

Constitution and Companion Guide of the Phillip Island Baptist Church (P.I.B.C)



Constitution

1. NAME

The name of this church is Phillip Island Baptist Church ("the Church").

2. AFFILIATION

Affirming Baptist understandings of the Gospel, the Church is a member Church of The Baptist Union of Victoria and accepts as expressions of the Christian faith the Doctrinal Basis and the Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith contained in the Constitution of that Union.

3. PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY

Partnership in Ministry (PIM) shall consist of those who profess faith in Jesus, having personally accepted him as Saviour and Lord and who are willing to participate in the life of the Church, pledging themselves to God and to their fellow partners in the spirit of the Church Covenant.

4. MISSION AND PURPOSE

As a local community of the people of God, this church exists to be-

1. A Worshipping Community, devoted to God who alone is worthy (John 4:24; Rev. 4:11)
2. A Missional Community, faithful to the Great Commission
3. A Caring Community, demonstrating God's love
4. A Serving Community, living in the world as Christ was in the world (Matthew 20:28)
5. A Nurturing Community, helping disciples grow into God's love

5. HOW WE WILL OPERATE (Governance)

1. Under the guidance of God and Scripture, the Church will be governed on congregational principles, with the Partners in Ministry meeting being the final authority on all matters.
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 partners meeting.
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 Newsletter.
4. The Church Council must maintain open communication with partners on the affairs of the Church.
5. The Church will set aside, on the nomination of the Senior Pastor, such persons to Companion the Senior Pastor in the spiritual oversight of the church. These people will be known as Pastoral Companions.

6. ALTERATION TO THIS CONSTITUTION AND COVENANT

Changes to this Constitution, or covenant can only be made at a Special Meeting convened for such a purpose. Any proposed alteration to this Constitution or covenant shall first be brought to the Church Council for discussion. Notice of the wording of the proposed alteration shall then be given to the Partners in Ministry at least 14 days prior to the meeting date.

Companion Guide

1. PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY (PARTNERSHIP)

1.1. Procedure to become a Partner in Ministry

- 1.1.1. A Person who requests to become a Partner in Ministry should be directed to the Church Council who will arrange two current Partners in Ministry to interview the person. To become a Partner in Ministry requires the recommendation of the Church Council and the approval of a Church meeting. It must be clear that the person has made their own free decision to commit themselves to Christ and to the Church; has participated in appropriate preparation and accepts the Church's constitution and covenant.
- 1.1.2. If a person seeks to become a Partner in Ministry, having been a partner of another Church, a letter of commendation must be sought from that other Church.
- 1.1.3. Persons are deemed to have become Partners in Ministry at the time their successful election is announced at the Church Meeting at which the election is held. As soon as mutually convenient, new Partners in Ministry shall be welcomed into Partnership at the Communion of the Lord's Supper.
- 1.1.4. A roll will be kept of the names of those who are Partners in Ministry ("Partner in Ministry Roll"). The Administrator shall maintain the names of partners in the following sections:
 - a) Active Partners in Ministry - being those actively engaged in the life and ministry of the church.
 - b) Non-resident - those partners in good standing but no longer resident in the district.
- 1.1.5. A name may be removed from the Roll if the person becomes a member of another Church; requests removal from the Roll; dies; or has their PIM status removed by a decision of a Church meeting for disciplinary reasons. (Removing a name for disciplinary reasons should only be done after people appointed by the Church Council have visited the partner. Two weeks notice of the date and purpose of that Church meeting must be given to the Partner in Ministry concerned and the person should have the opportunity to speak to the Church meeting).
- 1.1.6. The Partners in Ministry Roll will be revised at each Annual Church Meeting on the basis of a report prepared by the Church Council. Unless the meeting notes that special circumstances apply, the names of those (PIM) who have not attended (or been connected with) the Church in the past year will be removed.

