profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, give evidence of such faith in daily life, give general assent to the Declaration of Principles and, subject to 2.2 below, have confessed their faith in Christ through baptism by immersion.

2.2. The church believes that the practice of believers baptism by immersion is in accordance with the Scriptures, but the church may admit to its membership those who, after this belief has been presented to them by the Minister, are not persuaded that they should be so baptised.

3. Declaration of Principles

The church accepts as its basic principles:

**3.1 The Divine Inspiration and Supreme Authority of the Scriptures in matters of Faith and Conduct**

The Scriptures (or Bible) consist of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct for the Church and the individual Christian. The church has the liberty and responsibility, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, to interpret, to preach and to administer God's will in these matters. It preaches 2 Tim 3:16, 2 Tim 4:1-2, 2 Pet 1:21.

**3.2 The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ**

There is one God who is revealed to us as in the Scriptures as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the revelation in human form of this one God. Through Him we know the Father and receive the Holy Spirit. He is the Lord of the Church and the church seeks to live under His direction. His Lordship extends over all creation and at His return all humanity will confess His Lordship. John 1:18, John 14:6, Rom 8:9, Eph 1:20-23, Phil 2:11

**3.3 Freedom of Conscience**

Freedom of conscience is the freedom for all members of society to practice their religion, follow their beliefs, propagate their faith and worship without restriction of law. For Christians, it is also the freedom to interpret the Scriptures for themselves under the guidance

of the Holy Spirit. Baptist Church Members are those Christians whose interpretation of Scripture enables them to give general assent to the Declaration of Principles.

### **3.4 A Regenerate Church Membership**

The church is a community which has as its members only those who profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the life of believers, the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for Christian service and gives power for holy living. Although there is a diversity of gifts and functions, all members are of equal standing in Christ. John 14, 15 and 16, 1 Cor 12 and 14.

### **3.5 The Priesthood of Believers**

All members of the Church have a ministry and offer to God spiritual worship through the one mediator Jesus Christ, who is their High Priest in heaven. All believers have become a holy priesthood, directing unbelievers to God and declaring the praises of Him who called them out of darkness to light. This ministry of the members is always exercised in the context of the requirement for everything to be done decently and in order. 1 Cor 14:40, 2 Cor 5:19-20, Heb 8:1, 1 Pet 2:5, 1 Pet 2:9

### **3.6 The Ordinances of Believers Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Baptist churches observe the two ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's supper. Baptism is expressed by immersion in water in the Name of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - of those who repent of their sins and confess faith in Jesus Christ, through His atoning death, as their Lord and Saviour. The Lord's supper (or communion), instituted by Jesus, is commanded by Him to be observed by all who have professed faith in Him whose atoning death for sin is declared in the ordinance until He shall come again. Matt 3:13-17, Matt 28:19-20, Acts 2:37-38, 1 Cor 11:23-26

### **3.7 The Vesting of Authority for Church Policy and Management with the Church Members**

Each Baptist church is considered to be competent to manage its own affairs and the members' meeting is the final authority in decisions concerning its policy and management. Central to the Baptist understanding of the nature of the church is the conviction that authority rests in the corporate body, the gathered fellowship of believers. Gifted persons, including one or more pastors especially set apart to exercise spiritual leadership, are set apart to lead, teach and exercise oversight and administration of the church. The day to day administration and leading of the church is normally conducted by the pastor(s) and officers, who are entrusted by the members with their respective responsibilities.

### **3.8 The Voluntary Association of Baptist churches**

While each Baptist church is competent to manage its own affairs, Baptists recognise that they are called into real fellowship with other believers, particularly believers of like conviction, giving expression to and maintaining the unity of God's Spirit in the bonds of peace. Further, they recognise that they are called by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to work together with believers of like conviction and with Christians generally in the world-wide ministry and mission of the church. For these reasons, and in order to realise common

purposes, Baptists believe that it is a proper understanding and expression of the Gospel for Baptist churches to associate voluntarily with each other. We do so as constituents of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated (“the Union”) and, through the Union, with similar associations nationally and internationally.

#### 4. Member of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated

4.1. The church is and shall be a member of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated (“SABU”).

#### 5. Aims and Objects

The Church accepts that its aims and objects are:

5.1. To proclaim the gospel of The Lord Jesus Christ leading those who repent and believe in Him for salvation into membership in the Church.

