



# OUR CHURCH CONSTITUTION

*What we believe and how we live*



## **MELTON BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION.**

Those disciples of Jesus Christ, who together are called the MELTON BAPTIST CHURCH, accept this statement as the basis for, and manner of, their association and work together in and for the Kingdom of God. The following constitution was agreed and accepted by the members of MBC at the quarterly members meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012.

### **2. AFFILIATION.**

As a member of the Baptist Union of Victoria, we accept the responsibilities inherent in that membership. *See appendix i for the BUV's constitution*

### **3. STATEMENT OF BELIEFS.**

The following summary of Biblical beliefs acts as the statement of faith for Melton Baptist Church:

- 3.1. The divine Inspiration and Supreme Authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (*2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21*);
- 3.2. The existence of one God in three persons -The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit (*Deuteronomy. 6:4, Genesis 1:2,26, John 1 12, 5:17, 22-23, John 14:15-26, John 16:27-28, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Philippians 2:5-6, Hebrews 1:1-3, 8*);
- 3.3. The Deity and Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity (*[deity] Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6, Daniel 7:13-14, Matthew 2:11, Matthew 14:32-33, Matthew 28:16-17, John 1:14, John 8:58-59, John 10:30-33, John 20:27-29, Colossians 1:15-16, 2:9, Titus 2:19, Revelation 5:13-14. [incarnation] Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38*);
- 3.4. The fallen sinful and lost estate of all humanity (*Romans 3:32, 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22*);
- 3.5. The salvation of men from penal consequences 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 (*Acts 2:22-24, 31-33, Mark 16:19, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Hebrews 4:16, 9:11-15*);
- 3.6. The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of men in their sanctification, and in their preservation to the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Corinthians 12:14-16, 11, & 13, Ephesians 4:17*);
- 3.7. The necessity, in order for salvation, of repentance towards God, and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 2:38, 3:19-21*);

3.8. The belief that Jesus Christ is the one and only true revelation of God and that eternal salvation comes only through Jesus Christ (*John 14:6, Acts 4:12*);

3.9. The resurrection of the dead, the final judgment of all men by the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 15:42-48, Hebrews 9:27*);

3.10. The two ordinances, within the Bible, of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are of perpetual obligation: Baptism being the immersion of believers upon profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a symbol of the fellowship of those regenerated 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 (*Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*).

#### **4. MISSION.**

The Mission statement of the Melton Baptist Church is: *Reaching People for Jesus*. The Mission of Melton Baptist Church is to model itself on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20, cf. Mark 16:15-18, Acts 1:8) to *reach out and make disciples* for Jesus Christ.

#### **5. MEMBERSHIP.**

##### **5.1. UNDERSTANDING OF MEMBERSHIP.**

We understand membership in the context of the following scriptures: *1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4:7-13, 25, Ephesians 5:29*

This means each person is to be vitally related to Christ and to each other. The result of this union being that each member lives under the Lordship of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, and is in unity with the other members of His Body. It is therefore the purpose of this Body of Christ (the Melton Baptist Church) to fulfil the will and purpose of its Head (Jesus) through the various gifts given by the Head to each of its members, these gifts having been given for the purpose of building up the Body, each member working diligently to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (*Ephesians 4:1-6*).

##### **5.2. ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP**

To become a member of Melton Baptist Church a person must: Turn to God in repentance (i.e. to stop living independent of God, quitting any known sin); Have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e. Eternal Life). Be baptised by immersion, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism by immersion by another church/denomination will also be recognized in regards to anyone wishing to become a member or transfer their previous membership (from a previous Baptist Church) to Melton Baptist Church.

##### **5.2.1 ADMISSION TO ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

A person who has been baptised according to the rites of another Christian denomination where believer's baptism is not practiced may be accepted as an associate member of the church on the public profession of their faith in and commitment to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Associate members are entitled to the full privileges of membership except that they are not eligible to vote on matters affecting the doctrinal position of the church or its relationship to the Baptist Union or any of its constituents. Their acceptance into associate

membership requires the approval of a church meeting. It must be clear to the church meeting that the person:

5.2.2 has made their own free decision to commit themselves to Christ and to the church;

5.2.3 had participated in appropriate membership preparation and

5.2.4 is able to affirm the normative nature of believer's baptism, but is unable in good conscience to be baptised.

5.2.5 If a person seeks to become a member of the church having been a member of another church, a letter of commendation must be sought from that other church.

