

Auburn Baptist Church Constitution revised 25th October, 2020

1. NAME:

The name of the church is Auburn Baptist Church.

2. DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THIS CHURCH:

The doctrinal position of the church accords with the evangelical doctrines set out in the Baptist Union of NSW Incorporation Act, 1919 (NSW) and subsequent amendments approved by the Baptist Union of NSW Assembly:

- The nature and unity of the Godhead: There is one God who exists in Trinity, but is revealed in 3 persons as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- The deity and complete humanity of Jesus Christ;
- The person, work and ministry of Holy Spirit;
- The divine inspiration of the Scriptures;
- The sinful and fallen nature of all people;
- Christ's atonement for human sin;
- The work of the Holy Spirit in [bringing a person to] salvation;
- The Church;
- The baptism of believers only, by immersion;
- The ordinance of the Lord's Supper;
- The return of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- The resurrection of the dead,
- Rewards and punishment in a future state.

A document entitled "Baptist Union of NSW – Statement of Beliefs" is available upon request and provides an expanded statement of these doctrines.

3. MEMBERSHIP:

3A . Eligibility for Membership

Members shall be persons who give evidence of a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; who have been baptised by immersion and agree to hold to the doctrines set forth in this constitution under the heading "Doctrinal Position of this Church". [In the case of a person who believes that baptism by immersion may be injurious to their health, baptism by pouring or anointing may be accepted.]

3B. Admission to Membership:

Applications for membership shall follow the procedure outlined in the governance rules.

3C. Responsibilities of Membership:

- a) To endeavour at all times, by the grace of God, to remain true to their commitment to Christ.
- b) To join regularly in the worship and witness of the Church.

- c) To lead a life worthy of Christ in love, humility and peace, endeavouring to build each other up through encouragement, counsel and comfort.
- d) To study the Scriptures in private and in groups as the Lord gives opportunity.
- e) To express their gratitude to God, and their responsibilities as His stewards, by contributing regularly and wholeheartedly to the financial support of the Church and the wider work of the Union of Churches, or other causes of interdenominational or missionary nature.
- f) To pray regularly in private and where possible in fellowship for the people and ministry of the Church and the wider family of Churches.
- g) To support the Pastor and the Pastoral team in their work within the Church and community through prayer and personal encouragement for their spiritual and material welfare.
- h)** Members under the age of 18 years of age shall not vote on matters relating to property transactions.

4. PASTOR(S)

4A. Appointment of Pastor(s)

The pastor(s) shall be persons whose credentials are acceptable to the Baptist Churches of NSW and hold to the doctrinal position as set forth in this Constitution.

Where more than one Pastor is appointed, the Pastors shall comprise the Pastoral Team, in which one will be the Pastoral Team Leader, appointed by the Church. The Pastor (or Pastoral Team Leader) shall normally be ex-officio president of all organizations, although responsibility may be delegated to another member of the Pastoral team or a member of the diaconate.

Pastors shall be appointed upon 75% majority or removed upon a simple majority vote of the members present, eligible to vote and voting at a meeting of which notice has been given on the two Sundays preceding such meeting – the purpose of the meeting having been specified.

All *terms and conditions* of a call shall be conveyed to a pastor in writing, having previously been clarified between both parties, together with full particulars of the church and its development. Pastors may be called to a full-time or part-time ministry, depending on the needs and negotiations. Acceptance shall be made in writing to the Church, indicating agreement with the terms of the call.

The tenure of the pastor may be terminated by two months notice in writing by either the Pastor or the Church.

4B. Continuity of Leadership:

Should there be no Pastor(s), pastoral responsibilities will be assumed by [the Elder/s. In the absence of the Pastor/s and Elder/s, their respective responsibilities will be assumed by the] Diaconate.

5. ORDINANCES:

- a) Baptism. The Pastor may baptise any believer upon application. A member of the Pastoral Team, deacon, elder or other Church member may baptise an applicant for baptism with the approval of the Pastoral Team.
- b) Communion. Communion shall normally be observed once a month in each service. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to participate in the Communion.

6. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND DISSOLUTION

6A. Property Ownership

The Trustees of all church property shall be the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust.

6B. Application of Church Assets and Income

The assets and income of the Church shall be applied solely in the furtherance if its charitable purpose and the advancement of religion. No portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members, except as bona fide remuneration where a member is an employee of the church, fee for services where a member is a contractor to the church and reimbursement of expenses incurred by a member on behalf of the Church.

6C. Church Dissolution.

