Temora Baptist Church

Constitution

Adopted 19th May 2013
1. NAME
The name of the Church shall be the Temora Baptist Church.

2. DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THIS CHURCH
This Church shall hold to the following evangelical doctrines set out in the Baptist Union of NSW Incorporation Act, 1919 (NSW) and amplified by the 1979 Baptist Union of NSW Assembly:

a. THE NATURE AND UNITY OF THE GODHEAD
There is one God Who is eternal, personal Spirit. He is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness and love. God is Triune in essential being and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

b. THE DEITY AND HUMANITY OF CHRIST
Jesus Christ as second Person of the Godhead is eternally one with God the Father, of whose person and glory Jesus is the accurate expression. To become human He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, the nature of God and human nature, were united in one Person; truly God and truly human.

c. THE HOLY SPIRIT
The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, is eternally one with the Father and the Son, yet He is sent by Them to achieve the divine purpose in the world and the Church.

d. THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES
The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy people of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

e. THE SINFULLNESS OF MANKIND
All people were made in the image of God and for fellowship with God. By transgression of God’s command humankind fell from fellowship with God and their nature was corrupted. As a consequence all people are spiritually dead under Satan’s dominion and control, and subject to God’s wrath and condemnation. Therefore, apart from God’s grace, people are helpless and hopeless.

f. CHRIST’S ATONEMENT FOR THE SIN OF HUMANITY
In order to redeem people from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, Jesus Christ became human and died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute. By His resurrection, God’s acceptance of His atoning death was demonstrated. This atonement is sufficient for the whole world, but effective only in those who receive it. The sinner is justified and reconciled to God, not through any personal merit, but solely on the basis of God’s gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, received through faith.

g. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION
The ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God’s provision of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their sinfulness, leads them to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and so brings them to spiritual birth as God’s children and to fellowship in Christ. Working within the life of believers the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, witnesses to their relationship with God, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for effective service and produces graces for holy living.

h. THE CHURCH
The Church is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. All regenerate persons are members of the universal Church of God which takes local form wherever groups of believers unite for worship, fellowship and service, in accordance with Scriptural principles. All believers are called to a priestly ministry in
the offering of spiritual sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. God calls individuals to
positions of oversight and leadership, or to special ministries. The Church recognises such by
ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing deacons and other leaders, following

i. THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY, AND BY IMMERSION

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of a person’s faith in
Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In accordance with New Testament Scripture it should be
administered only by total immersion which symbolises the believer’s identification with Christ in
death, burial and resurrection, the remission of sins and the believer’s dedication to God to live
and walk in newness of life.

j. THE COMMUNION

The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, instituted by Him to be celebrated
with the elements of bread and wine by believers in Christ, until the end of the age. It
commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord’s substitutionary death. The celebration of
the ordinance expresses our fellowship with and in the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of the Body
of which He is the Head.

k. THE RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

At the end of this age, according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in
His glory to the earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return.

l. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

At the end of the age, there is to be a resurrection both of the righteous and the unrighteous. After
death people’s bodies return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to
be with Him and the unrighteous to be reserved for the judgement.

m. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN A FUTURE STATE

God has appointed a day of final judgement for the world. At that time Jesus Christ will judge
every person and each will receive reward or punishment according to their deeds. Those judged
righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever
in Heaven with the Lord. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting
punishment.

3. GOVERNMENT (ie Decision-making)

• The Church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW accepting its responsibility to
  support and share ministries undertaken by the Denomination.

• Recognising the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church shall be
governed in line with the fundamental Baptist 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 compose its membership.

• Notwithstanding this principle of autonomy, the Church recognises and sustains the obligations of
  mutual counsel and co-operation which are common among Baptist Churches. Therefore the
  Church will be interdependent as well as independent.

4. OBJECTIVE

The Church adopts as its objective (which it believes to be in harmony with the purpose of Christ's
Church as declared in the New Testament) the desire to glorify God through:

• The inspiration and maintenance of active spiritual growth among its congregation by the regular
  assembling for public worship and the administration of the ordinances.

• The proclamation of the truths of the Bible by all means so that persons experience salvation.

• Teaching, training and discipling all who come to faith in the Lord Jesus so that they grow
together in love, are loyal 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 evangelistic and other missionary enterprise. To assist those who are in need in the belief that social action and evangelism are mutually our response to the Gospel.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5A. 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 as believers by immersion and hold to the general beliefs set forth in this Constitution under the heading "Doctrinal Position of this Church".

5B. Admission to Membership

Applicants for membership shall apply to the Pastor or Church Secretary. All applicants for membership shall be visited by two members appointed by the Diaconate or the Church to discuss their testimony to faith in Jesus Christ, membership responsibilities, the Church Constitution and its various ministries. A report shall be presented to the Church following the visitation. Applicants may be admitted to membership upon majority vote at a properly constituted Church meeting.