1.2. Procedure for discipline

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

2. MISSION, MINISTRY AND OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

2.1. The Church

- 2.1.1. The whole church fellowship has received from the Lord of the Church a commission to exercise the ministry of Word, sacrament and pastoral care to all humankind, and all partners are called upon to fulfill this ministry by exercising the gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon them. In this ministry all accept the responsibility to encourage and edify the whole fellowship, and at the same time, to receive from the fellowship that nurture and discipline essential to their own growth in grace.
- 2.1.2. Under the guidance of God and Scripture, the Church will be governed on congregational principles, with the Partners in Ministry (partners) meeting being the final authority on all matters.

2.2. Partnership meetings

- 2.2.1. 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 Partners of Church Council; and
 - c) Appointment of the auditor.
- 2.2.2. A 'Mission and Budget Meeting' will be held each year to consider and approve the Church's annual vision and budget. Other Partners in Ministry meetings will be held as required.
- 2.2.3. Special Meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Church Council or by written request of one fifth of the Partners in Ministry, to the Church Administrator. Two full Sundays' notice, setting forth the reason(s) for calling the meeting, shall be given and the meeting shall consider only the business for which it was convened.
- 2.2.4. Special Meetings, 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.
 - d) Special 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 4 to this Constitution).

2.3. Notice of meeting

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

2.4. Chairperson

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

2.5. Quorums

A quorum for any regular meeting of the church shall be 25% of the active partnership. The quorum for a special meeting where it involves the calling or removal of a pastor shall be 40% of the active partnership.

The quorum for all other special meetings as defined under 2.2.4 shall be 30%.

2.6. When a quorum is not attained

If a quorum is not present within 15 minutes of the appointed time for the commencement of a Church Meeting or at the time of the presentation of a matter on which a vote is required, the Chairperson shall advise that as a quorum is not present, the meeting stands adjourned and shall give notification for a further meeting in accordance with the Constitutional requirements for that meeting. If at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 15 minutes of the appointed time for the commencement of the meeting, the number of members present at that time shall constitute a quorum. No business other than that contained in the original notice of meeting will be considered at this next meeting.

2.7. Voting

- 2.7.1. Partners in Ministry who are recorded on the Active roll are eligible to vote at all Partners in Ministry meetings (with the exception of a Special Meeting where special provisions apply).
- 2.7.2. 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 partners of Church Council must be by secret ballot. A meeting may require a secret ballot on other matters where it considers it appropriate.
- 2.7.3. A motion put to a Partners in Ministry meeting will be carried by a simple majority, with the exception of motions considered at a Special Meeting and alterations to this Constitution, which require a two-thirds majority of those present and eligible to vote.
- 2.7.4. The Chairperson will have only one vote. In the case of a tied vote, the question will be resolved in the negative.

2.8. Minutes

Records of the decisions of all partners meetings must be kept by the church Administrator and made available for inspection by Partners in Ministry.

2.9. The Pastor

- 2.9.1. The church shall call a Pastor or Pastors of the church who shall be primarily concerned with the spiritual leadership and pastoral oversight of the church and shall perform the specific duties pertaining to their appointment.
- 2.9.2. One Pastor shall be called as the Senior Pastor and shall be the leader of the Pastoral Team and the spiritual leader in the life and ministry of the church.
- 2.9.3. Each Pastor shall be a person whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the Church to fulfill such a ministry of leadership; who is a believer baptised by immersion upon personal confession of faith; who is committed to our Baptist heritage and who shall be chosen and called into office in accordance with the procedures set out in Appendix 2 of this constitution.
- 2.9.4. Each full time Pastor shall be a partner of the Church Council and is entitled to attend all meetings of Church committees, auxiliaries and organisations.

Calling or Removing of a Pastor/s

- 2.9.5. In the Calling of a pastor the Church Council shall call the Church to prayer.
- 2.9.6. The procedure for the calling of a pastor is as per Appendix 2.
- 2.9.7. The pastorate may be terminated on the initiative of
 - a) A Pastor – after giving three months’ notice of intention in writing to the church; this may be shortened in consultation with the Church Council and Pastoral Companions.
 - b) The church – by a motion carried by a two-thirds majority of the active partners present and voting.