In the event of the Church being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall:

- a) In the case of property held in trust pursuant to the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust Act 1984, be dealt with in accordance with that Act, and in particular Section 29 – which said trusts provide that no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Church.
- b) In all other cases be transferred to the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT or to any other organisation with similar purposes and which has rules prohibiting the distribution of its assets and income to its members, and which is exempt from Income Tax.

7. GOVERNANCE RULES:

The Church shall conduct itself in accordance with the Governance Rules endorsed by the members.

8. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution except by a 75% majority of members present, eligible to vote and voting at a meeting convened for the purpose. The quorum for such a meeting shall be 25% of the membership.

Any proposed change to the Constitution shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the deacons, and shall be distributed by the Secretary to all members , not less than one month before the date of the meeting to consider the change.

The Secretary to the Assembly Council of the Baptist Churches NSW & ACT shall be notified of any changes to this Constitution by the Church Secretary within 14 days of any decision being made by the Church.

Governance Rules:

1. Objectives:

This church adopts for its aim and functions the following objectives which we believe to be in harmony with the purposes of Christ's Church as declared in the New Testament:

- Inspiring and maintaining active spiritual growth among the congregation through regular public worship and through personal spiritual disciplines.
- Proclaiming the truths of the Bible so that people have the opportunity to experience salvation.
- Teaching, baptising and discipling all who come to faith in the Lord Jesus so that they may grow together in love and loyalty to each other and grow to maturity in Christ under the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Proclaiming the sole Lordship of Christ Jesus in the lives of the members of the congregation and seeking to fulfil His desires in the life of the community, nation and wider world through evangelism and other missionary enterprise.
- Assist those in need, believing that social action and evangelism are mutually our response to the Gospel.

2. Church Governance:

- The Church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT, accepting its responsibility to support and share in the ministries undertaken by the denomination.
- Recognizing the Headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church shall be governed in line with the fundamental principle of the autonomy of the local church and congregational government. That is, the decision-making of this church shall be vested in the body of believers who comprise its membership.
- Notwithstanding this principle of autonomy, the Church recognises and sustains its obligations of mutual counsel and co-operation which are common among Baptist Churches. Therefore the Church will be both independent and interdependent.
- The Church shall adopt the Safe Churches Policies recommended by the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT, pursuant to NSW law and as amended from time to time.
- The Church shall conduct itself in accordance with the Constitution endorsed by the members.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3A Members Roll:

The secretary shall keep a Members Roll and an Inactive Members Roll.

3B Admission to Membership

- a) Applications for membership shall be made to the Pastor or Church Secretary.
- b) The church shall be advised of the names of applicants for membership.
- c) Applicants shall be interviewed by 2 members appointed by the pastor, elders or deacons. The interview will include discussion of:
 - a. their testimony to faith in Jesus Christ,
 - b. Membership responsibilities, the Church Constitution,

- c. governance rules and the various ministries of the church.
 - d. spiritual gifts and encouraging their ministry participation.
- d) A report shall be presented to the pastor and deacons after the interview for recommendation to the Church.

3C Transfer of Membership

A. If an applicant for membership has been a member of another Baptist church, an interview will still be conducted in order to strengthen fellowship and help build relationships. Letters of transfer or commendation shall also be sought and taken into account when determining the application. The Church shall be informed of all transfers of Membership.

B. Any member in good standing may request that a letter of commendation be sent to another Baptist Church they wish to join. The Deacons may process such requests, reporting their actions to the next Church Meeting for confirmation.

3D Removal from Membership

The deacons or elders will review the roll annually.

Members who, for a period of six months fail to participate in the life of the Church without satisfactory explanation, or fail to honor other membership responsibilities, should be followed up by the elders. If a member has left the district, then their name shall be transferred to an absent Members' Roll.

Where failure to participate in the life of the Church relates to some reason other than leaving the district, or where the member in question fails to honour other membership responsibilities, every effort shall be made to restore such members to active fellowship.

Where these efforts fail, the elders may remove the member from the Members Roll or transfer them to the inactive Members Roll. The church shall be informed of any such action at the next Church meeting.

Members whose names are on the Inactive Members Roll shall have no voting rights at any Church meeting.

The elders will prayerfully review the Absent Members Roll annually, seeking to determine those members who might be restored to active Membership; have their membership transferred to another church or, if all reasonable actions have failed, have their names removed from the Inactive Members Roll. The Church shall be informed of all such actions at the next Members Meeting.

