

LAURA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

CONSTITUTION

Drafted Sept 2007

1. Name

The name of the Church shall be the LAURA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, hereafter also called 'the Church'.

2. Definitions

"the church" means the association

"the church council" means the committee of management of the association

"meeting" means a general meeting of members of the association convened in accordance with these rules

"member" means a member of the association

"the Act" means the Associations Incorporation Act 1985

"special resolution" means a special resolution defined in the Act

"month" shall mean a calendar month.

3. Declaration of Principles

The church believes the doctrines expressed in the Nicene Creed and accepts as its basic principles:

3.1 The Divine Inspiration and Supreme Authority of the Scriptures in matters of Faith and Conduct

The Scriptures (or Bible) consist of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct for the Church and the individual Christian. The church has the liberty and responsibility, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, to interpret, to preach and to administer God's will in these matters. It preaches 2 Tim 3:16, 2 Tim 4:1-2, 2 Pet 1:21.

3.2 The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ

There is one God who is revealed to us as in the Scriptures as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the revelation in human form of this one God. Through Him we know the Father and receive the Holy Spirit. He is the Lord of the Church and the church seeks to live under His direction. His Lordship extends over all creation and at His return all humanity will confess His Lordship. John 1:18, John 14:6, Rom 8:9, Eph 1:20-23, Phil 2:11

3.3 Freedom of Conscience

Freedom of conscience is the freedom for all members of society to practice their religion, follow their beliefs, propagate their faith and worship without restriction of law. For Christians, it is also the freedom to interpret the Scriptures for themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3.4 A Regenerate Church Membership

The church is a community which has as its members only those who profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the life of believers, the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for Christian service and gives power for holy living. Although there is a diversity of gifts and functions, all members are of equal standing in Christ.

3.5 The Priesthood of Believers.

All Members, recognising the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives, have a part in the ministry of the Church.

3.6 The Ordinances of Believers Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptist churches observe the two ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's supper. That believers' baptism into the name of God, "the Father", "the Son" and "the Holy Spirit", as commanded by our Lord, is for those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That the sharing in the Lord's Supper, commanded by our Lord, is open to all who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this, His atoning death is declared until He comes again.

3.7 The Vesting of Authority for Church Policy and Management with the Church

The government of the Church, in accordance with the fundamental Baptist principle of autonomy of the local Church, shall be by its Members, who shall have full power to manage the affairs of the Church through Member's Meetings.

3.8 The Voluntary Association of Baptist churches

While each Baptist church is competent to manage its own affairs, Baptists recognise that they are called into real fellowship with other believers, particularly believers of like conviction, giving expression to and maintaining the unity of God's Spirit in the bonds of peace. Further, they recognise that they are called by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to work together with believers of like conviction and with Christians generally in the world-wide ministry and mission of the church. For these reasons, and in order to realise common purposes, Baptists believe that it is a proper understanding and expression of the Gospel for Baptist churches to associate voluntarily with each other. We do so as constituents of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated ("the Union") and, through the Union, with similar associations nationally and internationally.

4. Aims and Objects

The Church accepts that its aims and objects are:

- 4.1. To proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, baptising and leading into discipleship in His Church those who repent and believe in Him for salvation.
- 4.2. To proclaim the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of its Members and to seek to fulfil His purposes in the life of the community, the nation and the world.

- 4.3. To instruct people of all ages in the Scriptures and its implications in daily living.
- 4.4. To encourage Members to meet for regular public worship of God and to share in the Lord's Supper.
- 4.5. To work for justice and care with compassion for the needy and oppressed.
- 4.6. To support the work of the South Australian Baptist Union and the wider fellowship of all Christian believers.

