

HEATHCOTE-ENGADINE BAPTIST CHURCH

CONSTITUTION

NAME

1. The name of the Church shall be the "Heathcote-Engadine Baptist Church", herein after called the Church.

DOCTRINAL BASIS

- 1.1. The Church membership shall consist of persons who have been baptised as believers by immersion into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and who maintain at least the following doctrines as revealed in Holy Scripture:
 - a. There is one God in three persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - b. God is sovereign over all His -creation,--and in revelation, redemption and final judgement.
 - c. The Holy Scriptures, that is the sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments, were given by Divine inspiration and therefore are the authoritative Word of God.
 - d. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, made full atonement for all sin.
 - e. He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and will come again in like manner.
 - f. All men are sinners rightly deserving death, but can escape that penalty since Christ's death has fully met the requirements of God's justice.
 - g. Through repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the sinner receives God's gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.
 - h. At conversion the believer receives the Holy Spirit to indwell him.
 - i. There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the saved unto eternal life and the unsaved unto eternal condemnation.

OBJECTS

2.1 The objects of the Church shall include the following:

a. **Worship**

- (1) To maintain a reverent and simple corporate worship – to administer the ordinances.
- (2) To encourage individual worship in all believers.

b. **Fellowship**

- (1) To encourage all members to be loyal to the Church and to one another in word and deed and live in Christian love and fellowship with their fellow members.
- (2) To co-operate with other evangelical Churches.

c. **Education**

To proclaim the Word of God. To teach and train all believers, building them up as loyal and effective disciples of Christ.

d. **Evangelism**

To present the gospel to all people by directly proclaiming it to all those whom we are able to reach and by supporting with our prayer, active interest and finance those who work beyond our reach.

e. **Service**

To serve the people of the community as God guides and enables us.

COVENANT

3.1 Each member will be expected to make and endeavour to honour this commitment:

"I unreservedly and with abandon commit my life and destiny to Christ, promising to give Him a practical priority in every part of my life. I shall seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

"I acknowledge that I belong to that fellowship of Christians known as Heathcote-Engadine Baptist Church, and I shall take part in the worship, work and witness of the Church as fully as God enables me."

"I wholeheartedly subscribe to the Doctrinal Basis and Objects of Heathcote-Engadine Baptist Church, which reads 1.1."

"I declare God to be Lord of the material aspects of my life: He is the owner, I am the owner. Since He is a lavish giver, I shall be lavish and cheerful in regular giving."

"I shall seek to live an exemplary Christian life in all relations with my family and my fellow man."

"I shall endeavour to bring my whole life under the Lordship of Christ."

ORDINANCES

- 4.1 **Baptism.** The Elders or, with their consent, any other believer may baptise any applicant who gives evidence of a saving faith in Christ and an understanding of the meaning of the ordinance.
- 4.2 **The Lord's Table.** The ordinance of the Lord's Supper will be observed regularly, at least twice monthly under normal circumstances. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be invited to partake.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- 5.1 In accordance with the principals of local autonomy and congregational government, the body of believers who comprise the membership of this Church has the power to manage its own affairs in a manner consistent with this Constitution.
- 5.2 The Church will be affiliated with the Baptist Union of N.S.W. accepting its responsibility to share in the work of the denomination.

MEMBERSHIP

- 6.1 All members must be persons who upon profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have been baptised by immersion and hold the doctrines set forth in this Constitution.

A person shall be accepted into the membership of the Church upon satisfying the Elders in all these matters.
- 6.2 The Elders shall be responsible for the oversight of all matters relating to the Church roll, their aim being to maintain an active interest in the Church of all members concerning their faith and practice as consistent with our doctrinal statement.

