



**NEW LIFE**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

# Constitution



# New Life Baptist Church Constitution

## 1. Name

1.1 The name of the church is New Life Baptist Church.

1.2 New Life Baptist Church is a properly recognised constituent church of The Baptist Union of Victoria. The Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) is incorporated under "The Baptist Union Incorporation Act", 1930 – approved by the Parliament of Victoria on 24 December 1930 - number 3903. This is a perpetual incorporation unless revoked by Parliament.

## 2. Not-For-Profit Status

2.1 The assets and income of New Life Baptist Church shall be applied solely in furtherance of its purposes and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly by way of profit to the members.

## 3. The People of New Life Baptist Church

3.1 New Life Baptist Church is a body of believers in Jesus Christ who have responded to the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, having been united to Christ and to His people through personal confession of faith in Jesus as God's true son, signified through baptism and partnering with one another.

3.2 New Life Baptist Church is a Constituent Member Church of The Baptist Union of Victoria and accepts as expressions of the Christian faith the *Doctrinal Basis* contained in the Constitution of that Union and printed as Appendices I to this Constitution.

3.3 In common with the whole Church, New Life Baptist Church accepts its commission to participate in Christ's ministry to all creation, to proclaim and model the good news of salvation available through faith in Jesus Christ. All members, referred to hereafter as Partners (Refer to 4.1 below), through the Holy Spirit, are called to build up the body of Christ and partner with Him in transforming the world until He returns.

### 3.4 New Life Baptist Church's Vision and Mission

At New Life, we aspire to be a flourishing church of Christ-like disciples, relying on the Holy Spirit to know God and make Him known throughout our local community and beyond.

Our mission model is based on three movements, Upward, Inward & Outward. These three movements represent the way in which we are called to live and love as God's people. Upwards: responding to God and following Jesus, Inwards: loving and caring for each other as God's people, and Outwards: blessing our community by sharing Jesus.

We nurture Christ-centered community, partnering with God to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

***As a Christ-centered community we:***

- Believe that God's church is to be a visible witness to His life and power. We are committed to being the people of God who allow others access into our lives to see and experience the good news of Jesus.
- Are committed to reaching out to those who do not know Him. We desire to be a community where people belong and in so doing understand the implications for following Jesus.
- Desire to be a positive influence in the life of our community. We are committed to embracing a practical Christianity, known for its service to others on behalf of Christ.
- Will use our unique Spirit-given abilities for the purpose of building up one another so that we might become more like Christ Himself.
- Affirm a passionate and public Christianity modeled after the pattern and life of Jesus.

**4. Partnership**

- 4.1** New Life Baptist Church consists of people who are personally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to the mission of the church. These people are referred to as Partners after having been affirmed by the church Leadership.
- 4.2** A person is invited to consider partnership at New Life Baptist Church after meeting with the Pastor or member of the Leadership Team to discuss the vision, mission, core values and partner's document (the New Life Baptist Church Partner's document is included in this document as Appendix III).
- 4.3** A roll will be kept of the partners of the church known as the *Partnership Roll*.
- 4.4** A name may be removed from the Partnership Roll if the partner:
  - 4.4.1** becomes a member of another church;
  - 4.4.2** requests removal from the Partnership Roll;
  - 4.4.3** dies;
  - 4.4.4** finishes their 12 month term, and chooses not to renewor
  - 4.4.5** has their partnership removed by a decision of the Leadership Team for disciplinary reasons.

## **5. Baptism**

- 5.1** New Life Baptist Church baptises professing believers in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as a sign of their salvation, their desire to obey the commands of Christ, and their initiation into the body of Christ and an expression of them becoming a new creation.

## **6. Leadership**

### **6.1 Leadership Team**

- 6.1.1** The Leadership Team consists of the Senior Pastor and a minimum of two elected representatives of the church. The Leadership Team is responsible for the oversight of the life and mission of New Life Baptist Church.
- 6.1.2** The Leadership Team must be people eligible for partnership of the church.
- 6.1.3** The elected representatives will be appointed by church partners for a three year term (which is renewable) by a two thirds majority of those Partners who are present at a Special Church meeting.
- 6.1.4** The Leadership Team will prepare new policies or alter existing policies on various matters, including staff appointments, for the purpose of governing aspects of New Life Baptist Church's life and mission.
- 6.1.5** The Leadership Team values consultation as it seeks to discern the will of God. It is responsible for ensuring that, when relevant, the wider church community have opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes. This seeks to recognize the gifts of appointed leaders whilst valuing the wisdom and voice of the wider body of Christ.

### **6.2 The Senior Pastor**

- 6.2.1** The Senior Pastor of the church will be someone whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by God to lead His church.
- 6.2.2** The Senior Pastor of the church must be a person eligible for partnership of the church.
- 6.2.3** Each of the following items relating to the Senior Pastor of the church requires a two thirds majority of those Partners who are present at a Special Church Meeting. Details of a Special Church Meeting can be found in the plain English summary of Schedule B, prepared by The Baptist Union of Victoria, which is reproduced as Appendix II to this Constitution:
- 6.2.3.1** The calling of a Senior Pastor.
- 6.2.3.2** The approval of any extension of term if a pastor has been Called for a specific term.