5.2. To proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christians and to seek to fulfill His purpose in the life of the church and the world beyond.

5.3. To encourage people to assemble in regular worship of God.

5.4. To instruct people of all ages in the Scriptures and its implications in daily living.

5.5. To support the work of the wider fellowship of Baptists through the South Australian Baptist Union, the Baptist Union of Australia, and the Baptist World Alliance and to co-operate with other Christian bodies as may be determined by the Church.

5.6. To work for justice and care with compassion for the needy and oppressed.

#### 6. Government of the Church

6.1. The members of the church shall have power to decide all matters relating to the conduct of the church and its affairs. The government of the church shall be expressed through the Members’ Meetings.

6.2. Members may delegate to church officers or to a committee the power to make any decision not inconsistent with this Constitution. Such delegation may be revoked at any time and shall not prevent the exercise of any power by members’ meetings. In the event of any conflict in the exercise of powers, the decision of members’ meetings shall be binding and conclusive.

#### 7. Membership List

7.1. The church shall cause a list of members to be kept and maintained.

## 8. Duties of Members

8.1. The duties of members shall be:

- 8.1.1. To lead a Christian life in humility and peace, and to edify one another in love;
- 8.1.2. To glorify God in the worship and work of the church;
- 8.1.3. To study the Scriptures;
- 8.1.4. To promote the unity and welfare of the church as a family of God and to work harmoniously with other members in the fulfillment of the church's objects;
- 8.1.5. To join regularly in congregational worship, the hearing of the word of God and partaking of the Lord's Supper;
- 8.1.6. Through the meeting of members, to exercise discipline over the members in conformity with the Scriptures.
- 8.1.7. To attend meetings of members unless unable to do so.

## 9. The Pastorate

- 9.1. The members recognise that ministry belongs to the whole church. At the same time, members may appoint and set apart individuals as "pastors" to devote themselves to the "feeding, governing, serving and building up of Christ's church..."<sup>1</sup>.
- 9.2. The Pastor shall be a believer who has been baptised by immersion upon public profession of faith.
- 9.3. The Pastor shall be appointed for an indefinite period, which may be terminated by either the Pastor or the church upon three months' notice in writing, unless otherwise specifically provided for by mutual agreement between the Church and the Pastor.
- 9.4. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Pastor shall be appointed on such terms, for such duties and subject to such reviews as the church and the Pastor agree in writing.
- 9.5. The Pastor shall do all things necessary to obtain or maintain accreditation with SABU and shall fulfil such continuing education or other accreditation requirements that SABU specifies from time to time.

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<sup>1</sup> The London Baptist Confession, 1644

9.6. The church may summarily remove a Pastor from ministry upon evidence of scandalous life.

9.7. The services and procedures of the Advisory Board of SABU shall be used in the matter of pastoral settlement.

#### 10. Powers

10.1. For the purpose of carrying out its aims and objects, the church may exercise all the powers of an incorporated association as set out in the Associations Incorporation Act 1985 as amended from time to time.

#### 11. Members' meetings

11.1. Members shall hold an annual general meeting within five months after the end of the church's financial year.

11.2. The members may hold other meetings for the management of their affairs as prescribed in the By-Laws.

11.3. It shall be the duty of every member entitled to vote to attend the meetings of members unless unable to do so.

11.4. All resolutions carried at a duly convened meeting of members shall be binding upon all members, whether present or absent, or refraining from voting,

#### 12. Procedure at Annual General Meetings

At each Annual General Meeting of members:

12.1. The Chair of the meeting shall present or cause to be presented to the members an Annual Report of the church's activities and audited Financial Statements;

12.2. Such elections as may be required by this Constitution or By-Laws shall be held;

12.3. If the church has an auditor, the church's auditor shall be appointed; AND

12.4. Any general business transacted may be transacted which is not required by this Constitution or the By-Laws to be transacted at a Special meeting of members.

#### 13. Officers

13.1. The members shall appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer.

13.2. The members shall appoint a Committee of Management, which shall be called

[*name of Committee*]. The [*name of Committee*] shall comprise the Pastor, the Secretary, the Treasurer and such other officers and persons as shall be prescribed in the By- Laws.