### 5.3. PROCEDURE.

For any person desiring to become a member of the Melton Baptist Church, or a baptised member transferring from another church, or a person requesting associate membership, the following procedure is to be followed:

1) Have been attending MBC worship services regularly.

2) Notify a Senior Minister/s, or member of the Leadership Team, of his/her desire. Such a request shall be understood to signify the applicant's consent to work harmoniously with the church and its leadership, and in conformity with its rules and direction of ministry.

3) Complete an information session on the philosophy of membership and ministry of the Melton Baptist Church, and from Baptist distinctive.

4) Full agreement with MBC's statement of faith.

5) Applicants will be interviewed by a member of the Leadership Team and a report shall be given to the Leadership Team.

6) If the interview report clearly indicates that the applicants are born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; with a sincere desire to be members of this Body of Christ, and there is no Biblical reason given by the membership why they should not be admitted to membership, then the Leadership Team will endorse their membership at a Leadership Team meeting, conditional on their Baptism or the documented evidence of their previous baptism and church experience.

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7) The Request or Application for membership to be published in the church newsletter for three (3) weeks. (Comments or biblical objections, from the membership are to be given in writing to a Senior Minister/s or a member of the Leadership Team).

8) Leadership Team will finally present names to the members at the next quarterly members meeting for approval.

### 5.4. RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

All members accepted for membership will be received into the church at a church service, with the laying on of hands and prayer for the anointing of the spirit for ministry.

#### 5.5. TRANSFERS OUT.

Members moving to another area are encouraged to unite with another church of the same faith and order. Transfers of members in good standing shall be granted on request, with a letter of commendation. Transfer shall be supplied upon authority of the Leadership Team. A member leaving the fellowship with unresolved differences will not be recommended to another church until reconciliation is effected (*Romans 16:17-18*).

#### 5.6. SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION.

Should any member, or associate member, who cause offence to the church and its reputation, by reason of unchristian conduct, or by consistent breach of his/her membership responsibilities, the church, at a duly convened ordinary or extra-ordinary meeting, may terminate or suspend, (for a specified period) his/her membership, but only after inquiry by the Leadership Team, in a spirit of meekness and love and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such a member to repentance and amendment. The member concerned should be given prior notice of the meeting and opportunity afforded to make any representation, either in person or in writing, as may be desired. In the event of termination or suspension, the member shall be notified in writing, stating the reasons of such actions. A suspended member shall have his/her membership reviewed at the end of his/her suspension.

#### 5.7. REVISION.

A roll of members and associate members shall be kept and revised annually. The Leadership Team should prepare, each year, a list of those members who have for a period of three months, failed to participate in the services of worship, or honoured their membership responsibilities, without valid excuse. After every endeavour has been made to restore them to fellowship, the leaders shall present to the church, recommendation that the names of those members be removed from the roll of the church. removed from the roll of the church.

(Termination and revision of members shall be only upon the vote of three-quarters of the members present and voting at a properly constituted church meeting).

#### 5.8. DISPUTE.

In matters of dispute and reconciliation, members will observe the procedure laid down in Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1-5.

- 1) The matter is to be dealt with discreetly in a spirit of love between the two people or parties.
- 2) If unresolved, the matter will include a Senior Minister.
- 3) If unresolved, the matter is to be placed in the hands of the leadership, who will meet with the member/s personally.

4) If reconciliation is not achieved the member/s will be disciplined. The leadership is not obliged to give the church all the details in such matters and shall have sole discretion as to the form of discipline. In all matters of dispute the action of the church shall be with a view to reconciliation, in a spirit of meekness and love.

5) In all matters of disputes, the member involved will have the opportunity to address the Leadership Team, and/or the complainant/s.

#### 5.9. RESPONSIBILITY.

Realising that membership in a local church comes with both privilege and obligation, the following responsibilities of members are set forth in the form of a pledge to God and His church. Each member is expected to contribute towards the funds of the church according to his/her ability; to attend when possible the worship services of the church and the church meetings; to co-operate with other members in Christian fellowship; and to do all possible to advance the Kingdom of God.