2.10. Pastoral Companions

The Pastoral Companions with the Senior Pastor are responsible for the vision and spiritual oversight of the church. These responsibilities include:

- a) Sharing with the Senior Pastor in the spiritual oversight of the church;
- b) Enabling, encouraging and supporting the Senior Pastor in the spiritual leadership of the church;
- c) Assisting the Senior Pastor to discern the mission and ministry of the church in the wider community;
- d) Meeting as necessary.

2.10.1. Term of office

2.10.1.1. Once elected, a Pastoral Companion commits to serve a two-year period. The term may be extended further without the need for a further election with the consent of the Senior Pastor and the other Pastoral Companions.

2.10.1.2. Their number shall be a minimum of three.

2.10.2. Election Procedure

2.10.2.1. Election will be by secret ballot.

2.10.2.2. Nominations will be provided to the Administrator not less than fourteen days prior to a church meeting.

2.10.2.3. Each nominee must receive the endorsement of at least eighty percent of the partners present and voting, to be eligible to become a Pastoral Companion.

2.11 Church Council

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 administrative oversight to the Church;
- b) Developing and advancing the Church's mission, vision and values;
- c) Engaging in strategic planning;
- d) Reviewing the Senior Pastor's performance;
- e) Legal compliance;
- f) Financial accountability;
- g) Producing written governing policies and processes;
- h) Encouraging and developing potential Church Council partners so that the future leadership of the Church is assured;
- i) Establishing and reviewing ministry teams and other such bodies to best suit the fulfillment of the Church's mission;
- j) Appointing and dismissing leaders, pastors (other than the Senior Pastor) and other staff.

2.10.3. Church Council Meetings

2.10.3.1. The Church Council will meet as regularly as required for business, prayer and fellowship, and must be given reasonable notice of such meetings. Special meetings may be held, as deemed necessary by the Pastor, the Church Administrator, or on the written request of any two of the Church Council.

2.10.3.2. The quorum for any Church Council meeting will be not less than 50% of the partners of Church Council.

2.10.3.3. Records of the decisions of all Church Council meetings must be kept by the Church Administrator and made available for inspection if a Partners in Ministry meeting requests them.

2.10.4. Term of office

2.10.4.1. Elected officers and partners 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.

2.11.2.1 Elected officers and partners of Church Council cannot serve on the Council in the same time period s their partner/wife/husband

2.10.5. Casual vacancies

2.10.5.1. Should a casual vacancy occur, the Church Council may co-opt a Partner in Ministry to fill the vacancy and the person so appointed will hold office until the next Annual General Meeting following the appointment.

2.10.5.2. An election must be held at the next Annual General Meeting and the partner so elected will hold office for the remainder of the term.

2.10.6. Election procedure

2.10.6.1. Nominations shall be in writing, signed by two partners and the nominee and must be received by the Church Administrator at least two full weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting. The Church Administrator is to advise the church of the names of those nominated for two Sundays prior to the elections.

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

2.10.7. Voting procedures for election

2.10.7.1. Each nominee must receive the endorsement of at least two-thirds of the partners present and voting, to be eligible to take office on the Church Council.

2.10.7.2. The minimum number to serve on the Church Council shall be five, not including the Pastor/s.

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

Officers

2.10.7.4. The Church Administrator, Church Treasurer, and Senior Pastor shall be the Church Officers. Also known as the Administrative Executive.

2.10.7.5. The Church Administrator and Church Treasurer shall be elected at the Church Annual Meeting for a term of two years and shall be elected in alternate years. Any casual vacancy shall be filled for the balance of the term of that office.

2.10.7.6. The Church Administrator and Church Treasurer shall be partners of the Church Council and shall fulfill the same requirements as necessary for the office of a partner of Council.

(a) The Church Administrator shall

2.10.7.7. Be responsible for keeping a record of all Church Council Meetings, Church Meetings, and the Partnership Roll;

2.10.7.8. Conduct correspondence on behalf of the Church and deal with business matters of the Church;

2.10.7.9. Present to the Church Annual Meeting a written report covering the total Church work during the past year.

(b) The Church Treasurer shall be responsible for

2.10.7.10. Receiving all monies on behalf of the Church;

2.10.7.11. Making payments as directed by the Church Partners or Church Council Meetings;

2.10.7.12. Presenting a financial report to each ordinary meeting of the Church Council and to each Partners in Ministry Meeting;

2.10.7.13. Presenting at the Annual Church Meeting a budget of estimated income and expenditure for the ensuing financial year;

2.10.7.14. Presenting an audited financial statement of Church income and expenditure for the financial year to a Partners in Ministry Meeting no later than four months after the end of the financial year.