5. Membership

5.1. Criteria for Membership

- 5.1.1 Membership shall be open to all who profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, give evidence of such faith in daily life, give general assent to this Constitution and subject to section 5.1.2. below, have confessed their faith in Christ through Baptism by immersion.
- 5.1.2 The Church believes that the practice of believers' baptism by immersion is in accordance with the Scriptures, but the Church may admit to its Membership those who after this belief has been presented to them jointly by two appointed Members of the Church, are not persuaded that they should be so baptised.
- 5.1.3 The duties of members shall be:
- To lead a Christian life in humility and peace, and to edify one another in love;
 - To glorify God in the worship and work of the church;
 - To study the Scriptures;
 - To promote the unity and welfare of the church as a family of God and to work harmoniously with other members in the fulfillment of the church's objects;
 - To join regularly in congregational worship, the hearing of the word of God and partaking of the Lord's Supper;
 - Through the meeting of members, to exercise discipline over the members in conformity with the Scriptures.
 - To attend meetings of members unless unable to do so.

5.2. Application for and Resignation of Membership

- 5.2.1. Applications for membership of the church shall be in writing, signed by the applicant and directed to the church Secretary.
- 5.2.2. An applicant who is a member of another church may apply for a transfer of that membership. Upon receipt of such an application, the Secretary shall request a letter of recommendation from the applicant's previous church.
- 5.2.3. The members, upon consideration of a report and recommendation of the Church Council shall decide applications for membership.
- 5.2.4. A member may resign from membership of the church by giving

written notice thereof to the secretary .

5.3 Membership List

- 5.3.1. The church shall cause a list of members to be kept and maintained.
- 5.3.2. The Secretary shall have responsibility for keeping and maintaining a list of church members containing:
 - i) the name and address of each member;
 - ii) the date on which each member was admitted to the association; and
 - iii) if applicable, the date of, and reason(s) for, termination of membership.
- 5.3.3. The Church Council shall cause the list of church members to be reviewed annually.
- 5.3.4. Members who have died since the last review, have not attended worship for six months or who have resigned or transferred their membership shall be removed from the list.
- 5.3.5. Those members from 5.3.4 above who have not attended worship for six months shall be moved to an Affiliates list and shall no longer be Members.

5.4 Handling of Disputes

- 5.4.1. The members shall exercise church discipline in accordance with the procedure laid down in Matthew 18:15- 17:
- 5.4.2. The primary purpose of church discipline shall be the restoration of right relations between members.
- 5.4.3. If the stages of discipline cannot be carried out because the erring member refuses to submit to the discipline of the church, that person shall be declared to have excluded himself or herself from the membership of the church.
- 5.4.4. At all times, the church shall exercise discipline in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

6. Powers

For the purpose of carrying out its aims and objects, the church may exercise all the powers of an incorporated association as set out in the Associations Incorporation Act 1985 as amended from time to time.

7. Government of the Church

- 7.1 The members of the church shall have power to decide all matters relating to the conduct of the church and its affairs. The government of the church shall be expressed through the Members' Meetings.

7.2 Members may delegate to church officers or to the Church Council, or other committee the power to make any decision not inconsistent with this Constitution. Such delegation may be revoked at any time and shall not prevent the exercise of any power by members' meetings. In the event of any conflict in the exercise of powers, the decision of members' meetings shall be binding and conclusive.

8 Member of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated.

The church is and shall be a member of the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated ("SABU").

9 Meetings

9.1 Annual General Meeting: Members shall hold an annual general meeting within five months after the end of the church's financial year, normally to be held in the month of August.

9.2 Other Meetings: The members may hold other meetings for the management of their affairs as thought necessary by the committee or as proscribed in 12. below.

9.3 It shall be the duty of every member entitled to vote to attend the meetings of members unless unable to do so.

9.4 All resolutions carried at a duly convened meeting of members shall be binding upon all members, whether present or absent, or refraining from voting,

10 Procedure at Annual General Meeting

At each Annual General Meeting of members:

10.1 The Chair of the meeting shall present or cause to be presented to the members an Annual Report of the church's activities and Financial Statements;

10.2 Such elections as may be required by this Constitution or By-Laws shall be held;

10.3 If the church has an auditor, the church's auditor shall be appointed;

10.4 Any general business transacted may be transacted which is not required by this Constitution or the By-Laws to be transacted at a Special meeting of members.

