

NewHope Baptist Church

Constitution

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1. Name

The Church is named the NewHope Baptist Church (“the Church”).

2. Doctrinal basis

Affirming Baptist understandings of the Gospel, the Church is a member church of The Baptist Union of Victoria and accepts as an expression of the Christian faith the *Doctrinal Basis* contained in the Constitution of that Union and printed as Appendix 1 to this Constitution.

3. Membership

3.1 Eligibility

- 3.1.1 The membership of this Church consists of those who have been baptised by total immersion in water, on a profession of their repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who declare their intention to live as a follower of Christ.
- 3.1.2 Notwithstanding the doctrinal position of the Church concerning baptism by full immersion:

- a) persons for whom immersion is impractical, unsafe or ill-advised may receive believers baptism in another mode (e.g. pouring).
- b) persons who have received believers baptism in a mode other than full immersion and have in so doing professed their repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who declare their intention to live as a follower of Christ, may be admitted to membership.
- c) persons who have received water baptism before the age of understanding and have subsequently confirmed their repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who declare their intention to live as a follower of Christ may be admitted to membership.
- d) in exceptional circumstances, the Church Council may admit others to membership.

3.2 **Notification of application**

The names of applicants for membership must be printed in the Church Bulletin to enable members to comment.

3.3 **Reception into membership**

Reception into membership requires the prior approval of the Church Council. It must be clear to the Church Council that the person:

- 3.3.1 has made their own free decision to commit themselves to Christ and to the Church;
- 3.3.2 has participated in appropriate membership preparation; and
- 3.3.3 has been, or is about to be, baptised, or has otherwise been approved by Church Council for church membership.

3.4 **Procedure for discipline**

All situations appearing to require the exercise of discipline will be investigated by a pastor, and if necessary, referred to a Church Council meeting. If deemed necessary by the Church Council, the member will be visited by a pastor and/or two members of the Church Council in an endeavour to "restore them gently" (Galatians 6:1). If the member persists in such conduct, the Church Council will suspend their membership and refer the matter to a members meeting. A members meeting may remove that member's name from the Roll or otherwise deal with the case as that meeting decides.

3.5 **Acceptance of Constitution**

Each member accepts that the basis of membership is according to this Constitution. A copy of this Constitution will be made available to every church member.

4. **Church Roll**

4.1 The Church will maintain a roll of its members ("the Roll"). The Roll will be divided into two sections: Active and Reserve.

4.2 **Active roll**

The Active roll includes all members not listed in the Reserve roll.

4.3 **Reserve roll**

4.3.1 The Reserve roll includes members who:

- (a) are not in regular attendance at services – other than by reason of illness, distance or special circumstances;
- (b) have permanently moved from the Melbourne metropolitan area; or
- (c) are in regular attendance at other churches.

4.3.2 Such members are not eligible to vote at members meetings.

4.4 **Roll revision**

There will be an annual revision of the Roll by the Church Council in conjunction with the Senior Pastor and other pastors. Unless the Church Council notes that special circumstances apply, the names of members in the Active roll who have not attended the Church for a period of 12 months will be moved to the Reserve roll.

5. The basis of governance

5.1 Under the guidance of God and Scripture, the Church will be governed on congregational principles, with the members meeting being the final authority on all matters.

5.2 The Church recognises the Church Council as its governing body and authorises it to manage the affairs of the Church subject to this Constitution and decisions of the members meeting.

5.3 The Church Council must operate according to the Program and Budget. The Church Council may incur non-budgeted expenditure up to 10% of the total annual Budget and must report such expenditure in the Church Bulletin.

5.4 The Church Council must maintain open communication with members on the affairs of the Church.

6. Members meetings

6.1 **Types of meetings**

6.1.1 An Annual General Meeting will be held each year and include:

- (a) presentation of the annual report and financial reports;
- (b) election of officers of the Church and members of Church Council; and
- (c) appointment of the auditor.

