

# The Baptist Union of Victoria

## Constitution

### **I. NAME:**

The Baptist Union of Victoria.

### **II. CONSTITUENTS:**

The Constituents of the Union shall include all the Churches, Societies, Institutions and other bodies which –

(a) At the date on which this Constitution becomes operative are constituents or are organisations affiliated with the Union.

(b) Thereafter shall become constituents of or organisations affiliated with

the Union in conformity with this Constitution and the By-laws made or to be made for the purpose of giving effect to it.

For guidance of constituents of the Union it is hereby recorded that the Union approves and adopts those doctrines, which constitute the Doctrinal Basis of the Union and other Trust Funds and the principles and ideals of the Baptist faith, which are as follows:

### **III. DOCTRINAL BASIS**

1. The Divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. The existence of One God in Three Persons – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
3. The Deity and Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity.
4. The fallen, sinful, and lost estate of all mankind.
5. The salvation of men from the penal consequences and the power of sin through the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, His atoning death, His resurrection from the Dead, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His unchanging Priesthood.
6. The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of men, in their sanctification, and in their preservation to the Heavenly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The necessity, in order to salvation, of repentance towards God, and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The resurrection of the Dead, the final judgment of all men by the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The two ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are of perpetual obligation:

Baptism being the immersion of Believers upon the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a symbol of the fellowship of the regenerate in His Death, burial and resurrection; the Lord's Supper being a memorial until He come, of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

10.

#### **IV. PRINCIPLES AND IDEALS OF THE BAPTIST FAITH:**

Whilst holding many phrases of Christian Truth, in common with other Denominations, Baptists place a distinctive emphasis upon the following fundamental principles of the Christian Faith, as revealed in the New Testament.

##### **1. The Child in the Kingdom.**

(a) Baptists believe that infants are God's little ones, whether children

of Christian or non-Christian parents, and accept without modification the word of the Lord, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven". This Christian view of the child makes the external act of "Infant Baptism" unnecessary.

(b) Baptists approve of the presentation of children to God by parents,

if thereby they solemnly undertake to train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the home and in the Church.

##### **2. The Significance of Conversion.**

(a) To all who at the stage of personal responsibility, ignore God's law,

and wander as prodigals from the Father's Home, Baptists preach the gospel of the Father's love, and the message of the cross, as the Way of Life. Conversion is acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

(b) This acceptance of Christ is a personal and deliberate act, involving

the assent of the mind, the decision of the will, and the love of the heart.

(c) This avowal of allegiance to Christ implies a constant endeavor to

live a life worthy of, and well pleasing to Him in all things.

##### **3. The Church – a Spiritual Society.**

Baptists hold that the Church, as established by the Lord Jesus Christ should consist of persons who have personally and intelligently accepted Him as Savior and Lord, and pledged themselves to discipleship and service in the Kingdom of God.

4. The Lordship of Christ in the Church.
  - (a) Baptists hold and teach that Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church, and that without any human intervention or ritualistic ceremony.
  - (b) Therefore, He is the sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct, in the life both of the Church and of the individual.
  - (c) This involves liberty of thought and conscience, and the rights of the Believer and the Church, freed from any ecclesiastical or other external authority, to interpret His mind.
  
5. The Standard of Belief.
  - (a) Believing that the voice of the Church is subordinate to the voice of Christ, and that the mind of the Master is the Standard of Christian belief, Baptists do not subscribe to any formal Church Creed lest it hamper the development of Christian thought.
  - (b) Further, in their interpretation of the Lord's farewell declaration,  
"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth", Baptists accept the principle that God has yet "more light and truth to break forth from His Word".
  - (c) Therefore, Baptists claim the personal privilege, and accept the Christian responsibility of courageously thinking God's thoughts after Him, under the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit of Truth.
  