11 Election of Officers

11.1 Nominations

11.1.1 The Secretary shall seek and receive nominations from members of the church for all offices and committees of the church.

11.1.2 Subject to the provisions of the Constitution all members shall be eligible for nomination for office or for service on the committees.

11.1.3 The Secretary shall call for nominations at least fourteen days before the date set for elections.

11.1.4 Any voting member at the meeting may make nominations, provided that the consent of the person nominated has been obtained.

11.2 Voting for Officers

11.2.1. The election of officers of the church shall be by ballot.

11.2.2 Candidates for office shall be elected upon a two-thirds majority vote.

11.3 Casual Vacancies

The Church Council shall fill casual vacancies until the next annual general meeting of members.

12 Special Meetings

Special meetings of members may be called by an officer or the Church Council either independently or when requested by at least five Members.

13 Notice of meetings

13.1.1 The Secretary shall give members notice of meeting at least fourteen days before the date of meeting, and shall publish the same to the congregation on at least two Sundays before the said date.

13.1.2 In the case of a members meeting convened to consider a change in the constitution such notice is to be given at least twenty-eight days in advance.

14 Scope of meeting

14.1. The chief business to come before the meeting shall be announced at the same time that the notice of meeting is given.

14.2. In the case of a members meeting convened to consider a change in the constitution such notice is to be given at least 28 days in advance accompanied by a written proposal of the changes sought to the constitution.

15 Quorum

15.1 A quorum of one half of all voting members shall be required for the transaction of all business.

15.2 If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the advertised starting time of the meeting, then the meeting shall lapse.

16 Voting

16.1 Only Members may vote.

16.2 Whilst seeking unanimous agreement, decisions shall be carried by a simple majority.

- 16.3 Unless prescribed in the Constitution or By-Laws, the Chair shall ordinarily decide the manner of voting, whether by show of hands or ballot, but the meeting may itself decide by special resolution the manner of voting to be adopted.
- 16.4 The Chair shall have a deliberative vote.
- 16.5 Proxy voting is not allowed. Only attending members may vote at meetings.

17 **Poll**

- 17.1 If a poll is demanded by at least five members, it must be conducted in a manner specified by the person presiding and the result of the poll is the resolution of the meeting on that question.
- 17.2 A poll demanded for the election of a person presiding or on a question of adjournment must be taken immediately, but any other poll may be conducted at any time before the close of the meeting.

18 **Officers and Church Council**

- 18.1 The members shall appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer and such Elders at they consider necessary for the spiritual oversight of the church.
- 18.2 All such officers shall be a natural person.
- 18.3 Eligibility for election. Any person who has been a member of the church for at least twelve months and who, in the opinion of the church is suitable shall be eligible for election as an Elder.
- 18.4 The tenure of all such officers shall be for 12 months or until the next Annual General Meeting.
- 18.5 All such officers and Elders are eligible for reelection to their previously held or any other office.
- 18.6 The members shall appoint a Committee of Management, which shall be called The Church Council. The Church Council shall comprise the Pastor, the Secretary, the Treasurer and Elders and such other officers and persons as shall be prescribed in the By-Laws.
- 18.7 The first committee of the association shall be comprised of such persons as hold office prior to incorporation. The first committee shall hold office until the first annual general meeting after incorporation.
- 18.8 The members shall appoint such other officers, committees and persons as need and occasion require for the proper conduct of its worship and the management of its affairs as prescribed in the By-Laws or as determined from time to time by resolution of the members.

- 18.9. **Disqualification of an Officer** The office of a church council member shall become vacant if a committee member is:
- i. Disqualified under the Act
 - ii. Expelled as a member under this constitution
 - iii. Incapacitated by ill health
 - iv. Absent without apology for more than 4 meetings in a financial year.