4. OFFENSE AND DISPUTE:

(a) Where a member becomes an offence to the Church by reason of immoral or un-Christian conduct, the church will make every effort, in the spirit of love and meekness, to restore the member to fellowship. (Matt 18:15-17) Where such effort fails, the Church may terminate, or suspend for a specified time, the membership. Termination or suspension of membership shall only be on the decision of a 75% majority of members present and voting at a Church meeting.

- (b) In the event of a dispute arising, either between the members, the pastor/s and the members, or the Church and the Baptist Association, such dispute may, after every effort has been made to resolve it within the Church or through the services of the Baptist Ministry Centre team, be referred for decision to the Baptist Ministry Centre team elected by the Baptist Association, if agreed by all parties to the dispute.
- (c) Matters of offence or dispute between members shall not be brought before the Church unless the parties have first complied with the direction of Matthew 18:15-17.

5. PASTORS, ELDERS AND DEACONS:

5A. CHURCH OFFICERS

NB: ALL APPOINTMENTS IN THIS SECTION MUST BE MADE WITH REFERENCE TO THE SAFE CHURCH POLICY.

Pastor/s, Elder/s, the Church Secretary, Treasurer and Deacons are the Officers of the Church. They are responsible to attend to the affairs of the church, within the framework of the Constitution and Governance Rules, and are responsible for adherence to Laws and Legislation that are in force from time to time.

5B: Pastors:

The Pastor(s) shall be people whose credentials are acceptable to the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT, and who hold to the doctrines set forth in this Constitution under the heading "Doctrinal Position Of This Church".

Where more than one pastor is appointed, the Pastors shall form the Pastoral Team, in which one shall be the Pastoral Team Leader. (The Pastor, or Pastoral Team Leader shall normally be ex officio President of all organisations, although this responsibility may be assigned to another member of the Pastoral Team, or members of the diaconate.) Pastors shall be appointed upon a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting for which notice has been given on the 2 Sundays preceding such a meeting, the purpose of the meeting having been specified.

In the sad event that there is a need for a vote to remove a Pastor, notice of the meeting will be given on the 3 preceding Sundays and the purpose of the meeting shall be specified. In such a case, a simple majority vote will be sufficient, since it would be an unworkable situation for a pastor to try and continue to minister in a situation where they lack the support of $\frac{1}{2}$ the Church.]

Procedure for calling a pastor –

- (a) A Pastoral Search Committee, appointed by the church, shall call for nominations. Members of the congregation may make recommendations for discussion within the Committee by submitting the name of a potential pastor, together with reasons supporting their suggestion, in writing to the Committee.
- (b) The Committee may advise the Baptist Association of the vacancy and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate denominational officer.
- (c) Should more than one name come before the Committee, discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.
- (d) The Committee shall communicate privately with this nominee, and/or with the appropriate Union Officer, to ascertain their willingness to allow their name to be placed before the Church.

(e) Should this nominee be willing, the name shall be submitted to the deacons and elders who, if they approve, shall present the recommendation to the Church. Only one nomination shall be placed before the Church at any one time.

(f) In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.

All terms and conditions of a call shall, after being clarified between the 2 parties, be conveyed to the Pastor in writing, together with full particulars of the Church and its development. (Such terms will generally be as recommended by the Baptist Union of NSW and will not generally specify any length of tenure.)

Acceptance of the call and the terms of the call shall be conveyed in writing to the Church.

The tenure of a Pastor may be terminated by two months' notice in writing by either the Pastor or the Church.

5C. Elders

The church may appoint Elders from among the members of the Church, who shall support the spiritual ministry of the Pastor/s and share with the Pastor/s in the pastoral care of the Fellowship. The Biblical material, particularly 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 should be considered by the Church when appointing Elders. Only persons of known maturity, spirituality and gifts appropriate to the office shall be appointed.

Members of the Church who are over the age of 25 years, and have been in membership for at least 24 months, may be appointed to the office of Elder by the Church, at the Annual Meeting, subject to a 75% vote of the members present, eligible to vote and voting at the Annual Meeting. Elders shall be appointed for a term of 3 years. They shall be eligible for re-appointment. It is recommended that elders serve no more than 2 consecutive terms, but may be eligible for re-election.

Elders shall be responsible to the Church, in co-operation with the Pastor/s, to:

(a) Assist in the shepherding of those who are part of, or associated with the Church, willingly and ably encouraging and building up such people, and being an example to the Church in Christ-like living.

(b) Participate in the visitation, discipline, care and support of all who attend the Church;

(c) Participate in the preaching and teaching ministry of the Church where they are recognised as having these gifts and are invited to do so by the Pastoral Team Leader;

(d) An Elder will not serve concurrently as a Deacon. Elders, while meeting separately, may attend and participate in meetings of the Diaconate.

