



Golden Bay
Baptist Church
Church Constitution

[Adopted in March 2002]

[Ammended 2011,2015]

CONSTITUTION OF GOLDEN BAY BAPTIST CHURCH

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1 NAME

The name of the Church shall be **Golden Bay Baptist Church** (hereinafter referred to as 'the Church')

2 AFFILIATION

The Church shall be affiliated with the **Baptist Union of Western Australia Incorporated**.

3 STATEMENT OF FAITH

We hold that:

- 3.1 Jesus Christ, alone is head of the Church.
- 3.2 The Church is the community called into being by God. In both its universal and local expressions, it consists of persons who have personally and knowingly accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and have pledged themselves to worship, follow and serve him as a priestly community.
- 3.3 By his high-priestly ministry, Jesus Christ has opened the way for every believer to approach God the Father directly through him.
- 3.4 Jesus Christ, is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct in the life of both churches and individuals.
- 3.5 He has given to all churches and to every individual the right and responsibility to understand and to do God's will. Therefore, being accountable to God, Christians are not to despise their fellow believers but to accept one another as Christ's servants, allowing each other freedom of conscience. God has given to human governments the right and responsibility to promote what is just and good but not to coerce belief or practice contrary to conscience.
- 3.6 There is only one God. He is infinitely good and great, and has revealed himself to be personal and triune in essential being, eternally existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 3.7 God speaks to us through the Bible, the sixty-six Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Being God-breathed, they are wholly trustworthy and supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and conduct.
- 3.8 God created the heavens and the earth and all that exists in them. He continues to care for and govern his creation, working out his purposes for all he has made.
- 3.9 God created humans in his image, male and female, intending that we live in fellowship with him. However, tempted by Satan, the first man and woman disobeyed God. As a result we all sin, failing short in our responsibilities to love God and neighbour and to care for the world.
- 3.10 Despite our sin, which alienates us from God and rightly deserves his judgement, God, because of his grace and great love for all people, sent his Son into the world to save

us.

The incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth, was conceived by the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit. Fully human and fully divine, he lived on earth a sinless life of perfect obedience. He died on the cross as a sacrifice on our behalf and in our place, redeeming us from the penalty and power of sin and triumphing over Satan. He was raised bodily from the dead and ascended to his Father's presence where he lives forever as our great High Priest and reigns as Lord of all.

- 3.11** The Gospel, the good news concerning Jesus Christ and his reconciling work, is God's powerful way of bringing salvation. All who respond in repentance and faith God sets right with himself, forgiving and cleansing them from sin, giving them his Holy Spirit and eternal life, and incorporating them into his church.
- 3.12** The Holy Spirit gives new life to all believers and resides in them permanently. He makes them holy, and enables them to grow into the likeness of Christ. Through his Spirit God empowers all his people for life and witness, granting them various gifts for the well-being, functioning and mission of the church.
- 3.13** While all believers belong to the universal church, God gathers them into local churches which exist to worship and serve him. Jesus Christ, the head of the church, has established both baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of believers on their profession of faith, an act of identification with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves commitment to a life of discipleship in fellowship with his people. In the Lord's Supper, believers remember Christ's sacrificial death, share in fellowship with their risen Lord and with one another, and look forward to his return.
- 3.14** All Christians are commanded to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and their neighbours as themselves. We discover what love means in practice through searching the Scriptures, which reveal God's character and will. Such love includes the responsibility of every Christian to participate in the proclamation of the Good News throughout the world.
- 3.15** Jesus Christ will return visibly and victoriously from his Father's presence to gather his people to himself and to complete his conquest of sin and evil. All people, both believers and unbelievers, will be raised bodily and be judged by God. Believers will enjoy eternal blessedness in God's presence, while unbelievers will suffer eternal judgement. The whole creation will be so transformed that righteousness will characterise the new heavens and the new earth for ever,

Concerning Congregational life, we hold that:

- 3.16** The will of Christ for each church is to be found as the Holy Spirit brings direction and conviction to that congregation gathered to seek his will in the light of the Scriptures. On this basis the Members Meeting is the final authority under Christ for a congregation. Finding Christ's will through the Members Meeting involves mutual

counsel through the exercise of the members' gifts and learning from the experience of other congregations.