- 6.1.2 A Program and Budget Meeting will be held each year to consider and approve the Church's annual program and budget.
- 6.1.3 Other members meetings will be held as required.
- 6.1.4 A Requisition Meeting may be requisitioned by 10 per cent of members entitled to vote. Such requisition must be in writing, and must state the purpose for which the meeting is requisitioned, and only that business will be dealt with at that meeting. Such meeting is to be held within eight weeks of the original requisition being received by the Church Secretary. If a quorum is not attained, the requisition will lapse.
- 6.1.5 A Model Trust Deed Meeting, in accordance with Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930, will be held when the following matters are to be considered:
- (a) the appointment or removal of the Senior Pastor;
 - (b) the renting, sale, purchase, exchange or mortgage of property held in trust by the Baptist Union of Victoria for the Church; or
 - (c) the use of money received from the sale, mortgage or insurance of such property.

Model Trust Deed Meetings must be called and conducted in the manner prescribed in Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930. (A plain English summary of Schedule B, prepared by The Baptist Union of Victoria, is reproduced as Appendix 2 to this Constitution).

6.2 **Notice of meeting**

Notice of the time, place and major business of members meetings must be given by 14 days clear notice by announcement at each worship service or by publication in the Church Bulletin (and preferably both).

6.3 **Chairperson**

The Senior Pastor has the option of being the Chairperson of all members meetings except in matters relating to the Senior Pastor. The Church Council will appoint the Chairperson at each members meeting at which the Senior Pastor does not preside, unless otherwise determined by the meeting.

6.4 **Quorum**

The quorum for members meetings will be 10% of those members eligible to vote, except for the calling or removal of the Senior Pastor when the quorum will be 15% of the said members.

6.5 **When a quorum is not attained**

If a quorum is not attained within thirty minutes after the scheduled time for commencement of the meeting, the meeting will lapse. The Church Council may hold the meeting at another time. The normal notice requirements will apply, unless the meeting is to be held within the next ten days, in which case one weekend's notice will be sufficient. No business other than that in the original notice of meeting will be considered at the next meeting. The quorum will be 29 members eligible to vote.

6.6 Voting

- 6.6.1 Members that are recorded on the Active roll are eligible to vote at all members meetings (with the exception of Model Trust Deed Meetings where special provisions apply).
- 6.6.2 The vote of the Church will be taken ordinarily by voices or by show of hands. All voting for the appointment or removal of the Senior Pastor, and the endorsement and election of the officers of the Church and members of Church Council must be by secret ballot. A meeting may require a secret ballot on other matters where it considers it appropriate.
- 6.6.3 A motion put to a members meeting will be carried by a simple majority, with the exception of motions considered at Model Trust Deed Meetings and alterations to this Constitution, which require a two-thirds majority.
- 6.6.4 The Chairperson, if a member of the Church, will have only one vote. In the case of a tied vote, the question must be resolved in the negative.

6.7 Minutes

Records of the decisions of all members meetings must be kept and made available for inspection by Church members.

7. Church Council

7.1 Responsibilities

The Church Council is responsible for the governance of the Church. These responsibilities include the following, with power to delegate where it deems appropriate:

- (a) giving prayerful and spiritual oversight to the Church;
- (b) developing and advancing the Church's mission, vision and values;
- (c) engaging in strategic planning;
- (d) recommending to the Church members, a name to be considered for Senior Pastor;
- (e) reviewing the Senior Pastor's performance;
- (f) legal compliance;
- (g) financial accountability;
- (h) producing written governing policies and processes;
- (i) determining the responsibilities of Church Council Chairperson, Church Secretary and Finance Director;
- (j) encouraging and developing potential council members so that the future leadership of the Church is assured;
- (k) establishing and reviewing ministry teams and other such bodies to best suit the fulfilment of the Church's mission;

- (l) appointing and dismissing leaders, pastors (other than the Senior Pastor) and other staff.

7.2 Composition

The Church Council consists of the following:

- Senior Pastor
- Administration Pastor
- Three elected officers:
 - Church Council Chairperson
 - Church Secretary
 - Finance Director
- Four other elected members

7.3 Eligibility

Only members who have been members of the Church for at least 12 months immediately preceding the election will be eligible for election to the Church Council.