In the absence of elders, these functions will be carried out by the diaconate.

5C. Deacons

Members of the Church who are over the age of 21 years and have been in membership for at least 6 months, may be appointed to the office of deacon by the Church at the Annual Meeting. Nominees shall give evidence of Spiritual maturity and fulfil the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The deacons, in addition to the Secretary and Treasurer, and along with the Pastor/s shall be the Church Officers (see 5A above). They are empowered to have oversight of and transact the routine business of the Church, and oversee the ministry and auxiliaries of the Church.

Voting for deacons shall be by written ballot in the following manner:

The names of all nominations shall first be placed before the meeting. Members shall then vote, without order of preference, for every candidate who, in their opinion, is eligible and qualified to serve as a deacon. Nominations who fail to achieve 2/3 of the votes of those eligible and voting shall not be considered eligible for election.

Where the number of nominations deemed eligible by the meeting exceeds the number of positions to be filled, a second ballot shall be held. The nominations who receive the highest number of votes shall be declared elected.

Deacons shall endeavour to attend all appropriate meetings connected with the Church.

The deacons shall meet at least monthly and at other times as required. The Pastoral Team Leader may be the chairman, or a chairman may be appointed from among the deacons. A quorum at a meeting of the Diaconate will be 50% of those eligible to attend.

Deacons elected by the Church shall serve for a term of 2 years. To assist with continuity of leadership, at least half of the deacons shall conclude their term each year, in rotation, and be eligible for re-election. A deacon should be encouraged to serve no more than 3 consecutive terms, but be eligible for re-election.

6 OTHER CHURCH APPOINTMENTS

NB: ALL APPOINTMENTS IN THIS SECTION MUST BE MADE WITH REFERENCE TO THE SAFE CHURCH POLICY.

6A Secretary (who shall act as chief executive officer of the church.)

A Secretary shall be elected by the church at the annual meeting for a term of 2 years. The secretary shall, by virtue of office, be a member of the diaconate. The Secretary shall fulfil the same eligibility requirements as a deacon and be elected in the same manner.

The Church Secretary shall ensure that adequate records are kept of all Church, Deacons and Committee meetings, conduct correspondence for the Church and generally deal with the business of the Church.

By means of an annual report and otherwise, the Secretary will ensure an adequate flow of information from the various committees and ministries to the church members.

The Church Secretary will keep an up-to-date Members Roll and Inactive Members Roll of the Church, which will be available for members to scrutinize. Members are encouraged to assist the Secretary in ensuring all details are kept current.

Members who are unsuccessful in nominating to serve as Church Secretary may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for deacons.

6B Treasurer

A Treasurer shall be elected by the church at the annual meeting and serve for a term of 2 years. The treasurer shall, by virtue of office, be a member of the diaconate. The Treasurer shall fulfil the same eligibility requirements as a deacon and be elected in the same manner.

The Church Treasurer shall receive all monies for the Church and make such payments as may be directed. The Treasurer will keep a record of all financial transactions, keeping the Church informed through regular reporting.

The Church Treasurer shall present a Financial Statement and Balance Sheet to the Annual Meeting, covering income and expenditure for the year under review. Such a statement shall be audited. At all quarterly Church Meetings, the Church Treasurer will present a financial statement covering all the income and expenditure for the previous quarter, and the year to date.

Members who are unsuccessful in nominating to serve as Church Treasurer may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for deacons.

6C Other Elected Roles

If the Church deems it appropriate, and in order to help the Church function effectively, people may be elected to other leadership roles from time to time.

6D Employees

The Church members may, on the recommendation of the Diaconate, resolve to employ clerical or other paid staff, in order to function effectively. The Diaconate shall determine the employment details for any such employee/s. All those paid wages, salaries, stipends or other employment related benefits by the Church, are employees of the Church.

6E Nominations

Nominations for all elected positions shall normally be invited from the members at least one (1) month prior to the Annual Meeting. Nominations shall be in writing, signed by the nominee and the nominator, and handed to the Church Secretary no later than after the conclusion of the last Sunday preceding the Church Meeting.

6F Election of Officeholders to Fill Casual Vacancies:

In the event of any elected position holder being unable to fulfil their full term the Church may appoint someone to fulfil the remainder of their term. In the event of an unexpected vacancy, the Church Leadership Team may appoint an interim until the next Church meeting.

Nominations for casual vacancies during the year shall normally be invited from members at least two weeks prior to the Church Meeting at which the elections will be held. Nominations are to be in writing, signed by the nominee and the nominator, and handed to the Secretary no later than after the conclusion of the last Sunday preceding the Church Meeting.