- 3.17** Christ gives leaders to his Church. It is the duty of the local church through the Members Meeting to recognise and affirm Christ's call to such leaders, and to set them aside to serve, thereby charging them with the responsibility to lead and delegating prescribed authority to lead. Mutual accountability is to operate between leaders and church.
- 3.18** While not in any way diminishing the autonomy of the local church, it is appropriate for Baptist churches to cooperate in a Union of Churches in which it is essential for all member churches to practise mutual care, support, and accountability.

4 OBJECTS

The purpose of the Church shall be to glorify God by:-

- 4.1** Promoting and providing opportunities for people to worship God together.
- 4.2** Proclaiming the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and encouraging people to believe in Him.
- 4.3** Providing Bible teaching and fellowship for Christians
- 4.4** Maintaining and teaching Christian standards of living.
- 4.5** Enabling and encouraging Christians to use and develop their gifts for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church and in the community.
- 4.6** Promoting the spread of the Gospel in Australia and overseas.
- 4.7** Ministering to people with their various needs.

5 CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the Supreme Head of the Church and under Him the Church shall be self-governing. The Church shall follow the principle of Congregational Government and therefore the final authority in all Church matters shall be vested in the Church Members Meeting.

Notwithstanding its autonomy, the Church, recognising the need for mutual counsel and interdependence with the Baptist Union of Western Australia Incorporated, shall support and participate in the Union's ministry.

The Church may do all things necessary or convenient for carrying out its Objects and Purpose and in particular it may:-

- 5.1** Acquire, hold and dispose of any real or personal property.
- 5.2** Open and operate bank accounts.
- 5.3** Authorise agents to transact any business of the Church on its behalf.

5.4 Accept, or refuse any gift or donation offered to the Church.

6 MEMBERSHIP

6.1 ELIGIBILITY

6.1.1 Membership of the Church is open to all who are members of Christ's kingdom; having repented of their sins and professing Christ as Lord, putting their trust in God and showing evidence of their faith in their daily lives (as per Romans 10:9-13). We believe that it is right and proper that a new believer, upon coming to faith, be baptised by immersion. Since salvation is not dependent on baptism, baptism is not a pre-requisite for membership in our congregation. As a church, however, we hold believer's baptism by immersion to be the normal and biblical mode of baptism, and encourage those who have not been baptised to seek this in keeping with Jesus' command.

6.1.2 Each applicant for Church Membership shall be required to express agreement with the Statement of Faith and to express willingness to abide by this Constitution.

6.2 PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

6.2.1 Members are expected to live in accordance with the principles of the New Testament.

6.2.2 Members are expected to support the ministry, and maintain the fellowship of the Church, especially by:-

- I. Prayer
- II. Attendance at the Services and the Lord's Supper
- III. Engaging in service for Christ through the Church
- IV. Sharing in the government and life of the church by attendance at Members' Meetings.
- V. Conscientious giving as God's provision enables.

6.3 ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

6.3.1 A person desirous of joining the Church shall normally make application to the Pastor or Church Secretary. Thereafter two members shall be appointed by the Diaconate to interview the applicant and to report on their Interview to the Church Members Meeting. A copy of this Constitution shall be given to each applicant. A simple majority vote shall be required for acceptance into membership of the Church.

6.3.2 In the case of an applicant from another Baptist Church a letter of recommendation from that Church may also be presented to the Church Members Meeting, If such an applicant is accepted for membership in this

Church the previous Church shall be so advised in order that It may be able appropriately to adjust its rolls.

6.3.3 Reception into membership shall normally be at a Church service.

6.4 MEMBERSHIP ROLL

The Church Secretary shall be responsible for keeping the Church Members Roll. It, shall have two sections.

6.4.1 Members

This section shall include the names of all members in regular attendance of the Church.

6.4.2 Non-attending Members

This may include the names of members living outside the district, including those in missionary service and may also include the names of members unable to attend services.

6.4.3 The Roll shall be revised at least annually at the Annual Church Members Meeting after consideration by the Deacons.

6.5 TRANSFERS TO OTHER BAPTIST CHURCHES

Any member in good standing who desires to join another Baptist Church shall, upon request received from that Church, have a letter of recommendation sent to it on his/her behalf.