### 6. ORDINANCES.

The ordinances of the church which are of perpetual obligation upon all the Lord's people are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

#### 6.1. BAPTISM.

Baptism is administered by the authority of the Lord of the Church, and is the act by which a person who has confessed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, is identified with the Lord and his people, and in which he/she visibly puts on Christ and accepts the mission to which the Lord has called His people. The baptism practiced in this church is by immersion in water, upon the person making a confession of his/her faith. Other forms of baptism may be acknowledged in the criteria for associate membership

#### 6.2. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper is the memorial feast "until He comes" of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In their participation, believers can experience the reality of the Lord's presence. All who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who are in fellowship with His people shall be invited to share the Lord's Supper at each observance. This church shall observe the Lord's Supper on at least one Sunday in each month.

### 7. MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP.

#### 7.1. MEMBERS.

The work of the ministry belongs to the members (Ephesians 4:12) functioning according to spiritual gifts (manifestations of God's grace), given to each born again believer by the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 11*).

In their ministry all accept the responsibility to use their gifts and abilities to encourage and build up the church, and at the same time receive from the church that nurture and discipline essential to their own spiritual growth. abilities to encourage and build up the church, and at the same time receive from the church that nurture and discipline essential to their own spiritual growth.

The church recognises the supreme importance of appointing only those who, because of their recognisable spiritual and other qualifications, are considered to be God's choice of any office in the Church, who would work together in harmony with and under the direction of the leadership of the Church, in the spirit of Hebrews 13.17.

## 7.2. SENIOR MINISTER/S.

The church shall call and set apart Senior Minister/s to a special ministry of leadership, preaching the Word, equipping members for ministry and overseeing the ordinances, pastoral care and outreach of the church. The Senior Minister/s shall be a person whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the church to fulfil such a ministry; who is a baptised believer, trained theologically; well attested by the Baptist Union of Australia; who shall be chosen and called into office in accordance with the procedures set out in Appendix 2, of the Model Constitution, to these rules. The Senior Minister/s accept their office from the Lord of the church, and while he/she is a "servant" of the church, the church is not their master. The Senior Minister/s are the spiritual leader/s in the life and ministry of the church, and shall coordinate the ministries of the Leadership Team and associate ministers, being a voting member of the Leadership Team.

## 7.3. ASSOCIATE MINISTERS

With respect to Associate Ministers, only persons who are baptised believers and who hold and maintain the doctrines and practices stated in this constitution and rules and trained theologically, shall be eligible to be paid as Associate Ministers. The church calls the Senior Minister/s to lead the church, and in turn it is their responsibility in consultation with the Leadership Team, to appoint and develop Associate Minister/s necessary for the growth of the church. Such appointments, including terms and conditions, are to be endorsed by the church.

## 7.4 THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Leadership team, in addition to the Senior Minister/s and Associate Minister/s, will comprise church members their lives should consistently reflect the qualities set out in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 (see 7.4.1: Expectations and eligibility of conduct for MBC Leadership Team). Together, they share responsibility for the prayerful visionary and strategic leadership of the church.

### 7.4.1. ELIGIBILITY.

Only persons (male and female) who are baptised believers, full members (for at least 24 months) and who agree, hold and maintain the doctrines and practices stated in this constitution, and the character expectations for leaders listed below, shall be eligible to be a member of the Leadership Team.

- i. Leaders should be humble (Mark 10:45, Philippians 2:6-8)
- ii. Leaders should be visionary (Proverbs 29:18 – 'Where there is no vision the people perish' KJV).
- iii. Leaders should be pastoral and not overbearing or quick tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3).
- iv. Leaders should be moral examples (Titus 1:8).
- v. Leaders should not be drunkards, smokers or addicted to other vices (Titus 1:8).
- vi. Leaders should be developing and mentoring younger leaders (2 Timothy 4:2).

vii. Leaders should all be tithing (Malachi 3:6-10).

#### 7.4.2. NUMBERS.

The number of members of the Leadership Team will be as decided by the Leadership Team and church, but will include at least a church secretary and a church treasurer. The Leadership Team shall consist of at least 5 representatives.

#### 7.4.3. TERMS OF OFFICE.

Election to the Leadership Team shall be for a three (3) year term. Should anyone serve for two consecutive terms a break of at least 12 months will be required. Those seeking consecutive terms still require to be nominated in the usual way as highlighted below in 7.4.6.

#### 7.4.4. ELECTIONS.

Elections to the Leadership Team shall take place at the annual meeting, except where a casual vacancy occurs. The election of this vacancy may be held at quarterly ministry meeting, or an extraordinary meeting, called for the sole purpose of conducting an election.

#### 7.4.5. VOTING.

Elections shall be by two-thirds majority of those members present at the meeting, who voted by secret ballot. Where nominations exceed the number of vacancies, members will vote only to fill the number of vacancies on the Leadership Team.

