

CONSTITUTION OF MORTDALE-OATLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

1.0 NAME

The name of the church shall be Mortdale-Oatley Baptist Church.

2.0 MISSION

Mortdale-Oatley Baptist Church (MOBC) exists to make disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ.

3.0 THE BASIS OF THE CHURCH

3.1 The Church shall consist of baptised believers¹ in the Lord Jesus Christ, who affirm the following beliefs:

- a) That there is one God in three eternal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
- b) That Jesus Christ is God the Son, who revealed God and God's love for all people by becoming truly human, giving himself up to death on the cross, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven;
- c) That all people are sinners and therefore separated from God;
- d) That by his gracious gift alone, God makes people right with himself through the sacrificial death of Jesus
- e) That this gift is received by faith alone;
- f) That God the Holy Spirit convinces people of sin and indwells all believers giving them new, eternal and holy life;
- g) That at the end of time shall be the Day of Judgment when Jesus will come again as King forever and faith in him will be the only hope;
- h) That the Christian Church is the gathered community of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- i) That there are two New Testament ceremonies signifying an inward spiritual gift – baptism of believers by immersion in water¹ and the Lord's Supper;
- j) That the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

3.2 and are committed to the mission through:

- a) Learning about Christ. This includes Biblical teaching in small groups and public worship which encourages people to understand and live out our mission.
- b) Loving like Christ. This includes fellowship and pastoral care within our small groups, congregation, and wider community.
- c) Living for Christ. This includes public worship and worship through godly living in the wider world.
- d) Leaning on Christ. This includes personal and corporate prayer.
- e) Leading others to Christ. This includes individual and corporate outreach fostered within our own church and in co-operation with other churches.

4.0 MEMBERSHIP²

4.1 All candidates for membership shall make application to the Pastor for proposal at a Church Meeting.

4.2 Applicants must be baptised¹ and publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and God.

4.3 Applicants for membership may be accepted, by resolution at a Church Meeting, upon the satisfactory report of two members appointed by the Pastor or MLT as visitors. The visitors shall ascertain applicants' understanding of and commitment to this constitution.

4.4 Where a person is in membership with another church, a letter of transfer should be sought.

¹ See Section 9.1.a) ² See Section 9.1.

- 4.5** Should any member become an offence to the fellowship by reason of unchristian conduct, rejection of the mission or beliefs of the Church, or by repeated breach of their commitment, the Church may by resolution at a Meeting, remove that member's name from the roll. This may only be effected after the Pastor or MLT have sought and failed to bring that person to repentance.
- 4.6** The Church roll shall be revised by a Church meeting, upon the recommendation of the Pastor and MLT, at least annually.
- 4.7** Matters of dispute and discipline shall be dealt with according to the principles of Matthew 18:15-17. Such matters may only be brought before the Church at the discretion of the Pastor or MLT.
- 4.8** Members of the Church shall contribute prayerfully and with due regard to the Biblical principle of tithing and offerings, for the promotion of the church's mission.

5.0 GOVERNMENT AND ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH

5.1 Autonomy

The Church shall be governed in accordance with the principle of autonomy of the local fellowship. Invested in this body of believers, who comprise its membership, is the full power to manage its own affairs. It shall be a member of and support the Baptist Union of NSW.

5.2 Pastors

- a) The Senior Pastor shall have responsibility for overall leadership of the Church and be accredited or seek accreditation with the Baptist Union of NSW.
- b) The church may appoint associate pastors.
- c) When a vacancy occurs the Church shall establish a Pastorate Committee to present a suitable nomination to the Church. The Committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor (as appropriate); 4 MLT members, appointed from among themselves; and 4 Church members appointed at a Church meeting. The Committee shall appoint one of its members as Chair.
- d) The appointment of a pastor shall be determined at a Church meeting convened for the purpose and announced at each service on the two Sundays prior to the meeting. No one shall be appointed as a pastor unless receiving the approval of 75% of the Church members present at the meeting.
- e) Pastors are to be called on conditions to be determined by the Church upon recommendation of the Pastorate Committee.
- f) All appointments are subject to mutually acceptable review procedures.
- g) When the senior pastor's position is vacant, the MLT may bring a recommendation to a Members' Meeting for the appointment of an interim pastor.

5.3 Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)

- a) Ministry Leaders shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Church, with due regard to the Biblical principles of leadership. Together with the Pastors, they shall lead the church in accordance with sections 2 & 3 of the Constitution.
- b) The number and designation of the Ministries shall be determined by the church at its Annual General Meeting.
- c) The MLT and pastors shall prepare and submit to the Church an annual plan and evaluation of the current Ministries.
- d) The MLT shall meet alternate months.
- e) A quorum shall be 50% plus 1.

