

Membership of our BUV

There are 3 categories of church membership of our BUV

A **Constituted Member Church** is a 'full' member of our BUV, and as such is committed to:

- Acceptance of the Doctrinal Basis and the Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith contained in our BUV Constitution
- The principle of congregational governance
- Believers baptism as the normative requirement for membership

A **Faith Community** is an 'associate' member of our BUV. Faith Communities are usually existing non-BUV churches who want to explore BUV membership. The Faith Community category is a temporary membership category.

A **Missional Community** is an 'associate' member of our BUV. Missional Communities are usually new church plants.

Baptist Union of Victoria **Agencies** are:



National **Agencies/Ministries** include:



Members of Union Council, BUV Leadership Team, and Boards of BUV Agencies are expected to affirm and operate in alignment with the Mission, Values, Doctrinal Basis, Distinctives and methods of governance of our Baptist Union of Victoria.

We are Victorian Baptists



Who we are & what we believe

What's important

How we mobilise together for mission

Further information on Baptist Union of Victoria missional life, administration and operation, resources, stories and contact details are available at

www.buv.com.au

Who are we?

Baptist churches are found in almost every country in the world. As part of the world-wide Christian church, Baptists form one of the largest families of faith, alongside other Trinitarian Christian traditions such as Anglicans, Methodists, Reformed, etc.

For Baptists the concept of a family is important. The church is not so much a particular place or building, but rather a family of believers, committed to Christ, to one another and to the service of God in the world.

In this Baptist family everybody is equal, for everybody has a part to play in the service of God. There is no hierarchy of bishops or priests exercising authority over their members. Equality of status, however, does not mean that all have the same role.

Most Baptist churches appoint their own Ministers - or Pastors - to have particular responsibility for mission through: preaching, teaching, discipling and pastoral care. Working alongside these Ministers or Pastors are locally elected and appointed leaders, who together with the pastor(s) form the leadership team of the local Baptist church.

Baptists are grass-roots people, with a particular emphasis on the local church. These local churches are self-governing and self-supporting, ranging in size from twenty or so members to several thousands. Although each Baptist church is an independent entity, Baptists nonetheless have always believed in associating with one another - and so churches come together in regional, national and international spheres to promote and support the fellowship of Baptists everywhere.

Our Baptist Union of Victoria is made up of over **240** churches and congregations. Churches of all sizes and in all corners of our state are **Constituent Members** of our Baptist Union as a whole, as well as our **Union Council**, **Baptist Union of Victoria Office** and other **BUV Agencies**.

In the local Baptist church, the seat of authority for the direction and management of church business is the **Church Meeting**. The key platform for governance, direction setting and priorities for our Baptist Union of Victoria is the Assembly or **Delegates' Dinner**, held twice annually. All **Constituent**

How do we mobilise for mission?

Baptist Governance

Ultimate responsibility for the governance of our Baptist Union of Victoria rests with our Assembly under Christ. At our **Delegates' Dinner**, Assembly elects members of our **Union Council** to whom authority is delegated.

Our **Union Council** is comprised of six independent, non-executive Council members as well as the Director of Ministries, Honorary Legal Advisor and Union Secretary. The Council members have a broad range of church, business, institutional and governance experience. They apply faith, judgment and accountability standards to ensure that the work of the Council and of our BUV Office results in the greatest possible impact on supporting the mission of constituent churches who are members of our Union.

Union Council expects every member, partner and employee of our BUV, to conduct themselves with the highest ethical standards, and has adopted a formal Council Charter and a set of Council Policies which detail the Council's role, powers, duties and functions. In addition to the matters required by law, the Council is responsible for:

- Setting the strategic direction for the organisation, assessing progress towards strategic objectives and approving policies to work towards those objectives;
- Recommending the appointment of the Director of Ministries to the Assembly;
- Approving the remuneration and tracking performance of the Director of Ministries;
- Approving the annual BUV Office budget;
- Considering and approving strategies and policies to ensure appropriate risk management;
- Monitoring and receiving advice on areas of operational opportunities and financial risk;
- Ensuring compliance with laws and policies; and
- Appointing sub-committees to assist in effective governance.

The **Director of Ministries** is responsible for operational management, with all powers, discretions and delegations authorised, from time to time, by the Council.