#### 7.4.6. NOMINATIONS.

Nominations must be made in writing one month before the election, to the Leadership Team, signed by two adult members, who are members of at least twelve (12) months standing. Such nominations will be affirmed by the Senior Minister/s, before presentation to Leadership Team and the members.

#### 7.4.7. REGULARITY OF MEETINGS.

Meetings will be held at least monthly, to consider the work of the church.

#### 7.4.8. QUORUM.

A quorum shall be considered to be two-thirds of the membership of this group.

#### 7.4.9. VOTING.

A majority vote will be considered to be two-thirds of the membership of the group.

#### 7.4.10. CHAIR PERSON.

Meetings shall be chaired by a Senior Minister, or their nominee. In the absence of a Senior Minister, meetings may be called by two-thirds of the Leadership Team.

#### 7.4.11. AGENDA.

Items for discussion will be collated in an agenda by the Leadership Team Secretary, in consultation with a Senior Minister.

#### 7.4.12. DUTIES.



Each leader will be responsible for a particular area of ministry, in accordance with their gifts and talents. Regular attendance of the Leadership Team meetings is required.

In addition, the leaders will take up other duties as detailed in the job description.

#### 7.5. LEADERSHIP TEAM SECRETARY.

The Leadership Team shall appoint a person to be responsible for Leadership Team secretarial matters as directed by the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team Secretary shall be responsible, under the direction of the Leadership Team, for the calling of Church Ministry Meetings and Leadership Team Meetings and for all matters associated with such meetings, including preparation of agendas, notification of meetings, finalisation of minutes, attention to correspondence from these meetings.

The Leadership Team Secretary shall be an ex-officio member of the Leadership Team, if not an elected member of the Leadership Team.

#### 7.6. TREASURER.

The Leadership Team shall appoint a person to be Treasurer, responsible to the Leadership Team for the receipt of all monies by the church and make payments as directed by the church, or Leadership Team. The Treasurer shall present at the church annual ministry meeting the audited statement of the funds received and disbursed and at the May ministry meeting, a projected budget for the next financial year.

The Leadership Team may appoint members to form a finance committee to assist the Treasurer in the execution of his/her duties. The Treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the Leadership Team, if not an elected member of the Leadership Team.

### **8. MINISTRY MEETINGS.**

#### 8.1. MEETINGS.

There are three types of ministry meetings for the church as set out below, all of which will follow standard procedure.

*a) Ordinary Meetings (Quarterly Members Meetings):* To consider the ministry of the church there will be three (3) during a calendar year.

*b) Extra Ordinary Meetings (Special Meetings):* (Convened and held in accordance with schedule B of Baptist Union Incorporation Act) May be called in one of the following ways, to consider only the business set out in the agenda proposed for the extra ordinary meeting:

- By a Senior Minister;
- By 2/3rd of the Leadership Team;
- By 1/3rd of the adult membership, by written request, forwarded through a Senior Minister.

*c) Annual Ministry Meetings:* This will take place as soon as possible after the completion of the church financial year, allowing time for the necessary audit, being in addition to the ordinary meetings of church members. At this meeting reports shall be submitted by all ministries of the church. Elections for vacancies of the Leadership Team and elections of all

office bearers of all church organisations, including church auditor, shall occur for the ensuing twelve months.

## 8.2. NOTICE OF MEETINGS.

For any of the above mentioned types of ministry meetings, two (2) full weeks' notice shall be given in writing, via either or all of the following:

- Church Newsletter
- Church Notice Board
- Special members letter

## 8.3. QUORUM.

A quorum for any meeting of the church requires a minimum of 30% of the adult membership to be present.

## 8.4. CHAIR PERSON.

Normally a Senior Minister or their appointee, will chair any church meeting. If a Senior Minister is unavailable, or the meeting is dealing with matters related to the Minister/s, the Leadership Team will nominate a chairperson from the Leadership Team.

## 8.5. VOTING.

### 8.5.1. VOTING AT MEETINGS.

For normal ministry matters, voting shall be by a show of hands, unless otherwise requested. For leadership/pastoral/ministry co-ordinator positions, voting shall be by secret ballot. The meeting shall appoint scrutineers.

- The Chairperson shall have a deliberative vote, but not a casting vote. If in the case of an equal vote, the motion voted upon shall be declared lost.
- Voting requires a simple majority to be recorded.
- Voting shall be by adult members and associate members only (18 years of age).
- Associate members are excluded from voting on constitutional changes and on matters doctrinal.