6G Removal of Officeholders:

Anyone elected to office may be removed from office by 75% majority of the members present at a Church meeting.

7. CHURCH MEETINGS and PROCEDURES:

7A. Meetings:

Church meetings shall normally be held quarterly.

Additional Church meetings may be convened by the Pastor/s or Elders, or upon a requisition signed by 10% of the members or a majority of the deacons. A meeting may be called for a special purpose and only consider matters of which written notice has been given.

Normally, notice of all Church Meetings shall be given at services on at least the two Sundays prior to the meeting.

An Annual Meeting shall be called each year to receive reports and conduct elections as herein prescribed, such meeting to be within two months (normally August) of the end of the Church Financial Year.

In the absence of a Pastoral Team Leader, one of the leadership team shall be appointed to preside. Alternatively, for special reasons, in consultation with Ministry Support and Development of the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT, an outside chairperson may be appointed. Such a chairman shall be a member in good standing in a Church affiliated with the Baptist Association.

The Church Meeting shall be a meeting of those persons on the Members Roll.

The quorum at any Church Meeting shall be one-quarter of the members, (not including those members who are absent from the area, hospitalized or on the Inactive Members Roll). In the event of the Annual Meeting having to be recalled by lack of a quorum, then, the quorum at such recalled annual meeting shall be one-sixth of the membership.

Non-Church members may be invited to be present at and to take part in the whole of, or any part of a Church Meeting, without the right to vote.

7B. Procedure:

All matters affecting the management and general interests of the Church shall normally be submitted to the Deacons before presentation to the Church.

Where any vote is required it shall be by voice or show of hands, and each Church member present may exercise only one vote. In the case where Church Officers are being elected, the vote shall be by ballot. Members under the age of 18 are ineligible to vote on any matter.

Any person who has a financial or other pecuniary interest in a matter which the Church wishes to discuss, shall retire from the meeting during such portion of the discussion as the majority of the members present shall determine.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY:

If a matter is declared confidential it will be treated as confidential by all who attend a Church Meeting, until such time as the matters discussed have been made public by a person authorised by the Church, or the diaconate, to do so.

9. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS:

The Pastoral Team Leader has the discretion to preside at all meetings of the Church and Church organisations.

All ministries associated with the Church shall submit an annual report, including a brief financial statement, to be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

For Church ministries where the positions are normally elected at a Church meeting, nominations are to come from the respective ministry or other members of the Church. Each position will be for a period of 3 years and will be eligible for reaffirmation for a further 3 years. After serving for 2 consecutive terms, office-bearers will be encouraged to take a sabbatical year before resuming that ministry.

For Church ministries where the positions are not normally elected by the Church, appointments will be made by the Pastor(s) elder(s) and deacons and reviewed annually.

The Church shall adhere to current Safe Church practices and endeavour to remain abreast of the current legislation affecting Safe Church policy.

Where a ministry involves children and young people, each worker must comply with Working with Children legislation and Church policy. It is the responsibility of the ministry leader, with the Leader of the Pastoral Team to ensure all required paperwork is completed and checks done where necessary.

ALL ministry leaders are responsible to observe Workplace Health and Safety practices.

10. GENERAL:

10A. Property:

The use of church property and equipment may be granted only to Church members, adherents or approved applicants, subject to conditions determined by the Church Leadership team.

10B. Insurance:

Insurance policies, as recommended by the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT, will be held by the Church. Property and Property Contents related policies will have "insured values" which fairly approximate the replacement value of the property and contents insured.

10C. The Ministry:

The ministry of the Church shall be supported and expenses met by voluntary contributions, or any other method approved by members. Any financial transaction shall be signed on behalf of the Church by two authorised members, one of whom would normally be the Church Treasurer.

10D. Auditor:

An auditor shall be appointed by the Deacons and shall audit the financial records of the Church for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

10E. Other:

In order to satisfy the requirements of the Incorporation Act and the Property Trust Act, only persons who have been baptised as believers by immersion can:

- be called as a Pastor
- be a delegate to Assembly

- be entitled to vote on a resolution concerning property (see Section 42 of the Property Trust Act)

11. ALTERATIONS TO GOVERNANCE RULES:

No alteration shall be made to the Governance Rules except by 75% of members present, eligible to vote, and voting at a meeting.

The quorum for such a meeting shall be 50% of the membership.

Any proposed change to the Church Governance Rules shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the Church Secretary and shall be distributed by the Secretary to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.