

NELSON BAPTIST CHURCH of New Zealand

Church Constitution

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Contents:

1. The Church
 2. Aims and Functions
 3. Structure
 4. Membership
 5. Leadership
 6. Government of the Church
 7. Declaration of Trust
 8. Alterations to this Constitution
 9. No Pecuniary Profit for any Individual
 10. Winding Up Provisions
-
- A. Addenda to the Constitution
 - a) Members' Pledge
 - b) Associated Trusts
 - i. Maitai Baptist Trust

1. THE CHURCH

1.1 The name of the Church is the Nelson Baptist Church.

1.2 The Church is a community of those who believe in God the Father, in God the Son Jesus Christ and in God the Holy Spirit - one God; who are repentant of their sin and who have been saved by personal faith in Jesus Christ through His atoning death and resurrection; who publicly proclaim their faith and are committed to the Church's vision, aims and functions.

1.3 The Church believes in:

1.3.1 The true humanity and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1.3.2 The atonement made on the Cross by our Lord for the sin of the world.

1.3.3 The person of the Holy Spirit as the one who sanctifies and who sets apart, empowers and imparts spiritual gifts to the Church.

1.3.4 The inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice.

1.3.5 Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

1.3.6 Membership of the Church is for those who have received salvation.

1.3.7 The Ordinances of the church are:

a) Believers' baptism by immersion.

b) Communion.

2. AIMS AND FUNCTIONS

2.1 To meet regularly for worship, prayer, teaching, encouragement and fellowship.

2.2 To engage in the task of mission, principally within New Zealand but also overseas (see Matthew 28:19-20).

2.3 To express God's love to the community through ministries of the Word and practical care.

2.4 In every possible way to seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ and bring them into His Church.

3. STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The church is an autonomous body governed through its Members, working closely with Regional and National Baptist Staff, the New Zealand Baptist Family of Churches and its Mission agency, and the wider body of Christ.
- 3.2 The Leadership shall consist of the Senior Pastor(s), together with the Elders and Management Team. The members of the Leadership Teams will be recognised as the legal officers of the church. Excepting external co-optees (subclause 5.3.3c), all members of the Leadership of the Church must be active Church Members.
- 3.3 The Church may set up a Charitable Trust or Trusts to provide resources which will enable the Church through the Trust to minister to its local community by seeking to meet the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and educational needs of the people of its local community. The Church shall elect Trustees when required under the relevant Trust Deed(s). Nominations and voting shall be in accordance with the election of Elders, see subclause 5.3.2 of this Constitution.

4. MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Any person who confesses faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptised as a believer, shows evidence of following Christ in newness of life and who is willing to uphold the commitments as outlined in the Members' Pledge may apply to become a Church Member.
In the light of the Baptist principle of freedom of conscience, if a person genuinely believes that their baptism as an infant and their subsequent confirmation of their faith is sufficient, that person will be permitted to apply for Church Membership.
- 4.2 Application for Church Membership shall be undertaken in line with the current *Nelson Baptist Membership Policy and Guidelines*. This policy will be reviewed by Elders every two years.
- 4.3 A Membership Roll shall be kept and reviewed annually by the Elders.
- 4.4 Resolution of differences and church discipline.
- 4.4.1 In cases of difference between Church Members, the Lord's words, as set out in Matthew 18:15-17 shall be followed.
- 4.4.2 If an allegation of conduct inconsistent with the teaching of scripture is received, the Elders shall arrange to have the allegation investigated.
- a) If the allegation is found to have substance, appropriate action will be taken by the Elders to address the issue and to seek repentance and reconciliation.
 - b) Where repentance and/or reconciliation does not result, the Elders may take appropriate action and/or bring a recommendation to a Members' Meeting.
 - c) The person or persons concerned shall, where possible, be given an opportunity to speak at any meeting called to consider their Membership.
- 4.4.3 Where reconciliation is unable to be achieved, the Elders shall have the power to admonish, suspend or expel any Member for serious misconduct.

5. LEADERSHIP

5.1 Senior Pastor(s)

5.1.1 Pastoral Responsibility

The Senior Pastor(s) in co-operation with the Elders shall be entrusted with the spiritual oversight and mission of the Church in co-operation with the Elders. The Senior Pastor(s) shall be an ex-officio member(s) of all ministries of the Church.