7.4 Church Council Meetings

- 7.4.1 The Church Council will meet as regularly as required for business, prayer and fellowship, and must be given reasonable notice of such meetings.
- 7.4.2 The quorum for any Church Council meeting will be not less than 50% of the members of Church Council.
- 7.4.3 Records of the decisions of all Church Council meetings must be kept and made available for inspection if a members meeting requests them.

7.5 Term of office

Elected officers and members of Church Council will be appointed for a term of two years. As nearly as possible, one half of the number will retire each year, but will be eligible for re-election.

7.6 Casual vacancies

- 7.6.1 Should a casual vacancy occur, the Church Council may appoint a member to fill the vacancy and the member so appointed will hold office until the next Annual General Meeting following the appointment.
- 7.6.2 An election must be held at the next Annual General Meeting and the member so elected will hold office for the remainder of the term.

7.7 Election procedure

- 7.7.1 On the fifth and fourth weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting, nominations for Church Council will be advertised.
- 7.7.2 By the close of the third week prior to the Annual General Meeting, nominations must be signed by three members plus the nominee and be submitted to the Church Secretary.
- 7.7.3 At any time prior to the publication of names as required in Section 7.7.4, the Church Council may make nominations for Church Council.

7.7.4 On the second and first weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting, the names of the nominees will be printed in the Church Bulletin.

7.8 Voting procedures for election

7.8.1 Each nominee must receive the endorsement of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting to be eligible to take office as a member of the Church Council.

7.8.2 If the number of members endorsed exceed the number of vacancies, it will be necessary to determine their election by ballot. In the event of a tied vote affecting the result of the ballot, the Chairperson will exercise a casting vote prior to announcing the names of those elected.

7.9 For the purposes of Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930, the members of the Church Council are deemed to be "the Deacons".

8. Pastors

8.1 Pastors must be persons eligible for membership of the Church who possess the necessary spiritual and other gifts and graces and who subscribe to the doctrinal basis of the Church.

8.2 The Church must appoint a Senior Pastor in accordance with the provisions of Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930 on the recommendation of the Church Council. The Church Council may ask a members meeting to elect a search committee to assist with this appointment. The Senior Pastor is deemed to be "the Pastor", referred to in that Schedule.

8.3 All other pastors will be appointed by the Church Council.

9. Auditors

An auditor or auditors must be appointed at the Annual General Meeting to act for the following twelve months, and will be empowered severally or jointly to audit financial statements of the Church and all groups and organisations of the Church.

10. Groups and organisations

10.1 All groups and organisations using the name of the NewHope Baptist Church, or associated with the Church, must operate under a constitution or upon a basis approved by the Church Council. The members meeting of the Church is the final court of appeal in all matters.

10.2 The Senior Pastor or Senior Pastor's delegate may chair any particular meeting of such bodies.

10.3 Property purchased or used by any such body and any money in hand, will become the property of the Church if that body disbands or ceases to function.

11. Alteration to this Constitution

No proposed alteration to this Constitution can be brought to a members meeting unless notice of the wording of the proposed alteration has been given to members at least 14 days prior to the meeting date.

Appendix 1

The Doctrinal Basis from the Constitution of the Baptist Union of Victoria

1. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. The existence of one God in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. The deity and incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity.
4. The fallen, sinful and lost estate of all people.
5. The salvation of men and women from the penal consequences and power of sin through the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, His atoning death, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His unchanging priesthood.
6. The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of men and women, in their sanctification, and in their preservation to the heavenly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The necessity, in order to know salvation, of repentance towards God and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment of all people by the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The two ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are of perpetual obligation: Baptism being the immersion of believers upon the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a symbol of the fellowship of the regenerate in His death, burial and resurrection; the Lord's Supper being a memorial, until He comes, of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Appendix 2

Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930 ... a plain English summary ...

This summary has been prepared by the Union office as a guide to the operation of Schedule B. It is a guide only. We recommend that Schedule B in its original form be read when specific questions arise. If you are in doubt about the meaning of a particular provision, please contact the Union office.