19. The Church Council Proceedings

- 19.1 The Church Council shall generally meet once every month to consider the general welfare of the members of the church and their programme of activities. It shall receive reports from the standing committees and make recommendations to the members. In cases of emergency, it may be called upon to act between meetings of the members. In all matters, including the interpretation of policy established by the members, it shall be accountable to the members.
- 19.2 Any direct or indirect pecuniary interests of a council member in relation to proposed contracts must be declared to the council. Such a pecuniary interest must also be declared at the next Members meeting.
- 19.3 Questions arising should be decided by a majority of votes.

20. Public Officer

The members shall appoint a Public Officer.

21. Indemnity

The Officers of the church shall be indemnified out of the church's assets against all actions, claims, demands, prosecutions, suits and proceedings arising from or relating to the bona fide execution of their duties under this Constitution.

22. By-Laws

The members shall have power, by a simple majority vote of members present at a duly constituted meeting of members, to make, repeal, alter or amend By-Laws not inconsistent with the Constitution for the regulation of their proceedings and the management of their business.

23. Winding Up

If, for any reason the Church is to be wound up pursuant to a resolution of members taken at a special meeting of members, it shall be wound up in accordance with the provisions of the law for the time being relating to the winding up of incorporated associations. The assets remaining after paying all the liabilities of the church and the expenses of the winding up shall be transferred by the Liquidator of the church to the South Australian Baptist Union Incorporated.

24 Special and Ordinary resolutions

- 24.1 A special resolution is a special resolution as defined in the Act.
- 24.2 An ordinary resolution is a resolution passed by a simple majority at a general meeting.

25 Special Resolution: Alteration of Constitution

- 25.1. The members shall have power, upon the majority vote of three quarters of the members present and entitled to vote at a meeting especially convened for the purpose, to repeal, alter, amend or add to the provisions of this Constitution, except as herein provided.
- 25.2 The quorum for such meeting shall be one half of all members entitled to a vote.
- 25.3 Notice of motion of the proposed change shall be given in writing to each member at least twenty eight days before the date of the special members' to the meeting at which the proposed change is to be considered, and published to the congregation on each of the two Sundays immediately preceding the said date.
- 25.4 Article 8, and Article 23 of this Constitution shall be considered fundamental and shall not be repealed, added to, altered or amended so as to alter their intent and meaning.

LAURA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

BY-LAWS

1. Name The name of the church shall be the Laura Baptist Christian Community, but the church may register and use such other names as the members shall decide.

2. Conduct and time span of meetings

- a. The conduct of meetings shall be in accordance with the standing orders or rules for transacting business (if any) adopted by the church.
- b. Evening meetings of members of the church, its officers or committees shall normally commence at 7.30p.m. and shall not extend beyond 10.00p.m. unless a resolution to do so is taken.
- c. No meeting shall extend beyond three hours.

3 Financial Year: The church's financial year shall commence on the 1st day of July and conclude on the 30th day of June each year.

4. The Pastorate

- a. The members recognise that ministry belongs to the whole church. At the same time, members may appoint and set apart individuals as "pastors" to devote themselves to the "feeding, governing, serving and building up of Christ's church..."¹.
- b. The Pastor shall be a believer who has been baptized by immersion upon public profession of faith.
- c. The Pastor shall be appointed for an indefinite period, which may be terminated by either the Pastor or the church upon three months' notice in writing, unless otherwise specifically provided for by mutual agreement between the Church and the Pastor.
- d. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Pastor shall be appointed on such terms, for such duties and subject to such reviews as the church and the Pastor agree in writing.
- e. The Pastor shall do all things necessary to obtain or maintain accreditation with SABU and shall fulfil such continuing education or other accreditation requirements that SABU specifies from time to time.
- f. The church may summarily remove a Pastor from ministry upon evidence of scandalous life.

¹ The London Baptist Confession, 1644

- g. The services and procedures of the Advisory Board of SABU shall be used in the matter of pastoral settlement.