3. CHURCH FINANCE

3.1 Offerings

The ordinary expenses of the church shall be defrayed by the voluntary offerings from partners and those attending at public worship, and other times and by such other means as are approved by the church. Partners, through the faithful exercise of Christian stewardship, are responsible for the work of the Kingdom through the local church and give as the Lord enables them.

4. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

4.1. The pastor shall be ex-officio President of all auxiliary organisations connected with the church, and shall, when present, be entitled to take the chair at all meetings.

4.2. Each organisation shall have the right of recommending its officers, though, in the case of all such leaders, approval must be given by the Church Council. In all matters of dispute, the church, subject to this constitution, is the final authority.

4.3. Property purchased or used by any organisation, if it disbands or ceases to function, shall become the property of the church.

4.4. Rules and programs of any society, club or organisation connected with the church shall be subject to approval by the Church Council before being published, circulated or performed.

- 4.5. No organisation shall use the name of the church without the consent of the Church Council.

5. CHURCH PROPERTY

- 5.1. The church property is available for use by organisations of the church. The activities of all such organisations are supervised under the authority vested in the Church Meeting and this constitution.
- 5.2. While church property is rate free it ought not be let, except under special conditions or, when the church has entered into special arrangements with the Baptist Union of Victoria, with the approval of the Executive Council.
- 5.3. Any organisation outside the local church desiring the use of any part of the church property shall apply in writing to the Church Administrator or his/her delegate.
- 5.4. All organisations, whether belonging to the church or not, using the premises are required to leave same in order, swept, clean and tidy for next use by others.
- 5.5. When breakages or damage to property occur, a report on same must be made to the Church Administrator or his/her delegate, and expenses met or replacement made by the responsible party.
- 5.6. Smoking, the consumption of drugs, or gambling are not permitted on the premises.
- 5.7. Costs of lighting, heating, cleaning, etc., will normally be met by any outside organisations using the premises. Details shall be arranged by agreement.

APPENDIX 1

THE DOCTRINAL BASIS AND THE PRINCIPLES AND IDEALS OF THE BAPTIST FAITH

1. PREAMBLE

Throughout their history Baptists have exhibited two attitudes to creeds and doctrinal statements. They have always resisted attempts to compel Christians to subscribe to any formal creed lest it hinder the Holy Spirit leading the Lord's people into new understanding of the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand they have, perhaps more than any other group of Christians, produced many Confessions of Faith – statements of their beliefs at a given time and in the midst of specific circumstances. The readiness with which Baptists have been prepared to alter these Confessions of Faith is a strong indication that never have they intended them to bind the conscience or the understanding of a believer. They were and are intended to be an understanding of the Christian faith, not a definite understanding of that faith.

In 1888, in order to fulfill a legal requirement to safeguard the trusts of the Baptist Association of Victoria, what is now called the Doctrinal Basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria was adopted by the Annual Assembly of the Association and incorporated into its Constitution, where it has remained until the present. In 1927, when the Constitution of the Baptist Union of Victoria was revised, the Doctrinal Basis was supplemented by an interpretative section entitled "Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith". That interpretation was incorporated into the Constitution of the Baptist Union of Victoria where it remains today as a representative statement of what some of the beliefs of Victorian Baptists were more than half a century ago.

Never was either of these statements intended to be the total understanding of Victorian Baptists of the whole counsel of God. In referring to these statements in its Basis of Fellowship this church accepts them as two expressions of the Christian faith in the long tradition of a multitude of confessions cast in the mould of the Baptist understanding of the faith once delivered to the saints, noting that the Constitution of the Baptist Union of Victoria states that the approval and adoption by the Union of the doctrines contained in these statements is "for the guidance of constituents of the Union".