The meaning of Baptism is expressed in many ways in the Bible:

- It is a sign of the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16)
- It portrays death to the old life of sin and resurrection to the new life that comes through faith in Christ. (Romans 6:3,4)
- It is a symbol of participation in the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- It is a confession of faith in Christ as Lord, and of the desire to obey the Lord's specific command. (Romans 10:9, Matt 28:19,20)
- It is a dramatic presentation of Christ's death burial and resurrection. (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12)
- It is linked with the blessing of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 12:13)

There have often been differences over 'open' and 'closed' membership in our churches. 'Open Membership' churches teach and practise the baptism of believers but accept Christians from other traditions into membership upon profession of their faith. 'Closed Membership' churches will only accept into membership those who have been baptised as believers.

6. Churches together

While the local church is the essential part of the Baptist concept of the church, we have always emphasised the importance of fellowship between churches. Associations and Baptist Unions are the expression of this outlook, sharing in the support of missionary work, the training of pastors and leaders, social services and support for new and struggling churches.

7. Religious freedom

Baptists have been enthusiastic supporters of religious freedom. We have opposed all forms of religious coercion and affirm the rights of all people to follow their conscience on matters of faith. We seek to affirm diversity even among our own churches.

8. Other denominations

Most Baptists have always maintained fellowship and communion with other denominations and seek to find cooperative ways to work beside them.

These distinctive principles of our Baptist Union of Victoria Beliefs based on the booklet 'Who are the Baptists?' by Dr Ken Manley.

Member Churches of the Baptist Union of Victoria are entitled to appoint and send **Delegates** to our BUV **Delegates' Dinner** to represent their church. **Delegates' Dinner** is the event at which members of the Baptist Union join together to pray and discern, discuss and share, vote and decide on business, governance and other matters integral to the life and mission of our union of Baptist Churches in Victoria.

Values:

- **Faith** – Jesus as the focus of our lives and mission
- **Mission** – we are a movement advancing the Kingdom of God
- **Empowerment** – we encourage and invest in people using their gifts to advance mission
- **Respect** – everyone deserves dignity, we value diversity and respect the views of others
- **Hospitality** – we welcome anyone to journey with us
- **Freedom of conscience** – individuals & churches must follow their conscience
- **Association** – our mission is advanced better together

Vision:

Advancing the Kingdom of God

BUV Office mission:

Empowering leaders for mission

Union Council and BUV Office Goals:



What do we believe?

DOCTRINAL BASIS OF OUR BAPTIST UNION OF VICTORIA

We believe in:

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 Spirit.
3. The deity and incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity.
4. The fallen, sinful and lost estate of all people.
5. The salvation of men and women from the consequences and 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 and women, in their sanctification, and in their preservation to the heavenly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The necessity, in order to know salvation, of repentance towards God and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment of all people by the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The two ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper: 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 comes, of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What's important?

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

1. The Lordship of Christ and the authority of the scriptures

We believe that to be a Christian one must confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Jesus reveals himself through the Bible, which is the authority for us on matters of faith and practice. For this reason Baptists have not normally been required to accept formal creeds or statements of faith. The Lordship of Christ and the authority of the scriptures are sufficient guides for faith and action.

2. The church is a fellowship of believers, or a company of committed disciples

Baptists have always stressed that the church consists of believers who have been born again by God's Spirit. Baptism is an expression of the believer's repentance and faith and so is generally a requirement of membership in a Baptist church. Ultimate authority in a Baptist church resides, under God, in the church meeting, when members meet together to discern the mind of Christ on all matters related to the work of the church.

3. The priesthood of all believers

Because the church is a fellowship of believers, each member has a living relationship with Christ, therefore each member, regardless of gender or office, is equal and has a share in the ministry of the church.

4. The ministry

While everyone is equal and shares in the ministry of the church, different gifts and functions are recognized by the church. Pastors are appointed to lead the church in worship and in mission. They are seen as the equippers of the local body of believers. Ordination is the recognition by the church and the wider BUV family of these leadership gifts and responsibilities.

5. Baptism and church membership

We believe the New Testament teaches that belief is confessed through baptism. Accordingly, Baptists insist that only believers may be baptised and believe that it should also be the basis of membership in a local church. Baptists practice full immersion baptism because we believe it represents the New Testament mode and best signifies death, burial and resurrection.