5. Officers & Standing Committees

- a. The elected officers of the church shall be a Secretary, a Treasurer and a Committee of Elders.
- b. The standing committees of the church shall be: Property Management Committee; the () Committee; the () Committee].
- c. Standing Committees shall comprise at least two persons who shall be members of the Laura Baptist Christian Community.
- d. Unless otherwise provided in these By-Laws, one-half, or as near as possible to one-half of the members on standing committees or other designated committees shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election.
- e. No person shall ordinarily be Chair of more than one standing committee at the same time.
- f. The standing committees shall hold regular meetings as decided from time to time, but usually not less than once every three months on a specified day.
- g. The Pastor(s) *ex officio* may attend all meetings of committee.

6. Duties of Officers

a. The Secretary.

The Secretary shall be elected annually and shall preside at meetings of members and of the Church Council and shall ensure that:

- i. All elected and appointed officers and committees effectively carry out their assigned duties and generally encourage and co-operate with all office-bearers;
- ii. Ensure that an agenda is prepared for the meetings of members and of the Church Council.
- iii. Keep or cause to be kept an accurate record of all proceedings of meetings of members, the Church Council, attend to all correspondence unless it is to be delegated to another person, prepare an agenda for meetings and see that committees are informed of decisions affecting their function.
- iv. If the Chair is absent or unable to act, the meeting shall appoint a member to act as Chair for the time being.

b. Treasurer

- i. The Treasurer shall receive, check with another officer and keep an account of all moneys entrusted to him by the church, bank all of the same, and pay all accounts as directed by the church. The Treasurer shall present a financial statement at the following:
 - 1. a Church Council meeting;
 - 2. members' meeting, including the Annual General Meeting;
- ii. The Treasurer shall prepare, submit for audit and present an audited annual balance sheet and an audited annual income and expenditure statement to the Annual General Meeting of members.
- iii. The Treasurer shall prepare and maintain an up-to-date inventory of the church's insurable assets, and report to the members at least once annually on the nature, extent and adequacy of the church's insurance cover.
- iv. If the Church's gross receipts should exceed \$200,000.00 the members shall elect an auditor annually who shall examine thoroughly the books of the Treasurer and vouch for their correctness and otherwise advise on aspects of the church's finances and financial affairs.

7. Elders

Elders shall meet with the Pastor regularly. Together with the Pastor, Elders shall have spiritual oversight of the members of the church and the fulfillment of the church's aims and objects and, for this purpose, they shall:

- 1. Visit members and encourage them to be regular in attendance at services and in the support of the church with their means and their spiritual gifts;
- 2. Notify the pastor(s) of sick or spiritually distressed members;
- 3. Support the maintenance of Christian discipline and good order in the congregation;
- 4. Be an example of Christian conduct, observing confidentiality regarding all private matters.
- 5. Develop pastoral care policies and procedures, having particular regard to the church's duty of care to those with whom and to whom the church ministers.

8. The Property Management Committee The Property Management Committee shall:

- i. See that the property, buildings and possessions of the church are kept in good and proper order;

- ii. Organise for minor repairs as necessary (having regard to the church's duty of care) and report on actions taken to the members;
- iii. Make six-monthly inspections of all of the church's property and buildings and report on their findings as to:
 - 1. Maintenance requirements;
 - 2. Compliance with Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare requirements;
 - 3. Compliance with government building, fire-safety and other relevant laws and regulations;
- iv. Compile and maintain an up-to-date inventory of all of the church's equipment.

9. Finances

- a. Offerings. The ordinary expenses of the churches shall normally be defrayed by the voluntary offerings of the members, adherents and other contributors.
- b. Special Funds. Funds collected by the church for any special purpose shall not be appropriated for any other purpose or use without the consent of two-thirds majority of members.
- c. Bank accounts. Church bank accounts shall be operated by the Treasurer and two other signatories or such other persons as the members shall decide, with the Treasurer and any one of the persons so appointed as signatories to sign any cheque or other financial transaction of the church.

10. Public Officer

The Secretary shall be the Public Officer of the church.