- 13.3. The members shall appoint such other officers, committees and persons as need and occasion require for the proper conduct of its worship and the management of its affairs as prescribed in the By-Laws or as determined from time to time by resolution of the members.

#### 14. Financial Year

- 14.1. The church's financial year shall commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of [*insert month*] and conclude on the [*insert date*] day of [*insert month*] each year.

#### 15. Public Officer and Common Seal

- 15.1. The members shall appoint a Public Officer and Seal-holders.

#### 16. Indemnity

- 16.1. The Officers of the church shall be indemnified out of the church's assets against all actions, claims, demands, prosecutions, suits and proceedings arising from or relating to the bona fide execution of their duties under this Constitution.

#### 17. By-Laws

- 17.1. The members shall have power, by a simple majority vote of members present at a duly constituted meeting of members, to make, repeal alter or amend By-Laws not inconsistent with the Constitution for the regulation of their proceedings and the management of their business.

#### 18. Winding Up

- 18.1. If, for any reason the Church is to be wound up pursuant to a resolution of members taken at a special meeting of members, it shall be wound up in accordance with the provisions of the law for the time being relating to the winding up of incorporated associations. The assets remaining after paying all the liabilities of the church and the expenses of the winding up shall be transferred by the Liquidator of the church to the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated.

#### 19. Alteration of Constitution

- 19.1. The members shall have power, upon the majority vote of two- thirds of the members present and entitled to vote at a meeting especially convened for the purpose, to repeal, alter, amend or add to the provisions of this Constitution, except as herein provided.

- 19.2. The quorum for such meeting shall be one [third][half] of all members entitled to a vote.
- 19.3. Notice of motion of the proposed change shall be given in writing to each member at least fourteen days before the date of the special members' meeting at which the proposed change is to be considered, and published to the congregation on each of the two Sundays immediately preceding the said date.
- 19.4. Article 4, Article 17 and Article 18 of this Constitution shall be considered fundamental and shall not be repealed, added to, altered or amended so as to alter their intent and meaning.
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## [ ] BAPTIST CHURCH

## BY-LAWS

1. Name

- 1.1. The name of the church shall be the [ ] Baptist church, but the church may register and use such other names as the members shall decide.

2. Membership

- 2.1. Applications for membership of the church shall be in writing, signed by the applicant and directed to the church Secretary.
- 2.2. An applicant who is a member of another church may apply for a transfer of that membership. Upon receipt of such an application, the Secretary shall request a letter of recommendation from the applicant's previous church.
- 2.3. The members, upon consideration of a report and recommendation of the Elders shall decide applications for membership.

3. Membership List

- 3.1. The Secretary shall have responsibility for keeping and maintaining a list of church members. For the purposes of voting at members' meetings only, the List shall distinguish adult members from minors.
- 3.2. The Secretary shall cause the list of church members to be reviewed annually, before the Annual General Meeting of members.
  - 3.2.1. Members who have died since the last review, or who have resigned or transferred their membership shall be removed from the list.
  - 3.2.2. Members who have not been associated with the church for 12 consecutive calendar months or more without good cause may also be removed from the list.

4. Church Discipline

- 4.1. The members shall exercise church discipline in accordance with the procedure laid down in Matthew 18:15- 17.
  - *If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.*



- *But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that the evidence of two or three witnesses may confirm every word.*
- *If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and*
- *if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

4.2. The primary purpose of church discipline shall be the restoration of right relations between members.

4.3. If the stages of discipline cannot be carried out because the erring member refuses to submit to the discipline of the church, that person shall be declared to have excluded himself or herself from the membership of the church.

4.4. At all times, the church shall exercise discipline in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

## 5. Meetings

### 5.1. Annual General Meeting

5.1.1. The Annual General Meeting shall normally be held in the month of [                    ].

### 5.2. Quarterly/Half-yearly Meetings

5.2.1. The members shall hold quarterly [half-yearly] meetings in the months of [                    ], [                    ] and [                    ].

### 5.3. Special Meetings

5.3.1. Special meetings of members may be called by the [Committee of Management] and shall be called upon the written request of any ten members or ten percent of the total number of members, whichever is the higher.

### 5.4. Notice of meeting

5.4.1. The Secretary shall give members notice of meeting at least fourteen days before the date of meeting, and shall publish the same to the congregation on at least two Sundays before the said date.