6.6 DISCIPLINE

6.6.1 If any member is absent from the services of the Church for a prolonged period without good reasons known to the Pastor, Elders, or Deacons, inquiry shall be made into the matter. In the event of any such inquiry providing no satisfactory result the matter shall be referred to the Diaconate for such action as may be decided upon. If deemed appropriate the Diaconate may recommend to the Church Members Meeting that the member's name be removed from the Church Poll.

6.6.2 In the event of any allegation of unworthy conduct or erroneous belief being brought against a member, the Pastor, and/or Elders, and/or Deacons shall make inquiry into the matter including where possible discussion with the Member concerned. If after inquiry they deem such course necessary they shall present a report to the Church Members Meeting which shall determine any further action. The objective of any discipline administered should be the restoration of the Member but should restoration not be possible the Church may suspend, remove from membership or expel the Member. Voting on such action shall be by secret, ballot and to become effective shall require a seventy-five percent majority vote of members present and eligible to vote.

6.6.3 Private offences shall be dealt with in accordance with the teaching of our Lord

7 ORDINANCES

- 7.1** The Ordinance of Baptism shall be administered by the Church normally through the Pastor; or as otherwise determined by the Diaconate, or Church Members Meeting.
- 7.2** The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be open to all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall be observed on at least one Sunday in each calendar month.

8 CHURCH OFFICERS

- 8.1** The Church officers shall be the Pastors, Elders and Deacons who shall comprise the Diaconate and, subject to any decision of the Church Members Meeting, shall have the oversight of the affairs of the Church.

8.2 PASTORS

- 8.2.1** The choice and appointment of a Pastor(s) is vested in the membership of the Church.
- 8.2.2** To qualify for appointment a Pastor(s) must
- i.** satisfy the membership criteria set out in Clause 6.1
 - ii.** practice the baptism by immersion of believers only
 - iii.** meet the New Testament requirements for Elders.
- 8.2.3** The Pastor(s) shall be responsible for the over-sight and Pastoral ministry of the Church.
- 8.2.4** When it becomes necessary to consider the appointment of a Pastor for the Church the Elders and Deacons shall normally act as a Call Committee, and shall make the necessary enquiries and bring forward a recommendation to the Church as soon as is reasonably possible.
- 8.2.5** Any member shall be entitled to submit in writing a proposal for the consideration of the Call Committee but the Call Committee shall not be bound in any way to act upon such proposal.
- 8.2.6** The recommendation of the Call Committee shall be considered at a Special Church Members Meeting called for the purpose.
- 8.2.7** The Call Committee shall put forward for consideration only one name at a time. For an invitation to the pastorate to be sent at least 75% of the members present and eligible to vote shall vote by secret ballot in favour of doing so.
- 8.2.8** A copy of this Constitution shall be given to any one invited to the Pastorate.
- 8.2.9** The term of service between Church and Pastor shall be terminated by three months notice on either side, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon.

8.2.10 The Pastor shall become a member of the Church at the time of his induction.

8.3 ELDERS

8.3.1 The Church may elect from the members of the Church one or more elders. They shall normally hold office for a period of two years and shall be eligible to stand for re-election.

8.3.2 Only those who meet the New Testament requirements for Elders shall be eligible for election.

8.3.3 With the Pastor(s) the Elder(s) shall be responsible for Pastoral care within the Church.

8.3.4 The election of an Elder shall be by secret ballot at a Church Members Meeting and must receive at least 75% of the votes of members present and eligible to vote.

8.4 DEACONS

8.4.1 Deacons shall be elected from members of the Church on the Resident Members Roll who meet the New Testament requirements for Deacons and who normally have been in membership with this Church and/or the Baptist church from which they transferred for not less than 12 months immediately prior to the date of the meeting at which elections take place.

8.4.2 Deacons shall supervise the practical affairs of the Church and shall share in its spiritual leadership.

8.4.3 Deacons shall be elected at the Annual Church Members Meeting and at such other times as may be required.

8.4.4 The number of Deacons for the ensuing year shall be decided by a resolution of the members at a Church Members Meeting prior to the Annual Church Members Meeting.

8.4.5 Deacons shall normally be elected for a period of two years, and on completion of their term of office shall be eligible for re-election.