The Baptist Union of Victoria ("Union") holds property on trust for its member churches for the following purposes and subject to the following conditions:

1. To allow the member church concerned "Church" to build/alter a sanctuary, manse or other buildings/structures as desired by the Church. These buildings are to be used as directed by the Church.
2. Based firmly on the principles of congregational government, the Church has complete discretion to manage its affairs, subject to clause 10 below.
3. The Church is entitled to direct the use of money received by it.
4. A pastor called (including for a new term) to the Church:
 - 4.1 must be Baptist;
 - 4.2 must be called (including for a new term) by a Special Church Meeting complying with clause 10 below;
 - 4.3 must subscribe to the Doctrinal Basis [reproduced as Appendix I].
and
a pastor removed from the Church must be dismissed by a Special Church Meeting complying with clause 10 below.
5. The Church is entitled to use its property as security to borrow money. The decision to mortgage or otherwise charge the Church property must be made at a special Church meeting complying with clause 10 below.
6. The Church is entitled to:
 - 6.1 create easements over;
 - 6.2 construct roads over;
 - 6.3 sell;its property.
Without the consent of the Executive Council of the Union ("Executive Council"), the Church may not sell its property at substantially less than current market value.
7. Money received by the Church:
 - 7.1 raised by way of mortgage of Church property;
 - 7.2 derived by sale of Church property;
 - 7.3 received as an insurance payout in relation to Church property;must be used for further property purchase or building improvements. Moneys so derived are deposited with the Union in the normal course until the Church directs the use of the money.
8. The Church is entitled to rent Church property on terms decided by a special Church meeting complying with clause 10 below.
9. Where the Union receives money on behalf of the Church, the payee has no further responsibility to follow up the payment.

10. The special Church meetings referred to above:
 - 10.1 may generally be called at any time;
 - 10.2 may be called by the Church leadership;
 - 10.3 must be called upon the written request of at least one-sixth of the members of the Church;
 - 10.4 must be convened by 14 days' clear notice specifying the time, place and purpose of the meeting
At a special Church meeting:
 - 10.5 persons voting must be over 18 years, must have been members of the Church for at least 6 months, and must have been present at Church for communion at least once in the preceding 6 months; and
 - 10.6 a two-thirds majority vote is required.
(the two-thirds rule relates to two-thirds of all those members present and voting. ... if the vote is by ballot and invalid votes are cast, the number of invalid votes must still be included in the total number of votes against which the two-thirds requirement is measured.)
11. A minute signed by the chairperson of a Church meeting is sufficient evidence that the minute is an accurate record of a Church decision.
12. (transitional provision)
13. In special circumstances of the Church owing money that the Union is liable to pay, the Union may, having given 6 months written notice to the Church, mortgage or sell Church property so as to cover the debt.
14. The beneficial ownership and control of Church property by the Church is not affected per se if the Church moves to another locality.
- 14A. In relation to the powers vested in the Church by clauses 4,5,7,8 and 13 above, the Church may, at any time, ask Executive Council to stand in the shoes of the Church and be able to exercise those powers in the Church's stead. Executive Council and the Church may later both determine that those powers will revert back to the Church.
15. If:
 - 15.1 the Church is dissolved;
 - 15.2 the Church is dispersed;
 - 15.3 the membership of the Church is reduced below 6; or
 - 15.4 public worship in the Church sanctuary property stops for six months (not being for building alterations)the Union automatically assumes full control of the Church property.
[At this stage any proceeds of sale of Church property by the Union would be deposited in the Union's Advancement Fund.]
- 15A. If the resident membership of the Church is reduced to less than 29 but more than 5, Executive Council may exercise the powers vested in the Church by clauses 4, 5, 7, 8 and 13 above. Executive Council may only exercise this discretion to stand in the shoes of the Church if it has given three months written notice of its intention to the Church and to Assembly. The Executive Council action must also have the endorsement of Assembly. Executive Council and the Church may later agree and both determine that the powers vested in Executive Council will revert back to the Church.
16. If the Church moves to another locality and leases the original Church property, then, until the end of the lease, the clause 15 "trigger" above, relating to the absence of public worship for at least six months, does not apply.


Union Administrator

13 October 2000