6.0 OTHER CHURCH ORGANISATIONS, MINISTRIES AND APPOINTMENTS

- 6.1** The Church may from time to time constitute or discontinue such organisations and Ministries consistent with sections 2 & 3 of this Constitution.
- 6.2** Any organisation or agency of the Church requiring a constitution of its own, shall have such constitution approved by the MLT, and such constitution shall not be altered without approval of the MLT.
- 6.3** The Senior Pastor, or nominee from the MLT, may Chair and attend any meeting.

- 6.4** Appointments to positions in the various ministries will normally be made by the MLT and ratified by a Church meeting. The following will be elected at the Annual General Meeting of Members: Delegates to the Baptist Union of NSW Assembly; Hon Treasurer; Property Officer; Auditor (who need not be a member of the church).
The Church may from time to time alter the list of those who shall be so elected.
All who serve in any position of responsibility in the life of the Church must be clearly known to be committed to Christ and his Church.

7.0 Requirements for all elected positions:

- a) Nomination papers shall be available at least three weeks prior to the election meeting and shall be returned to the Administration Leader, signed by the nominator, not later than ten days prior to the appointment meeting and the names of the nominees shall be placed on the notice board on the Sunday prior to the meeting.
- b) A nominee must be a member of MOBC, and their consent to nomination given.
- c) Where there is more than one nominee, a preferential vote will be taken. The successful nominee, or in the case of a sole nominee, will be subject to a vote of confirmation, requiring a two-thirds majority.
- d) If a casual vacancy occurs during the term of office, a person appointed to that office shall be appointed for the remainder of the term of the person who is so replaced.
- e) In the event of a position remaining unfilled, the MLT may appoint a person in an acting capacity until the appointment can be confirmed by resolution at a Church Members' Meeting, requiring a two-thirds majority.
- f) All appointments are for two years.

8.0 MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- a) The Church shall meet for business at least once a quarter; special meetings may be convened as required. Church meetings shall be announced on the previous Sunday at each service and the agenda published on the Church notice board.
- b) There shall be an Annual Meeting held at which the MLT and Pastors shall present written reports.
- c) Notice of motion shall be submitted to the Administration Leader in writing, one month prior to a meeting
- d) Ordinarily, the vote of the Church shall be taken either verbally or by a show of hands. Elections shall be by ballot. A ballot may be demanded on any other occasion by a majority of the members present.
- e) Matters taken to the Church Members' Meeting for final resolution shall include the following:
 - ◆ Purchase, sale or lease of land or buildings.
 - ◆ Annual Program and Budget.
 - ◆ Annual elections
 - ◆ Additions to or deletions from the membership.
 - ◆ Appointment of Pastors
 - ◆ Designation and number of Ministry Leaders
 - ◆ Borrowing of money
- f) Non-members of the Church may attend Church Members' meetings at the discretion of the Chairman, but shall not have the right to vote.
- g) No meeting shall be prolonged beyond 2 hours from advertised starting time, unless by vote at the meeting.
- h) A quorum shall be 25% of the membership. If a quorum is not present, issues on the agenda may be discussed, but will be referred back to the MLT for resolution, excepting sale or purchase of property, borrowing of money, annual elections, and appointment of a pastor. The MLT's vote in these instances must be unanimous.
- i) All meetings shall be opportunities for prayer, discernment of God's will and mutual encouragement.

9.0 FINANCE:

- a) Accounts for organisations and ministries of the Church may only be opened with the approval of the Treasurer or MLT.
- b) All such accounts require at least 2 signatories to sign cheques and these signatories must be approved by the Treasurer who is to be a signatory to such accounts of all organisations, ministries and the Church. Cheques shall be signed on behalf of the Church by any two signatories authorised by the Administration Leader and Treasurer or MLT.
- c) An audited Financial statement of the Church's receipts and payments shall be submitted to the Annual General Meeting.
- d) A year to date financial summary shall be tabled at each ordinary quarterly members' meeting.
- e) All organisations are to submit an audited Annual Financial Statement to the Treasurer. The Financial Year of the Church shall close on 30th June each year.

10.0 SUNDRY MATTERS:

10.1 Trustee

The Trustee of the Church property shall be the Baptist Churches of N.S.W. Property Trust; and all dealings with real property shall be in accordance with the Baptist Churches of N.S.W. Property Trust Act, 1984.

10.2 Property

Church buildings and property shall not be used or occupied by persons or organisations outside the Church except for ministry consistent with MOBC's Mission and then only if prior consent has been obtained from the Administration Leader or MLT.

10.3 Alterations to constitution

One month's notice of motion of any proposed alteration of this Constitution must be given in writing to the Administration Leader, and no alteration shall be made but by a vote of at least two-thirds majority of the members present.

11.0 APPENDIX

11.1 Membership

a) Baptism – Special Exception

The Church may admit as a member, a person who has been baptised but not as a believer, or a person who has been baptised but not by immersion, provided that at the time of application for membership, the person professes Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and signifies that for them, their baptism symbolised their identification with Christ and with the Church as the body of Christ. In cases where for health reasons immersion is inadvisable or impractical, believers shall be encouraged to be baptised in another appropriate form.