CHURCH OFFICERS

- 7.1 The Church Officers shall be the Eldership, made up of the Pastoral team members and Elders and the Church Council comprising Deacons and Ministry Leaders. The officers are empowered to transact all the business of the church when acting within the framework of Church policy

THE PASTORATE

- 8.1 The Pastor shall be a person who holds to the doctrines set forth in this Constitution and who will give prominence to the Bible as the Word of God and as the Supreme Authority in matters of faith practice and morals.
- 8.2 The Pastor shall with the other Elders be responsible for the worship services and areas of ministry that allow for opportunity of service and for the spiritual gifting and growth of all Church members. He shall be an Elder and have full voting rights in every area of Church activity.
- 8.3 When the senior pastorate falls vacant the Elders in consultation with the Church Council shall form up a pastorate committee to select a man and bring his name to the Church.
- 8.4 The pastorate committee shall initially negotiate with the Pastor such things as mode of accommodation, annual leave, long service leave, stipend, travelling and other allowances, and conditions necessary for him to fulfil his ministry through the Church to the best advantage of all parties. The Church Council is responsible to review the matters of this clause at times they feel appropriate.
- 8.5 In general the term of office of a Pastor may be terminated by three months notice in writing by either the Church or the Pastor.
- 8.6 The establishment of any paid pastoral worker position (additional to senior Pastor) must first be approved of at a Church meeting. The Elders, in consultation with the Church Council, shall appoint a committee for the choosing of and submission of a name to a Church meeting.

THE ELDERS

- 9.1 The purpose of the office of Elder is to share with our Pastors in the pastoral ministry of the Church in response to 1 Peter 5:1-3. In particular:
 - (a) To shepherd God's flock within our local Church, being both willing and able to encourage all in sound doctrine and setting an example to the Church.
 - (b) Those with the gifts of preaching and teaching share in these ministries.
- 9.2 Pre-requisites for appointment are to meet the scriptural requirements of the office as indicated in the following scripture: Titus 1:5-9 1 Timothy 3:1-7

The Elders are held responsible as the Lord leads to recognise others for eldership and to unanimously bring names forward to the Church Council and then to a Church meeting.

- 9.3 The appointment of elders shall require approval by a majority vote, of at least 85% from the Church Council and at a Church meeting.
- 9.4 The appointment of a member to serve as Elder should be for a period of 3 years unless through misconduct the member brings discredit to the office. Appointment would then be revoked by recommendation from the Church officers in consultation with the Pastor to the Church Members' meeting. Removal from office will be effected by a majority vote at a duly constituted meeting or at the request of the Elder.
- 9.5 An Elder should be re-affirmed by the Church Council at the end of a 3 year period. on a rotating basis.
The process of re-affirmation will require the Elder to re-affirm his commitment to the role of Eldership and for his name to again be submitted to the Church Council and to Church meeting for approval. Such recognition must be approved by a majority vote of at least 85%.
- 9.6 The number of Elders will be limited only by the number of God given men available within our local Church

DEACONS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

- 10.1 "Deacons and Ministry Leaders may be appointed to meet specific needs as the Church may determine from time to time."
- 10.2 Pre-requisites for appointment are that a Deacon and Ministry Leaders should meet the scriptural requirements of the office as indicated in scripture, in particular 1 Tim. 3:812.
- 10.3 The election of Deacons and Ministry Leaders shall take place at the annual Church Members' meeting or at such other times as the Church may determine.
- 10.4 The appointment may be revoked for wrong conduct by recommendation from the Church Council to the Church Members' meeting. Removal from office will be effected by a majority vote at a duly constituted meeting or at the written request of the Deacon or Ministry Leader.

CHURCH COUNCIL

- 11.1 The Church Council is to co-ordinate the activities of the Church members in achieving the Church goals. It is responsible for:
- (a) Designing effective work plans, organising and delegating to achieve resolutions passed by Church Members' meetings.
 - (b) Co-ordinating and reviewing progress against aims of each Church department.
 - (c) Co-ordinating reports.