2. DOCTRINAL BASIS

As a constituent of the Baptist Union of Victoria, this church accepts the doctrinal basis as set out below:

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 Humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity
4. The fallen, sinful and lost condition of all humankind

5. The salvation of humankind from the punishment and the 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 necessity, for salvation, of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ
7. The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of believers, in their sanctification and in their preservation to the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ
8. The resurrection of the dead, the final judgment of all humankind by the Lord Jesus Christ
9. The two ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper,
 - a) Baptism being the immersion of believers upon the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the symbol of the fellowship of the regenerate in His death, burial and resurrection;
 - b) The Lord's Supper being a memorial, until He comes, of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. PRINCIPLES AND IDEALS OF THE BAPTIST FAITH

While holding many facets of Christian truth in common with other denominations Baptists place a distinctive emphasis upon the following fundamental principles of the Christian Faith as revealed in the New Testament.

1) The child in the Kingdom

- a) Baptists believe that infants are God's little ones, whether of Christian or non-Christian parents, and accept without modification the word of the Lord, "of such is the kingdom of Heaven." This Christian view of the child makes the external act of "infant baptism" unnecessary.
- b) Baptists approve of the presentation of children to God by parents, if thereby they solemnly undertake to train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord in the home and in the church.

2) The significance of Conversion

- a) To all who at the stage of personal responsibility, ignore God's Law, and wander as prodigals from the Father's home, Baptists preach the Gospel of the Father's love and the message of the Cross, as the way of life. Conversion is acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- b) This acceptance of Christ is a personal and deliberate act involving the assent of the mind, the decisions of the will and the love of the heart.

- c) This avowal of allegiance to Christ implies a constant endeavour to live a life worthy of, and well-pleasing to Him in all things.

3) The Church – a Spiritual Society

Baptists hold that the church, as established by the Lord Jesus Christ, should consist of persons who have personally and intelligently accepted Him as Saviour and Lord, and pledged themselves to discipleship and service in the Kingdom of God.

4) The Lordship of Christ in the Church

- a) Baptists hold and teach that Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church and that without any human intervention or ritualistic ceremony.
- b) Therefore He is the sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct, in the life both of the church and of the individual.
- c) This involves liberty of thought and of conscience, and the right of the believer and the Church, freed from any ecclesiastical or other external authority, to interpret His mind.

5) The Standard of Belief

- a) Believing that the voice of the Church is subordinate to the voice of Christ, and that the mind of the Master is the standard of Christian belief, Baptists do not subscribe to any formal Church Creed lest it hamper the development of Christian thought.
- b) Further, in their interpretation of the Lord's farewell declaration, "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth", Baptists accept the principle that God has yet "more light and truth to break forth from His Word".
- c) Therefore, Baptists claim the personal privilege, and accept the Christian responsibility of courageously thinking God's thoughts after Him under the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit of Truth.

6) The Ministry of Leadership

- a) In adopting the Congregational Principles of Church Government, with no formal creed, with no external authority, and no defined ecclesiastical policy, and each partner having equal rights and responsibilities, the Baptist Church is largely dependent on the reality and vigour of the spiritual life of its individual partners.
- b) This spiritual life is generated by the understanding and inspiration of Christ's ideals; and by the creation and maintenance of a spiritual atmosphere, in which all that is unworthy dies, and in which Christian life becomes healthy and aggressive.

- c) The Baptist Minister accepts their office from the Lord of the Church and while they are a “servant of the Church”, the Church is not their master. They are the spiritual leader in the life and ministry of the Church.
- d) Associated with the Minister in the spiritual oversight of the Church are men and women chosen for their Christian gifts and graces, who are called to be examples to the partners of the church, in conduct, zeal, self-denial and generosity.
- e) Church officers are appointed as spiritual leaders to work in sympathetic co- operation with the Minister and church partners.
- f) The periodic Church Meeting is the centre of the church’s Christian activities and is the seat of authority in the management of church business.