Explanation

- i) *As a Baptist congregation in the Baptist family of Churches, we continue to maintain and teach that Baptism is for believers only and that the only valid Baptism is believer's baptism. Our limited open membership does not acknowledge the legitimacy of infant baptism.*
- ii) *As a local Church we encourage and defend the position of believer's baptism and seek to persuade all people of the need for personal faith to accompany baptism. Where people have already been baptised as infants we still seek to encourage them to receive believer's baptism.*
- iii) *We do not publicly promote the idea of unqualified Open Membership.*
- iv) *Those who have not previously been baptised as believers, but are willing to conscientiously assent to the principle of believer's baptism by immersion, even though they conscientiously deny the appropriateness of such baptism at their stage of Christian experience, may be granted a limited Open Membership after the following steps had been taken:-*

- ◆ *Interview with the Pastor as to the person's convictions about their infant baptism, or their believer's baptism performed in a different mode. If the Pastor is satisfied about the Christian character of the individual as well as the integrity with which he/she maintained the*

*validity of their previous baptism; and if that person presently demonstrated a commitment to the congregation and its Baptist ethos, he/she would then recommend that person as a **special case** to a Member's Meeting.*

- ◆ *Once approved by the Member's Meeting, the individual would then be welcomed into membership like any other candidate and entered on the member's roll. The only thing qualifying the entry on the roll would be an asterisk indicating that this person would (i) not be eligible to attend Assembly as a Delegate, and (ii) not be eligible to vote on Section 42 property resolutions (this is in conformity with the legal opinion given to the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of NSW in 1995).*

b) Members under 18 years of age

Under the provisions of the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919 members under 18 are:

- i) not eligible for appointment as Delegates of the Church to an Assembly of the Baptist Union of New South Wales; and
- ii) not entitled to vote on any resolution proposed for the purpose of giving the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust a direction under Section 42 of the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984.

This constitution was adopted on 3rd March 2004 and replaces that of 1986 as amended.

Incorporating Amendments Approved by the Church Members:

•

MEMBERS' GUIDE: How our church works *[not formally part of the Constitution]*

This guide complements the Constitution and is to assist members in understanding the structure of the church's leadership and how to raise matters of concern.

Pastors

The Senior Pastor is responsible to the MLT and ultimately the MOBC membership for the overall leadership of the church, encouraging and envisioning its future direction and equipping the congregation according to its mission. He or she is normally paid a salary which comes from the regular offerings of the congregation.

Associates may also be appointed to lead particular ministry areas and likewise equip the congregation in those areas. They are also normally paid a salary which comes from the regular offerings of the congregation. They are responsible to the Senior Pastor, MLT and ultimately the MOBC membership.

MLT (Ministry Leadership Team)

Each member of the MLT leads an area related to the church's mission. They are normally not paid. Each is responsible for seeking out people to join his or her Ministry team to fulfil particular roles, encourage those people and together with them set goals, develop programs and evaluate progress. These matters are reported periodically to the MLT and then to the church at the annual general meeting. Pastors are ex-officio members of the MLT.

If you are interested in serving in a particular area of Ministry, speak to the relevant Ministry Leader.

The notice board near the front door of the church has the names, relevant ministry areas and photos for each Ministry Leader.

Whom do I contact if I have a personal need or know someone who does?

In the first instance, this will probably come under the Leader for Fellowship whose responsibility includes pastoral care. If the matter is serious and urgent, you should contact a pastor.

What if I have an idea or concern about some aspect of the church's ministry?

In the first instance, speak to the Ministry Leader whose area the matter relates to as in most cases the Leader should be able to respond. If after discussion, you are not satisfied with the response, you can ask that Leader to raise the matter at the MLT meeting, or write a letter to it. It would also be appropriate to raise such a matter with your small group to test your view and if there is consensus, have the small group leader take up the matter for you if you prefer.

If the MLT's response still does not satisfy you, you can ask that the matter be listed on the agenda for the next church meeting by way of an explicit motion to which you can speak. If you have difficulty expressing yourself in a formal meeting, you can ask for an 'advocate' to be appointed to explain the matter on your behalf.

Procedure at Church Meetings

It is the intention to use small informal discussion groups frequently to raise matters and achieve consensus. This may be the preferred way forward for an issue of concern to you.

However, at times matters will require formal motions and debate must be in accordance with standard meeting rules. Please note, that because of the size and time restrictions of church meetings, it is not practical to have matters raised without a proper motion provided in advance, as required by the constitution. For the same reason, discussion of those items which are listed, must be kept strictly to the issue and it may be necessary to limit the time permitted for each person to speak, and then only once. It is the chairman's responsibility to all members present to ensure that matters are dealt with in a 'decent and orderly manner' as scripture requires!

If a matter is of great urgency and importance and arises suddenly, you should speak to the meeting chairman prior to the commencement of the meeting and propose a motion. The chairman can then briefly advise the meeting of the issue and ask the meeting if it wishes to add the item to the agenda.