### 8.5.2. ABSENTEE VOTES.

Absentee voting is only permitted for election of ministerial team and Leadership Team. Applications for absentee votes must be handed to the Leadership Team Secretary a minimum of one (1) week prior to the meeting, stating reasons for absence. The only acceptable reasons are paid employment, or annual leave outside of Melton.

## 8.6. AGENDA.

All meetings will follow the basic outlined agenda following, with the deletion of items not required for a particular meeting:

- Devotion and Prayer
- Apologies and welcome
- confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
- Business arising from minutes

- Correspondence
- Matters relating to membership
- Elections
- Receiving of reports
- Financial statement/report
- Recommendations from leadership to the meeting
- Notices of motion (These should have been received by the Leadership Team Secretary in writing, to the Leadership Team meeting prior to ministry meeting, in order to notify members)
- General business as per agenda
- Other business (Limit 30 mins). Any matters arising in this section may, at the chairperson's discretion, be deferred, and listed as agenda for the next ministry meeting.

#### **8.7. REPORTS.**

All church organisations shall submit for the annual ministry meeting, a written report as specified by the Leadership. At ordinary meetings, a written report may be submitted if required or deemed necessary. A full financial statement shall be provided for both ordinary and annual ministry meetings.

#### **8.8. CASUAL VACANCIES.**

The Leadership has the right to appoint persons to positions that fall vacant, without confirmation from the members, for the period up to the next annual ministry meeting. This does not apply to casual vacancies on the Leadership Team.

### **9. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS.**

9.1. Each organisation shall have the right of recommending its officers, though in the case of all such leaders, approval must be given by the leadership. In all matters of dispute, the church members meeting, subject to these rules, is the final authority.

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

9.3. Programs, rules and each syllabus of any society, club or organisation connected with the church, shall be subject to approval by the leadership before being published, circulated or performed.

9.4. No organisation shall use the name of the church without the consent of the leadership.

9.5. Each organisation shall provide for the annual ministry meeting an annual report and audited financial statement, if applicable.

### **10. PREACHING.**

Responsibility for appointment of preachers at church services shall be exclusively held by the Senior Minister/s. If there are no Senior Minister/s, the appointment of preachers is under the control of the Leadership Team.

### **11. CHURCH PROPERTY.**

The Leadership Team shall from time to time compile and issue guidelines for the use of and operation of church properties.

## **12. BUSINESS ETHICS AT MBC.**

To ensure that MBC remains a safe-haven from business pressures when participating in church activities and relating to one another, MBC has developed guidelines for the conducting of business within the church community. Business is not evil, nor is it to be expressly excluded from MBC; however, it must be conducted within appropriate guidelines so as not to negatively influence the Christian nature of MBC.

For MBC the general rule will be to 'let the church be the church and let business be kept in the business arena.' As a result, we ask that people attending MBC activities, such as worship meetings, home/small group meetings, outreach/mission/evangelistic events, ministries, fellowship times etc, do not use these activities for any business-related purposes. This includes:

12.1 Not approaching people in the church community or people from the Melton community and beyond with the intention of making a financial gain or to sell promote products or services. This specifically includes distribution of advertising material, invitations, email messages and/or calls for the purpose of soliciting business, party selling, multi-level marketing and network marketing.

12.2 Refraining from seeking professional advice or making business enquires at any church activities.

12.3 Product deliveries should not be made in the church building or at church activities.

From time to time, MBC will promote certain approved business activities and products where it is considered that these are primarily for the benefit of members and other attendees. The activities will include, Christian bookshops, Christian conferences and product/resources of visiting ministries.

## **13. DISSOLUTION**

In the event of the church being dissolved, all property, assets and monies which remain after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be vested in the Baptist Union of Victoria.

## **14. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION.**

No change of this constitution in whole or part shall be made except by the approval of two-thirds of the members present (excluding associate members) and voting at a properly constituted church meeting, written notice of which proposed change shall have been given to the Leadership Team Secretary not less than three (3) months prior thereto. Such proposed change shall be considered by the Leadership Team prior to the church meeting, and notice of its nature shall be given at each service on two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the said church meeting. As the church is an independent constituent of the Baptist Union of Victoria, such change if duly approved shall not become effective unless and until approved by the Executive Council of the Baptist Union of Victoria.