### 5.5. Scope of meeting

5.5.1. The chief business to come before the meeting shall be announced at the same time that the notice of meeting is given.

## 5.6. Quorum

5.6.1. In addition to the specific provisions concerning a quorum laid down in the Constitution, the following provisions shall apply:

5.6.1.1. A quorum of one third of all voting members shall be required for the transaction of all business.

5.6.1.2. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the advertised starting time of the meeting, then the meeting shall lapse.

## 5.7. Casting Vote

5.7.1. Casting vote The Chair shall have a deliberative vote and in the case of equal voting, shall have a casting vote.

## 5.8. Manner of voting

5.8.1. Unless prescribed in the Constitution or By-Laws, the Chair shall ordinarily decide the manner of voting, whether by show of hands or ballot, but the meeting may itself decide by special resolution the manner of voting to be adopted.

## 5.9. Conduct of meetings

5.9.1. The conduct of meetings shall be in accordance with the standing orders or rules for transacting business (if any) adopted by the church.

## 5.10. Closing time

5.10.1. Evening meetings of members of the church, its officers or committees shall normally commence at 7.30p.m. and shall not extend beyond 10.00p.m. unless a resolution to do so is taken.

5.10.2. No meeting shall extend beyond three hours.

## 6. Election of Officers and Committees

### 6.1. Nominations

6.1.1. The Secretary shall seek and receive nominations from members of the church for all offices and committees of the church.

6.1.2. Subject to the provisions of the Constitution and By-Laws, all members shall be eligible for nomination for office or for service on the committees.

6.1.3. The Secretary shall call for nominations at least fourteen days before the date set for elections. Nominations for all offices shall be in writing by any two members. Each nomination shall bear the signature of the nominators and of the person nominated. Nomination forms must be in the hands of the Secretary at

least seven days before the date of meeting at which the elections are to take place.

- 6.1.4. Any voting member at the meeting may make additional nominations, provided that the consent of the person nominated has been obtained.

## 6.2. Voting:

- 6.2.1. The election of officers of the church shall be by ballot. Candidates for office shall be elected upon a two-thirds majority vote.
- 6.2.2. The election of all other candidates be by a show of hands, unless the Chair or the meeting otherwise directs. Candidates, other than officers, shall be elected upon a simple majority vote.

## 6.3. Officers & Standing Committees

- 6.3.1. The elected officers of the church shall be: [*a Secretary; a Treasurer; a Committee of Elders and Deacons*]
- 6.3.2. The standing committees of the church shall be: [*Property Management Committee; the ( ) Committee; the ( ) Committee*].
- 6.3.3. Standing Committees shall comprise: a Deacon as Chair of Committee and at least four other persons, at least half of whom shall be members of the church.
- 6.3.4. Unless otherwise provided in these By-Laws, one-half, or as near as possible to one-half of the members on standing committees or other designated committees shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election.
- 6.3.5. No person shall ordinarily be Chair of more than one standing committee at the same time.
- 6.3.6. The standing committees shall hold regular meetings as decided from time to time, but usually not less than once every two months on a specified day.
- 6.3.7. The Pastor(s) *ex officio* may attend all meetings of committee.

## 7. Term of office and duties of officers

- 7.1. The Secretary. The Secretary shall be elected annually and shall preside at meetings of members and of the [*Committee of Management*] and shall ensure that:
- 7.1.1. All elected and appointed officers and committees effectively carry out their assigned duties and generally encourage and co-operate with all office-bearers;

- 7.1.2. Ensure that an agenda is prepared for the meetings of members and of the [*Committee of Management*].
- 7.1.3. Keep or cause to be kept an accurate record of all proceedings of meetings of members, the *Committee of Management*, attend to all correspondence unless it is to be delegated to another person, prepare an agenda for meetings and see that committees are informed of decisions affecting their function.
- 7.1.4. If the Chair is absent or unable to act, the meeting shall appoint a member to act as Chair for the time being.