6. The Ministry of Leadership.
  - (a) In adopting the Congregational Principles of Church government, with no formal creed, with no external authority, and no defined ecclesiastical policy, and each member having equal rights of responsibilities the Baptist Church is largely dependent on the reality and vigor of the spiritual life of its individual members.
  - (b) This spiritual life is generated by the understanding and inspiration of Christ's ideals, and by the creation and maintenance of a spiritual atmosphere, in which all that is unworthy dies, and in which Christian life becomes healthy and aggressive.
  - (c) The Baptist minister accepts his office from the Lord of the Church, and while he is a "servant of the Church" the

Church is not his master. He is the spiritual leader in the life and ministry of the Church.

- (d) Associated with the minister in the spiritual oversight of the Church are men and women chosen for their Christian gifts and graces, who are called to be examples to the members of the Church, in conduct, zeal, self-denial and generosity.
- (e) Church officers are appointed as spiritual leaders to work in sympathetic co-operation with the minister and Church members.
- (f) The periodic Church Business Meeting is the center of the Church's Christian activities, and is the seat of authority in the management of Church business.

7. The Christian significance of Baptism.

- (a) Christian Baptism, by which is meant the immersion of believers as instituted by our Lord, is a personal, public confession of the believer's identification with Christ, and also a means of grace to the Christian.
- (b) Baptism is an outward act, which symbolizes, but does not effect regeneration, and salvation is not dependent on it.
- (c) Baptism is a glorious privilege and a personal responsibility and is a help to the believer in reminding him of his spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

8. The Fellowship of the Lord's Supper.

- (a) To Baptists the Church is not so much an organization as a fellowship; effective only as there is spiritual association with the Head of the Church.
- (b) The Lord's Supper is a service of spiritual fellowship whereby, through remembrance of His Life and Death believers may experience in supreme degree the reality and influence of His Presence.
- (c) It is an opportunity of entering into close fellowship with the Lord in the Holy of Holies, where there is a re-kindling of love and a reconsecration of life to His service.

9. The Church and the Kingdom.

Baptists recognise their responsibility to strive for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world and teach that membership in the Church implies service and sacrifice. This involves a stewardship of time, talents and money, which aims at being worthy of the Son of God who loved and served mankind, even unto death.

## **OBJECTS OF THE UNION:**

1. To promote the unity of the Churches in faith, fellowship and worship.
2. To promote Church Extension -
  - (a) By establishing, taking over, assisting and/or maintaining Churches in suitable localities in Victoria and in adjoining States, with the consent of the Unions of those States.
  - (b) By assisting in the erection of buildings for Church, school and other denominational purposes.
  - (c) By assisting, when necessary, the churches in the maintenance of their ministers.
3. To carry on Home Mission work.
4. To establish and conduct Denominational Schools of Colleges and Hostels.
5. To carry on any work for the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of children, whether by way of Free Kindergarten or otherwise.
6. To give assistance to necessitous Churches.
7. To carry on Foreign Mission work.
8. To educate students for the ministry.
9. To assist aged and infirm Ministers and Home Missionaries, their widows and/or dependents.
10. To establish and administer any fund or funds for the benefit of Ministers and Home Missionaries, their widows and/or children whether by way of a pension or annuity scheme or otherwise.
11.
  - (a) To provide for properties being held in trust for the Churches of  
the Union in accordance with the Baptist Union incorporation Act 1930.
  - (b) To cause to be incorporated a company limited by guarantee to act  
as custodian of any real and personal property belonging to or controlled by or committed to the Union, which shall be designated by the Assembly of the Union.
12. To become a constituent of or associated with any federated body of bodies any of the activities of this Union, and to transfer to such body or bodies any of the assets of this Union.
13. To give advice and guidance to Churches which are, or are about to become pastor less and to ministers and Churches in circumstances of difficulty.
14. To aid in the promotion of public morality and social reform.
15. To collect and disseminate information relative to the history, condition and activities of Baptist throughout the world and to

promote fraternal intercourse between Baptists in Victoria and elsewhere.