Where the applicant for membership has been a member of another Baptist Church, letters of transfer and/or commendation shall be sought and shall be taken into account by the Church meeting when determining the application for membership at a properly constituted Church meeting.

5C. Responsibilities of Members

(a) To endeavour at all times, by God's grace, to remain true to their commitment to Christ as expressed in their baptism.

(b) To join regularly in the worship 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.

(f) To seek opportunity to serve in the ministry of the Church.

(g) To pray regularly in private and where possible in fellowship for the people and ministry of the Church and the family of Churches.

5D. Membership Roll

A Members' Roll and an Absent Members' Roll shall be kept by the Church Secretary.

5E. Removal from Membership

The Diaconate, Eldership or other appropriate body will prayerfully review the Members' Roll at least every two years.

Members who for a period of six months fail to participate in the Worship of the Church without satisfactory explanation or fail to honour other responsibilities of membership shall receive special attention. Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to removal from the District in which the Church is situated, then such members shall be transferred to an Absent Members Roll. Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to some reason other than removal from the district or where the member in question fails to honour other responsibilities of membership, every effort shall be made to restore such members to worship and fellowship (Matt.
18:15 - 17). Where these efforts fail, a recommendation may be brought to the Church that such members' names be removed from the roll (or transferred to an Absent Members Roll).

No member's name shall be transferred or removed from either the Members' Roll or the Absent Members' Roll except by their request or the decision of a 75% majority of the members present and voting, at a properly constituted Church meeting.

5F. Transfer of Membership

Any member in good standing may request that a letter of commendation be sent to another Baptist Church he or she wishes to join. The Deacons may process the request reporting their action to the next Church meeting for confirmation.

5G. Offence 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 such a member to fellowship (Matt 18:15 - 17). Where such efforts fail the Church may terminate or suspend for a specified time, his or her membership. Termination or suspension of membership shall be only on the decision of 75% majority of members present and voting at a properly constituted 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 Union, such dispute may, after every effort has been made to resolve it within the Church or through the services of Ministry Support and Development be referred for decision to the Panel of Arbitrators elected by the Assembly, if agreed to by all parties of 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 Matt 18:15-17.

6. CHURCH OFFICERS

Pastors, Church Secretary, Church Treasurer, Deacons and/or Elders, and/or Management Committee members may be appointed as the officers of the Church. Such officers shall comprise the diaconate of the Church which shall attend to the affairs of the Church, within the framework of the Church's determined policy from time to time.

6A. Pastor(s)

The Pastor(s) shall be a person whose credentials are, where possible, acceptable to the Baptist Union of NSW, and holds 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 comprise 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 delegated to another member of the team or member of the Diaconate.) Pastors will be appointed upon a 75% majority or removed upon a simple majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting of which notice has been given on the two Sundays preceding such meeting, the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum for meeting to call or remove a Pastor shall be 75% of the membership.

When calling a Pastor -

(a) Pastorate Committee appointed by the Church shall call for nominations. Members of the congregation may make recommendations for discussion within the Committee by submitting a name, together with reasons supporting the recommendation, in writing to the Committee.

(b) The Committee may advise 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 his willingness to allow his name to be placed before the Church.

(e) Should this nominee be willing, the name shall be submitted to the Church. Only one name shall be 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 be conveyed to a Pastor in writing, having previously been clarified between both parties, together with full particulars of the Church and its development. The terms of the call will generally be as recommended by the Baptist Union of NSW and should be extended without stating any length of tenure.

Acceptance shall be made in writing to the Church indicating acceptance of terms of call.

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

6B. Church Secretary

A Church Secretary should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Church Secretary will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for deacons will apply in relation to the Church Secretary.

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

By means of an annual report and otherwise, he/she will ensure an adequate flow of information from the various Committees to the Church members.

The Church Secretary shall keep an up-to-date Members' Roll and Absent Members' Roll of the Church which shall be available for members to scrutinise.

Unsuccessful nominees for Secretary may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for Deacons.

6C. Church Treasurer

A Church Treasurer should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Church Treasurer will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for Deacons will apply in relation to the Treasurer.

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

A Treasurer's Financial Statement shall be presented to the Annual Church meeting covering the income and expenditure for the past year. Such statement shall be audited.

Unsuccessful nominees for Treasurer may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for Deacons.

6D. Deacons

Members of the Church, who are over the age of 18 years and have been in membership for at least twelve months may be appointed to the office of Deacon by the church at the Annual Church Meeting.

The number of Deacons, in addition to the Church Secretary and Church Treasurer, to be appointed shall be determined at the members' meeting prior to the Annual Meeting. Nominees shall give evidence of spiritual maturity and fulfil the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3: 8 -13.

The Diaconate shall meet 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. The quorum for Diaconate meetings shall be not less than two thirds of elected members of the Diaconate.
Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be invited from the members two Sundays prior to the Annual Church Meeting. All such nominations should be in writing, signed by the nominator and nominee and in the hands of the Church Secretary not later than the Sunday preceding the Annual Meeting. Vacancies during the year may be filled in similar manner, after two Sundays' notice of such election has been given. The names obtaining the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected. All Deacons shall be elected for 12 months and shall be eligible for re-election. Where the number of nominations does not exceed the number of vacancies, then each nominee must obtain at least 75% of the formal vote in order to be elected.