## 7.2. Treasurer

- 7.2.1. The Treasurer shall receive, check with another officer and keep an account of all moneys entrusted to him by the church, bank all of the same, and pay all accounts as directed by the church. The Treasurer shall present a financial statement at the following:
  - 7.2.1.1. a duly convened deacons' meeting;
  - 7.2.1.2. members' meeting, including the Annual General Meeting;
- 7.2.2. The Treasurer shall prepare, submit for audit and present an audited annual balance sheet and an audited annual income and expenditure statement to the Annual General Meeting of members.
- 7.2.3. The Treasurer shall prepare and maintain an up-to-date inventory of the church's insurable assets, and report to the members at least once annually on the nature, extent and adequacy of the church's insurance cover.
- 7.2.4. The members shall elect an auditor annually who shall examine thoroughly the books of the Treasurer and vouch for their correctness and otherwise advise on aspects of the church's finances and financial affairs.

## 7.3. The [*Committee of Management*]

- 7.3.1. In addition to the members provided for in the Constitution, the *Committee of Management* shall consist of the Elders and Deacons.
- 7.3.2. The *Committee of Management* shall generally meet once every month/two months to consider the general welfare of the members of the church and their programme of activities. It shall receive reports from the standing committees and make recommendations to the members. In cases of emergency, it may be called upon to act between meetings of the members. In all matters, including the interpretation of policy established by the members, it shall be accountable to the members.
- 7.3.3. The *Committee of Management* shall fill casual vacancies until the next annual meeting of members.

#### 7.4. Elders

- 7.4.1. The members shall elect such Elders at they consider necessary for the spiritual oversight of the church.
- 7.4.2. Eligibility for election Any person who has been a member of the church for at least twelve months and who, in the opinion of the church (having regard to 1 Timothy 3:2- 7 and Titus 1:6- 9) is suitable, shall be eligible for election as an Elder.
- 7.4.3. Frequency and purpose of meeting Elders shall meet with the Pastor at least once per month. Together with the Pastor, Elders shall have spiritual oversight of the members of the church and the fulfillment of the church's aims and objects and, for this purpose, they shall:
  - 7.4.3.1. Visit members and encourage them to be regular in attendance at services and in the support of the church with their means and their spiritual gifts;
  - 7.4.3.2. Notify the pastor(s) of sick or spiritually distressed members;
  - 7.4.3.3. Support the maintenance of Christian discipline and good order in the congregation;
  - 7.4.3.4. Be an example of Christian conduct, observing confidentiality regarding all private matters.
  - 7.4.3.5. Develop pastoral care policies and procedures, having particular regard to the church's duty of care to those with whom and to whom the church ministers.

#### 7.5. Deacons

- 7.5.1. Subject to the provisions of this By-Law, the members shall elect a Deacon for each Standing Committee and as many other deacons as they consider necessary for the proper management of the church and its ministries.
- 7.5.2. Eligibility for election. In the nomination and election of deacons, members shall have regard to 1 Timothy 3:8- 12.
- 7.5.3. The Chair of each Standing Committee shall be a Deacon.

### 8. The Property Management Committee

- 8.1. The Property Management Committee shall:

- 8.1.1. See that the property, buildings and possessions of the church are kept in good and proper order;
- 8.1.2. Undertake minor repairs as necessary (having regard to the church's duty of care) and report on actions taken to the members;
- 8.1.3. Make six-monthly inspections of all of the church's property and buildings and report on their findings as to:
  - 8.1.3.1. Maintenance requirements;
  - 8.1.3.2. Compliance with Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare requirements;
  - 8.1.3.3. Compliance with government building, fire-safety and other relevant laws and regulations;
- 8.1.4. Compile and maintain an up-to-date inventory of all of the church's equipment.

#### 9. The ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) Committee

*[Here specify the duties of the Standing Committee]*

#### 10. Finances

- 10.1. Offerings The ordinary expenses of the churches shall normally be defrayed by the voluntary offerings of the members, adherents and other contributors.
- 10.2. Special Funds Funds collected by the church for any special purpose shall not be appropriated for any other purpose or use without the consent of two-thirds majority of members.
- 10.3. Bank accounts Church bank accounts shall be operated by the Treasurer and such other persons as the members shall decide, with the Treasurer and any one of the persons so appointed as signatories.

#### 11. Public Officer

- 11.1. The Secretary shall be the Public Officer of the church.

#### 12. Common Seal & Seal-holders

- 12.1. The Church shall appoint three Seal-holders.
  - 12.2. The Seal of the Church shall be in the custody of the Seal-holders appointed by the Church.
  - 12.3. The Seal shall be affixed by resolution of a members' meeting and the documents sealed shall be signed by any two Seal-holders.
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