16. To afford opportunity for conference and for public declarations of principles and opinion; and to confer and co-operate with other Christian communities as occasion may require.
17. To do anything not hereinbefore specified which may be found to be of benefit to the Baptist denomination.

## **VI. OPERATIONS:**

The Union shall act through its Assemblies, Officers, Council, Leadership Team, Departments, Committees, Agencies, Affiliated Organisations and constituent bodies.

## **VII. ASSEMBLY:**

Members of Assembly shall be such of the following as shall be members of a Baptist Church belonging to the Baptist Union of Victoria –

1. The Officers of the Union.
2. Past-Presidents of the Union.
3. Delegates appointed by the Churches in accordance with the By-Laws.
4. Ministers of or belonging to The Baptist Union of Victoria whose names are on the Official List referred to in the By-Laws.
5. Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer of each Agency, affiliated organization, or constituent body, other than a Church.
6. Members of the Leadership Team.
7. Members of the Advisory Board.
8. The Principal and Professors for the time being of Whitley College: The Baptist College of Victoria.
9. The Principal for the time being of the Carey Baptist Grammar School, Strathcona Baptist Girls' Grammar School, Kilvington Baptist Girls' Grammar School, and any other school or schools that may hereafter become affiliated with the Union.
10. Honorary Members who shall be persons, who have rendered important services to the denomination, provided always that the number of Honorary Members shall not at any time exceed ten (10).
11. Members of Council.

Associates of the Assembly shall be such of those persons whose names shall appear on the Special Positions List mentioned in the By-Laws who are members of a Christian church other than a Baptist church belonging to the Baptist Union of Victoria.

## **VIII. OFFICERS:**

The Officers of the Union shall be those persons appointed by Assembly as or to act as –

1. The President.
2. The Vice-President.
3. The immediate Past-President.
4. The Director of Ministries,
5. The Secretary, who shall be the representative for the purposes of the Religious Successory and Charitable Trusts Act, 1958, or of any other Act of Parliament that may be hereafter passed.
6. The Honorary Legal Advisor, all of whom shall be elected as provided in the By-Laws.

## **IX. COUNCIL:**

The Council shall consist of –

- a) The Director of Ministries
- b) The Union Secretary
- c) The Honorary Legal Advisor;
- d) Six (6) persons who are members of a constituent church of the Union  
and who have been nominated and elected by Assembly and hold office in accordance with the provisions contained in the By-Laws
- e) Council may co-opt members in accordance with the provisions contained  
in the By-Laws

Six (6) members shall form a quorum, three (3) of whom shall be from section d.

## **X. LEADERSHIP TEAM:**

The composition of the Leadership Team shall be determined by Council.

## **XI. FINANCE AND PROPERTY:**

Annual accounts certified by auditors appointed by Council shall be prepared for and made available to Assembly.

## **XII. REPORTS:**

Annual Reports shall be prepared for and made available to –

1. the Assembly, of and including
  - (a) receipts, expenditure, financial position and proceedings of each Agency and Department; and of constituents other than churches;
  - (b) information respecting matters requiring the attention of each constituent.

**XIII. BY-LAWS:**

By-Laws for giving effect to this constitution may be made, rescinded or altered by an Assembly. No proposed change in the By-Laws shall be considered unless written notice thereof shall have been given to the Secretary not less than three months prior to the holding of such Assembly.

**XIV. TRUSTS:**

The Assembly may at any time and from time to time by resolution passed by a majority of the members present and voting at an Annual Session of Assembly alter modify or amend the Statement of Trusts set out in Schedule B of the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930 provided that written notice thereof shall have been given not less than six months prior to the holding of such Assembly.

**XV. ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION:**

No change in this constitution shall be made, except by the approval of two thirds of the members present and voting at an Assembly, written notice thereof shall have been given not less than six months prior to the holding of such Assembly.