8.4.6 Nominations shall be made in writing and shall be signed by the proposer and countersigned by the nominee. The closing date for nominations shall be two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting at which elections shall take place. Nominations shall be advised to members not later than the Sunday prior to the date of the meeting at which elections shall take place. Voting shall be by secret ballot. To be elected a nominee must receive at least two thirds of the votes of members present and eligible to vote.

8.4.7 In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Deacon during the year such vacancy may be filled-in the manner aforesaid at the next church meeting or at a special church meeting called for that purpose. The person so elected shall hold

office until the Annual Church meeting at which the vacating deacon would have retired.

- 8.4.8** The Secretary and the Treasure shall be elected on the same basis as for the other Deacons.

The Secretary shall be responsible for the administrative duties of the Church.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for Church finances and shall keep the Church Members Meeting and the Diaconate informed on financial matters.

8.5 DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

- 8.5.1** The Director of Children's Ministries serves the church by providing oversight and leadership for any ministries run by the church to those under 16 years of age. The Director of Children's ministries is endorsed by the church body to make decisions with respect to children's ministry. The Director of Children's Ministries is directly responsible to the Eldership.

- 8.5.2** The Director of Children's Ministries will be elected from the members of the church on the Resident Members role for a period of 3 years. There are no limits on continuous terms of service.

- 8.5.3** Nominations for the role of Director of Children's ministry shall be made in writing and shall be signed by the proposer and countersigned by the nominee. Such nominations shall be provided to the church Eldership, who will meet with the nominee. Nominations, together with a recommendation from the church Eldership will be advised to members not later than two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting at which elections shall take place.

- 8.5.4** Voting shall be by secret ballot at the annual church members' meeting, or at any other church members meeting as required. To be elected, a nominee must receive at least seventy-five percent of the votes of members present and eligible to vote.

- 8.5.5** In the event of the Director vacating the office during the year, such vacancy may be filled in the manner aforesaid at the next church meeting or at a special church meeting called for that purpose. The person so elected shall hold office until the Annual General Meeting at which the vacating Director would have retired.

8.6 REMOVAL FROM OFFICE OF OFFICE BEARERS

- 8.6.1** At any time a Special Church Members Meeting may be called for the sole purpose of reviewing the appointment of a Pastor, an Elder, or a Deacon, or of any other office bearer. Such Special Church Members Meeting shall have the power to remove any office bearer from office by passing a resolution to that effect by secret ballot by a 75 percent majority of members present and eligible

to vote.

Prior to such a meeting being called, it is expected that every effort be made to reconcile any grievances.

- 8.6.2** In the circumstance that allegations of severe moral impropriety are made against the Director of Children's Ministries or any other children's ministry servant, the Diaconate shall immediately suspend the Director from their office. Any such suspension must be conveyed to the church membership at the earliest convenience. All such allegations shall be investigated by an impartial body (the Baptist Union of WA). Should the allegations prove unfounded, the Director must be immediately and publicly re-instated to office. Should the allegations prove founded, a special church members' must be called to remove the Director from office permanently.
- 8.6.3** In the circumstance that allegations of severe moral impropriety are made against the Pastor, the Diaconate must immediately seek advice from the Baptist Union of Western Australia on how to proceed. The Diaconate may choose to immediately suspend the Pastor from their office or else limit the Pastor's activities within the area of concern. Any such suspension must be conveyed to the church membership at the earliest convenience. Such allegations shall be investigated by an impartial body (the Baptist Union of WA). Should the allegations prove unfounded, the Pastor must be immediately and publicly re-instated to office. Should the allegations prove founded, a special church members' must be called to remove the Pastor from office permanently.
- 8.6.4** The term of service between Church and Pastor shall be established in the letter/contract of appointment. However, either party may terminate this contract by giving three months notice, unless otherwise mutually agreed.

9 MEMBERS MEETINGS

- 9.1** The members shall meet at least quarterly, to transact the business of the Church. Special Church Members Meetings may be convened by the Pastor and Secretary, or by decision of a Church Members Meeting, or by the request in writing of at least three members. Such a request shall be submitted to the Secretary or Pastor setting out the purpose for which the meeting is to be convened.
- At least two Sunday's notification must be given of Church Members Meetings and in the case of Special Church Members Meetings the nature of the business shall be available to the Church Members.
- 9.2** The Pastor may chair Church Members Meetings, or the meeting may appoint such other person as it sees fit.
- 9.3** A quorum for Church Members Meetings shall be 20% of the membership on the Resident Members Roll.