The Senior Pastor(s) shall operate in accordance with a regularly reviewed Role Description and other requirements as outlined in their Terms of Call or Individual Employment Agreement documents.

5.1.2 Pastoral Vacancy

When a vacancy occurs in the senior pastorate, the Church may, on the recommendation of the Elders, appoint an Interim Pastor(s) who shall temporarily take up this function.

A Pastoral Search Committee (which may include a representative from the wider NZ Baptist family) shall be appointed by the Church on the recommendation of the Elders. The Committee shall be guided by the Baptist Union pastoral search protocols.

- a) The Pastoral Search Committee shall, after consultation with the Elders, bring one nomination to a Members' Meeting called for that purpose.
- b) Two weeks' notice shall be given of the meeting. No call to the pastorate shall be made except on the votes of at least 75% of the votes cast at that meeting.
- c) Voting shall be by secret ballot.

5.1.3 Termination of the Pastorate

Three months' notice shall be given by the Church or the Senior Pastor(s) before the pastorate is terminated except in cases of serious ministerial misconduct, or unless another period is negotiated between the parties.

Any resolution to terminate the pastorate shall require a vote of at least 50% of votes cast by secret ballot at a properly constituted Special Members' Meeting called for that purpose.

While it is acknowledged that the Senior Pastor(s), and any person appointed under subclause 5.2 is not an employee, the church membership shall ensure that pastors are treated with fairness and dignity upon the conclusion of their pastorate.

Any dispute or difference arising out of the conclusion of the pastorate must be referred to an independent party for resolution by way of mediation or such alternative dispute resolution process that is agreed as being appropriate.

In the event it is not possible to reach agreement as to the identity of the independent party, a Senior Staff member of the Baptist Union shall appoint such an independent person.

5.1.4 Nature of the Relationship

Unless the parties agree in writing to the contrary, a relationship based on a Terms of Call between the Church Membership and the Senior Pastor(s) and any Pastors appointed under subclause 5.2 will not be an employment relationship, but a relationship of spiritual service.

5.2 Other Pastoral Leaders

- 5.2.1 As required, the Elders may recommend the creation of a new Associate Pastor role to the Church.
- a) Any recommendation to create a new Associate Pastor role shall require a vote of at least 67% of votes cast by secret ballot at a properly constituted Special Members' Meeting called for that purpose.
 - b) An Associate Pastoral Search Committee shall comprise of the Senior Pastor(s), an Elder, a member of the Management Team, and up to two additional Church Members selected by the Elders.
 - c) Nomination and appointment of Associate Pastors shall be as for Senior Pastors, see subclauses 5.1.2a-c.
 - d) Associate Pastor(s) shall operate in accordance with a regularly reviewed Role Description and other requirements as outlined in their Terms of Call or Individual Employment Agreement documents.
- 5.2.2 On the recommendation of the Elders, any staff considered a 'Pastor' in the life of the church may receive from the Church a Letter of Call to their ministry position, subject to subclause 6.1.

5.3 Elders

5.3.1 Elders' Charter and Code of Conduct

An *Elders' Charter and Code of Conduct* will be given to all prospective Elders and will be made available on request to all Church Members.

This document will be reviewed by the Eldership annually, and any proposed changes ratified at the Annual Members' Meeting.

5.3.2 Nominations

It is desirable that we have a minimum of three elected Elders serving at any one time.

The Senior Pastor(s) is an Elder.

Nominations shall be brought by the Leadership to a Members' Meeting. A majority of not less than 67% of the votes cast by secret ballot is required.

Elders shall serve for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-election. Elders are required to take a break of one year following three successive terms of service.

5.3.3 Co-options to Eldership

- a) Between Annual Members' Meetings, vacancies in the Eldership may be filled by co-option as per the co-option guidelines in the *Elders' Charter and Code of Conduct*.

- b) Any co-opted Elder shall be appointed for a term up to and including the date of the next Annual Members' Meeting, at which time the co-optee may be nominated for election as per subclause 5.3.2.
- c) The Eldership, on the advice of the Association Region Leader may co-opt an external Elder. Any external co-optee must be recommended by the Region or National Leader, and must be a member in good standing of a New Zealand Baptist Church.

The Eldership will communicate to the Church Members the purpose of the external co-option, and the proposed term of external co-option. External co-options are to be ratified at the next Members' Meeting.