7) The Christian Significance of Baptism

- a) Christian Baptism, by which is meant the immersion of believers as instituted by our Lord, is a personal, public confession of the believer’s identification with Christ, and also a means of grace to the Christian.
- b) Baptism is an outward act that symbolizes but does not affect regeneration and salvation is not dependent on it.
- c) Baptism is a glorious privilege and a personal responsibility, and is a help to the believer in reminding him of his spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

8) The Fellowship of the Lord’s Supper

- a) To Baptists the Church is not so much an organisation as a fellowship, effective only as there is spiritual association with the Head of the Church.
- b) The Lord’s Supper is a service of spiritual fellowship whereby, through remembrance of His life and death, believers may experience in supreme degree the reality and influence of His presence.
- c) It is an opportunity of entering into close fellowship with the Lord in the Holy of Holies, where there is a re-kindling of love and a re-consecration of life to His service.

9) The Church and the Kingdom

Baptists recognise their responsibility to strive for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world, and teach that partnership in the church implies service and sacrifice. This involves a stewardship of time, talents and money, which aims at being worthy of the Son of God who loved and served mankind, even unto death.

APPENDIX 2

THE CALLING OF THE PASTOR

When the church is seeking to call a pastor the following procedures shall be observed.

1. The Church Administrator shall notify the Baptist Union of Victoria that the pastorate is vacant, or is about to become vacant, and may request the Baptist Union of Victoria to recommend persons sympathetic to the life of the church for consideration for appointment as moderator. The moderator, who shall be appointed by resolution of a church meeting, shall normally chair all meetings of the church, the Church Council or of any pastoral search committee when matters related to the call of a pastor are under consideration.
2. A church meeting convened for the purpose of considering the filling of the pastoral vacancy shall settle the terms and conditions of a call in writing and shall appoint either the Church Council or a special Pastoral Search Committee to take the necessary consultative steps with a view to recommending to a subsequent church meeting a person to be called to the pastorate of the church.
3. The Church Council or the Pastoral Search Committee, as the case may be, shall invite Partners of the church to submit in confidence the names of persons considered suitable for the filling of the pastoral vacancy. Other persons, suggested by the Advisory Board, or by other sources may also be considered.
4. The Church Council or the Pastoral Search Committee shall in confidence interview persons considered by it to be suitable for filling the pastoral vacancy. Negotiations shall be conducted with only one person at any one time.
5. When the Church Council or Pastoral Search Committee is of a mind to recommend a person to a church meeting with a view to a call to the pastorate it shall first obtain the consent of that person and an indication from him or her that if a call is made he or she will most likely accept it. His or her agreement to the terms and conditions of the call as set by the church meeting shall also be obtained in a Statement of Understanding signed by both parties.
6. The Church Administrator shall, on behalf of the Church Council or the Pastoral Search Committee, convene a Special meeting of the church for the sole reason of considering the recommendation in respect of the issue of a call to the pastorate. Two full Sundays' notice shall be given of the meeting but the name of the person to be considered shall not be made known until the meeting has commenced.
7. At the Special meeting voting shall be by ballot and a call shall not be issued unless at least seventy five percent of the partners of the church over the age of eighteen years who are present and who vote shall be in favour of issuing the call. Details of voting shall be confidential to the scrutineers and the Chairman, and shall be made available on request to the pastor under consideration.
8. If the Special meeting shall decide to issue a call then the moderator shall advise the person concerned and seek a response.

9. No public announcement of the outcome of the meeting shall be made until the response of the person concerned has been communicated to the church.
10. If the Special meeting shall decide not to issue a call then the moderator shall advise the person concerned. The Church Council or Pastoral Search Committee with the moderator shall continue the search for a pastor.
11. At all stages of the procedures every care shall be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

APPENDIX 3

BAPTISM AND CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

Refer to Appendix 1, “Doctrinal Basis”, Sections 1(c) to 7 and 9; and “Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith”, sections 2, 3 and 7.