- 9.4 At all Church Members Meetings only members who are aged 15 years and over shall be eligible to vote.
- 9.5 All matters brought before Church Meetings shall be decided by a majority vote of members present and eligible to vote, except where otherwise provided in this Constitution. Voting shall ordinarily be by show of hands.
- 9.6 If requested by any member present and agreed to by the Meeting voting shall be by secret ballot.
- 9.7 At the ordinary Church Members Meetings, members may bring forward any matter relating to the welfare of the Church but preferably after giving notice to the Diaconate.
- 9.8 A matter may be determined to be Special Business by a majority vote of those present and eligible to vote. In this event a two-thirds majority vote of those present and eligible to vote shall be required to pass a motion.
- 9.9 Members are expected to accept with Christian grace majority decisions with which they may not agree.

10 **DIACONATE MEETINGS**

The Diaconate shall normally meet monthly after reasonable notice of such meeting has been given.

One half of the members of the Diaconate shall form a quorum except in the case where there are two deacons and in such instance both deacons must be present.

All matters considered at Diaconate meetings shall be decided by a majority vote of those present.

The pastor may chair Diaconate Meetings but they may be chaired by such other person as the Diaconate may appoint.

The Diaconate shall be responsible for carrying out all the duties delegated to it. It shall be accountable to the Church Members Meeting for the proper performance of its duties.

The Diaconate shall be responsible for seeing that proper records of all Church proceedings are kept and shall have the custody of all records, books, documents of the Church

11 **INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

The establishment of internal organisations must have the prior approval of the Church Members Meeting. The principal office bearer of each organisation shall be a member of the Church.

All organisations run by the Church shall be subject to the control of the Church in all their operations. The appointment of the officers of such organisations shall be subject to approval by the Church Members Meeting and/or the Diaconate.

All such office bearers appointed for specific duties by a Church Members Meeting or by the Diaconate shall be accountable to the Church Members Meeting for the proper performance of their duties.

12 FINANCES

Subject to the authority of the Church Members Meeting the Diaconate shall manage the financial affairs of the Church.

The ministry of the Church shall be financially supported by the freewill offerings of the members and congregation, by interest on funds invested and by any other means decided on by the Church Members' Meeting which are consistent with the spirit, and teaching of the New Testament.

No financial appeals on behalf of any organisation shall be made unless approved either by the Church Members Meeting or by the Diaconate.

An auditor shall be appointed annually by the Church Members Meeting. All Church accounts shall be audited. The Auditor's report shall be presented each year to a Church Members Meeting,

13 PROPERTY AND INCOME

13.1 Church buildings and property shall not be occupied or used by persons or organisations for any purpose except where prior consent has been obtained from the deacons or Church Members Meeting.

13.2 No land or building shall be bought, sold, disposed of or mortgaged in any way, through the Baptist Union Incorporated, without a two-thirds majority vote of members present and eligible to vote at a Special Church Members Meeting.

13.3 The property and income of the Church shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects or purposes of the Church and no part of that property or income may be paid or otherwise distributed, directly or indirectly to members of the Church, except in good faith in the promotion of those objects or purposes.

14 DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

14.1 The Church may be dissolved by a resolution approved by at least a three-quarters majority of the members present and eligible to vote at a Special Church Members Meeting called for the purpose, provided at least three months notice of the proposal has been given. In the event of such a resolution being passed persons appointed by the Church shall take all the necessary steps to wind up the affairs of the Church.

14.2 After payment of all debts and liabilities any surplus assets shall not be distributed amongst members but shall be distributed to another Baptist fellowship or to charitable purposes in accordance with a decision of a Special Church Members Meeting in a manner consistent with the objects of the Church, and in the event, of no decision being made by the Church then the Baptist Union of Western Australia

Incorporated may make such a decision on behalf of the Church.

15 CONSTITUTION

15.1 No change shall be made to the Constitution except by the approval of a three-quarters majority of members present and eligible to vote at a Church Members Meeting.

15.2 Notice of any proposed change must be given in writing at an earlier Church Members Meeting and the full text of the proposed changes shall be made available to all resident members at least one month prior to the meeting at which the proposal will be presented. Any such proposal may be adopted as presented or as amended by the Church Members Meeting.