- (d) Reporting in its own right.
 - (e) Chairing Church Members' meetings and drawing up the agenda.
 - (f) Reviewing proposals going to Church Members' meetings to ensure completeness and proper format.
- 11.2 The Deacons and Ministry Leaders shall be members elected annually by the Church for the oversight of specific ministries. The Church Council will be chaired by a Chairman who will be elected annually by the Church Council

MEETINGS

- 12.1 Church Members' Meetings may be General Meetings or Special Meetings. The Chairman shall be an Active Member nominated by the Church Council and ratified by the members.
- 12.2 **General Meeting.** The Church shall meet for Christian fellowship and for the transaction of Church business at least three times a year.
- 12.3 A **Special Meeting** may be called at the discretion of the Church Council or requested by a Notice of Motion.
- 12.4 No matter shall ordinarily be brought before a Church Members' meeting unless details of same have been intimated to the Church Council at least two Sundays preceding the Church Members' meeting.
- 12.5 Church Members' meetings will be advertised in the Church Bulletin on the two Sundays preceding the meeting. The agenda will be distributed to Church members the Sunday preceding the meeting. The agenda will serve as the official notice convening the meeting.
- 12.6 **Sacred Confidence.** All business classified confidential in Church Member's meetings, Church Council meetings, or Committee meetings shall be respected as strictly confidential and shall not be discussed with or in the hearing of those who are not members of those bodies.
- 12.7 Matters of major policy will not be discussed at a Church Members' meeting unless the item has been specifically referred to on the notice convening the meeting. Motions failing to be accepted on the agenda by the Church Council may then be brought to the Members' meeting as a notice of motion for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting.
- 12.8 Nominations for all Church Officers and others directly responsible to the Church are to be in the hands of the Chairman of the Church Council in time for members to be notified of the names of those standing for positions.

- 12.9 Officers and staff of all departments of the Church shall be Church members. Persons who are not Church members may serve as temporary helpers in any department of the Church at the discretion of the elected leader.
- 12.10 The list of nominations for each vacancy will be distributed to Church members with the agenda on the Sunday preceding the Church Members' meeting at which the election of officers will take place.
- 12.11 The term of office will commence on the day following the date of election unless otherwise determined at the time of election.
- 12.12 The quorum is the minimum number of members who may be present at a meeting before it is valid. A member who for any reason is not qualified to vote cannot be regarded as making up the quorum.
- 12.13 In the event of there not being a quorum, the meeting shall adjourn until a time fixed by the Church Council.
- 12.14 The quorum for the Church Members' meeting, except for "the election to or removal from office of the Senior Pastor" or for "Alteration to Constitution" shall be twenty-five per cent of the active membership eligible to vote calculated to the lowest number.
- 12.15 The quorum for any meeting called to discuss the Pastorate shall consist of fifty per cent of the active membership eligible to vote calculated to the lowest number.
- 12.16 The quorum for any meeting called to discuss the Constitution shall consist of one third of the active membership eligible to vote calculated to the lowest number.
- 12.17 Half the total membership of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum of the Church Council.
- 12.18 The vote of the Church shall ordinarily be taken by a show of hands but all voting in respect to appointment to or removal from office of the Pastor, Church Officers and those directly responsible to the Church will be by ballot. Ballot will also be used on such other occasions as the Church may consider advisable.
- 12.19 Members under the age of 16 years shall be encouraged to take part in discussion but shall not be entitled to exercise a vote.
- 12.20 Motions or amendments proposed at a Church Members' meeting will be (except with respect to Section 12.21) decided by a simple majority of those present and eligible to vote. Thus if there is equality of votes the motion is lost.

- 12.21 The Elders have the option to refer any matter for Church decision to an "evaluation" vote (rather than a normal decision making vote) at a Church meeting. The Elders shall consider such evaluation vote and preceding discussion and shall then come back to the Church with a recommendation and must re-submit the matter to a decision vote of the Church. The decision will be made on the basis of a simple majority or at a higher level should the Elders feel this to be in the interest of Church unity.
- 12.22 Where a position is not contested, to be elected to office the nominee must receive at least fifty per cent of the possible vote. Where a contest occurs, the required number of nominees shall be elected in order of the number of votes received. The scrutineers shall not communicate the above order or any other non essential facts to any person.

CONSTITUTION

- 13.1 No alteration shall be made to the Constitution, except by two thirds majority vote of the members present and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose.
- 13.2 Any proposed alteration or addition shall be given in writing as a motion on notice to the Chairman of the Church Council who shall distribute to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.