The Deacons, as far as shall be in their power, shall attend and sustain all meetings connected with the Church, shall assist in visiting the sick, shall maintain discipline in the Church and shall be empowered to transact the routine business of the Church.

7. SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Our Safe Church Policy will operate under the guidelines suggested by the Baptist Union of NSW in its document issued in 2009 with similar goals, and committing to Safe Leaders, Safe Programs and Safe Places.

In order for this Policy to function Church Leaders will be asked to abide by a Leader’s Conduct Covenant as suggested in the document issued by the Baptist Union of NSW in 2009

Also, any new people who come into our congregation, and who wish to be involved in our ministry, will be asked to complete a simple “Volunteer Application Form” which gives details of gifts, previous ministry, etc.

Further to this, those ministering with children (SRE, Sunday School, etc.) will need to complete the “Working with Children Check” as required by the State Government, and obtain the Baptist Union “Green Card” for teaching in SRE. (Special Religious Education)

8. CHURCH MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

8A. Meetings

The Church shall meet quarterly.

Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Pastor(s), or upon requisition signed by 10% of the Church membership or a majority of the Diaconate. An Extraordinary Meeting may be called for a special purpose and only consider matters of which written notice has been given.

Notice of all Church Meetings including Extraordinary Meetings shall be given on at least the two Sundays at services prior to the meeting.

An Annual Church Meeting shall be called each year to receive reports and conduct elections as herein prescribed, such meeting to be within two months of the end of the Church Financial year which will close on 30 June each year.

When there is no (senior) Pastor, or in his absence, an Elder or one of the Diaconate or a member of the Pastoral Team a Church member shall be elected to preside. Alternatively, for special reasons in consultation with Ministry Support and Development, an outside chairman may be appointed. Such a chairman shall be a member in good standing in a Church affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW.

The Church Meeting shall be a meeting of those persons on the Members' Roll and the Absent Members' Roll. Members under 18 years of age may not vote on matters relating to property transactions.

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

The quorum for all Church Meetings shall be 25% of the Church membership, (or as determined by each Annual Church Meeting), recorded on the Members’ Roll at the end of the last financial year. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the appointed starting time of the meeting, the meeting
shall stand adjourned usually to the same day, time and place in the next week. Notice of the adjourned meeting will be given at the intervening services. Such meeting will be competent to deal with the matters adjourned notwithstanding the absence of a quorum.

8B. Procedure

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

The vote of the Church shall be taken ordinarily on the voices, or by a show of hands, but all voting for the election of officers mentioned herein will be by ballot or as determined by the meeting. The Chairman may only exercise one vote.

9. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

The (senior) Pastor may, at his discretion, preside at all meetings of the Church, Diaconate and Church organisation.

All organisations associated with the Church shall formulate and present, for approval to the Diaconate, guidelines governing their operations.

The leader of Church organisations shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting, upon nomination from the respective organisations, provided that any Church member may submit a nomination. A closing date for nominations should be set.

The Church meeting may appoint groups for specific functions to assist in the general operation of the Church's ministry. Such groups shall report to the Church regularly.

10. SUNDARY

10A. Ordinances

(a) Baptism

The Pastor may baptise any believer upon application at his discretion, or alternatively a member of the pastoral team, Diaconate, Eldership or member of the Church may baptise any believer upon approval of the Pastoral Team.

(b) The Lord’s Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to take part in the Supper. Church members absent from the Lord's Table for six consecutive months shall be visited.

10B. The Trustees

The Trustees of all Church properties shall be the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust.

10C. Property

Church buildings and properties shall not be used or occupied by people or organisations for any purpose except where previous consent has been obtained from the Deacons, who may give such consent in accordance with the decisions and guidelines laid down by the Church.

10D. Insurance

Insurance shall be effected on all Church buildings and property in accordance with the requirements of the Baptist Union of NSW.

10E. The Ministry

The ministry of the Church shall be supported and expenses met by voluntary contributions. Cheques shall be signed on behalf of the Church by two of the Diaconate, one of whom shall normally be the Church Treasurer.
10F. Auditors

Auditors shall be appointed at the Annual Church meeting and shall audit the financial records of the Church for presentation at the Annual Church meeting (including all organisations).

10G. Application of Church Assets and Income

The assets and income of the church shall be applied solely in the furtherance of its charitable purpose and the advancement of religion and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the Members except as bona fide reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the church.

10H. 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 Union 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.

11. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution except by a 75% majority of members present and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose.

The quorum for such a meeting shall be two thirds of the membership.

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

The Secretary of the Baptist Union of NSW shall be notified of any changes to this Constitution by the Church Secretary within 14 days of any decision being made by the Church.