5.3.4 Character

Elders shall have exhibited the qualities of an Elder as found in 1 Tim 3:1-7.

5.3.5 Responsibilities

The Elders are responsible for spiritual oversight of the congregation, support and accountability for the Senior Pastor(s), and clarifying and promoting implementation of the mission and vision of the Church.

5.3.6 Meetings

Elders will meet no less than monthly.

5.4 Management Team

- 5.4.1 A *Management Team Charter and Code of Conduct* will be given to all prospective Management Team members. This document will be reviewed annually by the Leadership, and be available on request to all Church Members.

The Management Team shall consist of the Senior Pastor(s), an Elders' representative, the Church Administration Ministry Leader, the Church Treasurer, and the Building & Maintenance Ministry Leader.

5.4.2 Nominations

Nominations for Administration Ministry Leader, the Church Treasurer, and the Building & Maintenance Team Leader shall be brought by the Leadership to a Members' Meeting. A majority of not less than 67% of the votes cast by secret ballot is required.

Elected members of the Management Team shall serve for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-election, and are required to take a break of one year following three successive terms of service.

5.4.3 Responsibilities

Shall oversee administration, finance, property, compliance, and any other areas as the Leadership and/or the Church shall determine from time to time.

5.4.4 Meetings

The Management Team will meet monthly.

5.5 Ministry Leaders

The Senior Pastor(s) and Elders shall determine the ministry areas of the Church.

The Senior Pastor(s) may appoint Church Members to be Ministry Leaders heading up ministry areas.

Such appointment will require ratification by the Elders and Church Members.

- 5.5.1 Where a ministry area cannot be achieved by a volunteer but requires the appointment of a staff worker (full or part time), that person shall be appointed by the Elders on the recommendation of the Senior Pastor(s) and ratified by a Members' Meeting, subject to subclause 5.2 above and 6.1d below.

6. GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

6.1 Purpose

The purpose of any Members' Meeting shall be to seek to discover and confirm the mind of God on matters affecting the life and work of the church and its mission.

The following are matters that must be decided by a Members' Meeting:

- a) Calling of a Senior Pastor(s) and other Pastoral Leaders (see subclause 5.1 and 5.2).
- b) Appointment of Elders, Management Team members and trustees of associated Trusts (see subclause 3.3).
- c) Approval of the next year's church budget.
- d) Approval of non-budgeted expenditure, outside the agreed parameters that have been delegated to Leadership by the members.
- e) Purchase or development of land and property.
- f) Altering this Church constitution.
- g) Creation of new Associate Pastoral Leader roles (see subclause 5.2.1a).
- h) Creation of new paid staff positions (see subclause 5.5.1).
- i) Ratification of changes to Elders' Charter and Code of Conduct.

6.2 There shall be quarterly Church Members' Meetings, including an Annual Members' Meeting and an annual Vision Meeting.

6.2.1 Church Annual Members' Meeting

The church financial year shall end on 31st March. The Church Annual Members' Meeting shall be held within 120 days of the church financial year end date and shall include:

- a) Approval of the annual report and reviewed accounts for the preceding year.
- b) The election of Elders and Management Team members.
- c) Any other required annual legal or compliance decisions.

6.2.2 Church Vision Members' Meeting

The quarterly Members' Meeting preceding the church financial year end date will be a Vision Meeting and will include:

- a) Church vision and strategic ministry plan for the following year.
- b) Approval of the budget for the next financial year.
- c) Ratification of Ministry Leaders.

6.2.3 The Elders may call any other Members' Meeting as necessary.

6.2.4 At least two weeks' notice of any Members' Meeting will be sent to Church Members electronically, and announced in the weekly Church worship service for at least two Sundays prior to the proposed Members' Meeting.

6.3 Quorum

At least 50% of the active church membership shall be the quorum for any Members' Meeting where binding decisions are to be made.

6.4 Special Meetings

The Elders, on receipt of a request signed by at least 10% of active Church Members shall call a special Members' Meeting within 21 days of the request being received. Normal notice of the Members' Meeting shall be given.

6.5 Chairperson

The Elders will appoint a chairperson except when the Members' Meeting has been called by the National Leader (see subclause 6.6).

6.6 National Leader

The National Leader of the Baptist Union of New Zealand may call a special Members' Meeting. Normal notice of the Members' Meeting shall be given. The National Leader or nominee will chair such a meeting.