**6.2.3.3** The removal of a Senior Pastor.  
If the situation arises where there is widespread disapproval and loss of confidence in a pastor then a Special Church Meeting may be called. However, a proposal to remove a Senior Pastor should not be put to a church meeting before the church has consulted with the Baptist Union about the matter.

**6.2.4** Pastoral Search Committee.

**6.2.4.1** When the church seeks a Senior Pastor a Pastoral Search Committee will be formed. The composition of the Pastoral Search Committee will be determined by the Leadership Team.

**6.2.4.2** When the Pastoral Search Committee has interviewed suitable candidates and identified a potential new Senior Pastor, they will report back to a Special Church Meeting at which a vote by ballot will decide on the appointment.

## **7. Church Meetings**

**7.1** In accordance with Section 6.1.5, church meetings will be held to consult with the church and discern the will of God.

**7.2** As far as possible, church meetings will aim for a consensus approach to the matter being considered.

**7.3** Audited financial statements (for the preceding church year) must be presented to a church meeting every year.

### **7.4 Annual Meeting**

**7.4.1** An Annual Meeting will be held to consider the life and ministry of New Life Baptist Church and to focus upon the vision for the future ministry and effectiveness of the church.

**7.4.2** Notice of the time, place and business of the Annual Meeting will be communicated to the church at least two weeks prior to the scheduled Annual Meeting.

**7.4.3** The agenda for the Annual Meeting will be prepared by the Leadership Team.

**7.4.4** Agenda items for the Annual Meeting must include:

**7.4.4.1** Financial statements (for the preceding church year) will be made available at the Annual Meeting.

**7.4.4.2** Ministry reports of the previous year.

**7.4.5** Records of Annual Meeting proceedings will be recorded and made available to partners.

## **7.5 Special Church Meetings**

Special Church Meetings are needed to consider any decision regarding the calling, extension of term or removal of a Senior Pastor or any transaction significantly affecting any land or buildings of the church. This includes purchase of property. Special Church Meetings are governed under different rules set out in Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930 which is reproduced as Appendix III to this Constitution. A quorum of no less than one third of eligible partners must be present to conduct a meeting, and at least half of the Leadership Team should be represented.

## **8. Church property**

- 8.1** Where church land/buildings enjoy a rate free status, they are not to be regularly let by New Life Baptist Church unless recommended by the Leadership Team and approved by a Special Church Meeting.
- 8.2** If a church group ceases to function, New Life Baptist Church becomes the owner of any property purchased or owned by that group and any money in its possession.
- 8.3** Any property held by New Life Baptist Church will be held in accordance with Schedule B which is reproduced in Appendix II of this Constitution.

## **9. Dissolution**

- 9.1** In the event of the dissolution of the Church, any assets of the Church remaining after payment of the Church's liabilities shall, subject to any requirements imposed by the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission, be transferred to:
- 9.2** The BUV, provided that at the time of such transfer the BUV is endorsed as an income tax-exempt entity; or,
- 9.3** In default of the Baptist Union of Victoria; such other income tax-exempt entity or entities as decided by the Baptist Union of Victoria.

## **10. Alteration to this Constitution**

- 10.1** No proposed alteration to this Constitution can be brought to a church meeting unless notice of the wording of the proposed alteration has been given to members at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.
- 11.2** This Constitution remains in operation until it is revised or replaced by a church meeting. It is recommended that a review of this constitution's continuing suitability should be undertaken once every five years, and a church meeting asked to either reaffirm it or revise it.

## Appendix I

### 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 II

### 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.

## Appendix III

### New Life Baptist Church Partnership Document

***As people called to serve God through the New Life Baptist Church, we together commit to:***

1. Daily follow Jesus Christ in community and engage in His mission of making disciples.
2. Affirm the church's core values and doctrinal position, as per Baptist Union of Victoria
3. Value the gifts of one another and seek to nurture these in ministry and service, recognising that we have all received the high calling of ministry together.
4. Commit ourselves to a life of prayer, both as individuals and as a community.
5. Grow in love for one another by gathering regularly to encourage each other.
6. Protect Christ's good name by pursuing high ethical standards in daily life, and justice and kindness in daily relationships.
7. Acknowledge that our calling in the world is to bring the redeeming power and love of Christ to our community.
8. Regularly participate in the gatherings of the church, especially for worship and sharing the Lord's Supper.
9. Practically support our church, contributing our time and money as we are able.
10. Prayerfully support, encourage and respect the Leadership of our church.
11. Strive to preserve the unity of our church, always allowing truth, peace and love to guide our speaking, and to deal with offenses according to the rule of Christ (Matthew 18:15-17).

**Please note...**

- \* Applicants should have been a regular part of the New Life family for six months before submitting an application, unless transferring from another Christian church known to New Life.
- \* All applications are subject to Leadership Team approval and applicants will normally be notified of decisions within a month of their application being received.
- \* The document remains effective for one year from the date signed (partners renew annually)



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