The Biblical Teaching

1. Church Partnership in the New Testament

The focus of the New Testament is on partnership in the Church of Jesus Christ. There is no distinction between the church as a “glorious company of the saints” and the church as the fellowship of those saints in a given community. Partnership is partnership in the church, and that partnership is expressed in the visible, local Christian community. By grace through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, a person is “saved” (Acts 16 v 3), “made alive”, (Ephesians 2 v 1-8), “born again” (John 3 v 3,5,7), becomes a child of God (John 1 v 12-13), is baptized into the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Acts 2 v 38-39), is baptised “by one Spirit in to one body” (1Corinthians 12 v 13), becomes a part of the new humanity, fellow citizens and partners of the household of God (Ephesians 2 v 14-21), and accepted as “saints/brethren” in the local congregations of God’s people (Romans 1 v 7; 1 Corinthians 1v2; 2 Corinthians 1 v1; Galatians 1v2; Ephesians 1v1; Philippians 1v1; Colossians 1v2; etc)

In other words, the Apostolic church presents regeneration, spiritual baptism, baptism by immersion, partnership of the Church of Jesus Christ, and acceptance into the local community of believers as the experience of those who confess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. And while regeneration, spirit baptism and partnership into the Church are the work of God’s Spirit unseen by men, these things become visible to the world at large in the acts of confession, immersion “walking in newness of life”, and commitment to the fellowship and ministry of the local company of believers (Acts 2v 41-47; Romans 6 v1-23; Colossians 2v6-3v17). Each facet is inseparable from all the others and each finds its true meaning in this inter-relationship.

2. A COMMITTED PARTNERSHIP

Life in and through the local community of believers is a matter of commitment. Being part of the local community is not a matter of simple acceptance or loose association. It is a serious undertaking. Indeed Jesus’ own teaching in the New Commandment “Love one another” (John 13v 34-35, with 15 other references in the N-T) – coupled with all the Biblical teaching regarding life together as God’s people, precludes a careless attitude to partnership of the local body.

3. THE PLACE OF BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

As we have already seen, baptism belongs to the context of the total conversion experience. The word “baptismos” and related words occur some 120 times in the N.T. About one half are in the Gospels referring to John the Baptist and his baptism, his prophetic statement about Jesus, the baptism of Jesus, Jesus and his disciples baptising, Jesus death as baptism, and in the Great Commission. The remaining references describe the practice and meaning of baptism in the early church.

- a) Baptism is linked with repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 2v39), and the washing away of sins (Acts 22v 16), hearing and receiving the Good News and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2v 38-41; 8 v12-13 and 37 (KJV); 16 v14-15, 30-34; 18v8) and receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2v39; 10v 47-48; 19v5).
- b) Baptism is baptism into Christ or into the name (Matthew 28v19; Acts 2v38, 8v16, 19v5; Romans 6v3-4; Galatians 3v27; and implied in 1 Corinthians 1v13-17), and into the body (1 Corinthians 12v 13).
- c) The New Testament presumes that believers were baptised (Romans 6v4; Colossians 2v12; Ephesians 4v5; Galatians 3v27). Believers seemed to expect to be baptised (Acts 8v36). There is no question or debate as to whether or not a person who has received Christ should be baptised.

The full significance of baptism clearly lies in its place at the beginning of one's Christian pilgrimage. It is inseparably part of that conversion experience of change from death to new life with and in the risen Christ (Romans 6v 3ff). It is baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28v19). It is baptism into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12 v 13).

Therefore, it is concluded that the Bible teaches

- a) That the Church of Jesus Christ consists of persons who have personally and consciously accepted Him by faith as Saviour and Lord, and pledge themselves to discipleship and service in the Kingdom of God.
- b) That personal faith is naturally and properly expressed in baptism and partnership in and with the local body of believers.
- c) That baptism is the immersion of believers upon profession of their personal faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
- d) That partnership in and with the local body is a matter of deliberate and wholehearted commitment to Christ and to fellow members of His body.

This church is committed to preach, teach and practise these things and those who come to faith through the mission and ministry of this church will be led through believer's baptism by immersion in and with the local body of Christ.

APPENDIX 4

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 partner churches for the following purposes and subject to the following conditions:

1. To allow the partner church concerned "the 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 partners 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 partners 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 partners 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 partnership 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 partnership 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.

Trevor Spicer

Union Administrator

13 October 2000