6.7 Attendance

- 6.7.1 Both Church Members and others of the congregation are able to attend Members' Meeting, but only members may propose, second or vote on meeting agenda items.
- 6.7.2 A secret ballot shall be held if requested by not less than 10% of the Members present at the Members' Meeting or if requested by the chairperson.
- 6.7.3 The Chairperson can direct that younger attendees and non-Members leave a Members' Meeting during discussions of a sensitive nature.

7. DECLARATION OF TRUST

- 7.1 Any land or any property including Church buildings and manses shall be vested in the Baptist Union as Trustee, which shall hold them for and on behalf of the Church; and shall deal with the property by consent and direction of the church in accordance with the Trusts declared in the Sixth Schedule to the "Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1923".

8. ALTERATIONS TO THIS CONSTITUTION

8.1 Any recommended alteration to the constitution shall be communicated electronically, and announced in worship services least two Sundays before a Members' Meeting. No alterations or additions shall be made to the constitution unless adopted by a majority of at least 67% of the Members present at a Members' Meeting.

Unless the Church agrees to forgo its charitable status and income tax exemption, no alteration shall be made to this constitution which would in any way detract from the exclusively charitable nature of the church and in particular shall not alter the provisions of clauses 9 and 10 hereof.

9. NO PECUNIARY PROFIT FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL

9.1 No decision of the Church or its Leadership shall be made which would allow a Member or Members to receive any private pecuniary profit provided that:

9.1.1 A Member may receive reimbursement for all expenses properly incurred in connection with the affairs of the Church;

9.1.2 The Church may pay reasonable and proper remuneration to any officer or employee of the Church in return for services actually rendered to the Church;

9.1.3 Any member of the Church may be paid for all usual professional business or trade charges for services rendered, time expended and all acts done by that member or by any firm or entity of which the Member is a partner, employee or associate, in connection with the affairs of the Church.

9.1.4 Any Member may retain any remuneration properly payable to the Member by any company or undertaking with which the Member may in any way be concerned or involved for which the Member has acted in any capacity whatever notwithstanding that Member's connection with that company or undertaking is any way attributable to that Member's connection with the Church.

9.1.5 Nothing shall prevent the Church from making payments to any individual (whether a Member or not) in fulfilling any of the purposes expressed in clause 2 hereof.

9.2 Members or Leaders of the Church, in determining all reimbursements, remuneration and charges payable in this clause, shall ensure that the restrictions imposed by the following clause are strictly observed.

9.3 Notwithstanding anything contained or implied in this constitution, no Member of the Church or any person associated with a Member shall participate in or materially influence any decision made by the Church in respect to the payment to or on behalf of that Member or associated person, of any income benefit or advantage whatsoever.

10. WINDING UP PROVISIONS

Subject to clauses 17, 18 and 19 of the Sixth Schedule to the Baptist Union Incorporation Act, if the Members resolve at a properly constituted Members' Meeting adopted by a majority of at least 67% of the Members present at such a Members' Meeting that the Church should be wound up then the net proceeds arising from such winding up shall be applied, with the prior approval of the Baptist Union of New Zealand, to such charitable purposes within New Zealand as the Members may determine or in default of such determination as may be determined by a Judge of the High Court of New Zealand on application by the Members, and such proceeds shall not be paid or distributed amongst the Members of the Church.

ADDENDA TO THE CONSTITUTION

a) Member's Pledge

- To live at all times such a life as reflects a true Christian and a Member of the Church.
- To take an active and diligent part in the life and work of the Church, regularly attending its services of worship as far as I am able, and being willing to help in whatever way I can.
- To be faithful in prayer for the Church and its witness in the community.
- To share conscientiously in contributing to the funds of the Church according to my means.
- To share in the government of the Church by supporting and encouraging the Leadership of the Church and by attending Members' Meetings.
- To do all in my power to deepen and enrich the spirit of fellowship in the Church, always seeking to develop a spirit of love in this fellowship of Christ's people.
- To share by life and word in the supreme task of the Church, namely by witnessing to the saving power of Jesus Christ our Lord.

b) Associated Trusts

i. Maitai Baptist Trust

The trustees of the Maitai Baptist Trust shall be elected in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Maitai Baptist Trust at a properly constituted Members' Meeting of the Nelson Baptist Church in the same manner as the Elders (see clause 5.3.2 above) but in consultation with the Maitai Baptist Trust Chairman.