

**THE CONSTITUTION OF  
SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH  
AND  
A COVENANT FOR MEMBERS**

*Adopted by the membership on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1984  
Revised by the membership on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011; 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012;*

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# 1. The Church

- 1.1 The Universal Church can be defined as consisting of the entire number of the elect and is the bride, the body, and 'the fullness of Christ who fills everything in every way'. (Ephesians 1:23)
- 1.2 A Local Church can be defined as 'Those who are called by the Lord Jesus Christ out of the world to walk before and with Him and to walk together in local congregations or churches, for their mutual edification and gospel- centred public worship'.
- 1.3 This church is named Shore Baptist Church and will be referred to as 'The Church' in the Constitution.
- 1.4 The Church is a community of people who believe in the one God; The Father, The Lord Jesus Christ the Son and The Holy Spirit; and its purpose is to proclaim the good news of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to call people to faith in Him as Lord, to instruct believers in the word of God and to encourage members by regular assembly to 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. (2 Peter 3:18)
- 1.5 The Church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of The Church and the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, having been given by inspiration of God, as the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of our faith and practice and the judge of controversies.
- 1.6 The Church adopts the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, though not inspired, as an excellent and helpful expression of the teaching of the Word of God.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

### 2.1 Members

2.1.1 The Church adopts the practice of a formal church membership to:

- a. help us grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love
- b. show our intention to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer and service
- c. increase the expectations of others of members in these areas
- d. assure The Church of a commitment to Christ and His gospel through the ministry of this church.

#### 2.1.2 Membership Qualifications

Any person desiring to become a member of The Church may indicate that desire to an elder at any time. To qualify for membership in The Church a person must be:

- a. professing repentance toward God
- b. professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- c. baptised in obedience to Christ following their regeneration
- d. wholeheartedly believing in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible
- e. willing to submit to the Constitution.

### 2.1.3 Admission to Membership

At the earliest convenient time the elders will:

- a. examine each applicant as to their conversion, Christian experience and doctrinal belief
- b. notify the members of the application and give an appropriate time for objections or questions to be raised by any member concerning any applicant recommended by the elders.

Those applicants who receive the commendation of the members shall be publicly received into membership on the Lord's Day.

### 2.1.4 Responsibilities and Privileges of Membership

Members have the responsibility and privilege to:

- a. pray for The Church
- b. encourage, rebuke, teach, learn from and care for one another
- c. submit to The Church's leadership and teaching
- d. promote unity in the body
- e. financially support The Church's ministry
- f. use the spiritual gifts God has given them to build up the body however they can
- g. participate in members' meetings and vote on matters which affect the life and practice of The Church.

### 2.1.5 Associate Members

Associate membership may be granted in the following circumstances:

- a. For members, who move away from our area and who at their request, ask to be retained as associate members of The Church. Such persons are expected to retain regular communication with The Church in order to maintain their associate membership. Nevertheless, they are urged to diligently seek a church with which they can unite elsewhere.
- b. To a person who qualifies in every respect except that they subscribe to a paedobaptist view, hold that view in good conscience and fully respect The Church's doctrinal position on baptism.
- c. An associate member under clause b above shall be allowed to vote in any members' meeting on any matter with the exception of a vote on this Constitution and they shall not be able to hold the office of elder.

### 2.1.6 Termination of Membership

- a. Membership can be terminated by resignation.
- b. If at any time members find they are unwilling to submit to the Constitution, or if their conduct or belief is called into question, then that member may expect to be admonished and in certain cases removed from membership.
- c. It is the duty of The Church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

## 2.2 Officers

### 2.2.1 Summary

The Biblical offices in The Church are elders and deacons. In addition, The Church recognises the administrative position under this constitution of treasurer. All officers must be members of The Church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

## 2.3 Elders

- 2.3.1 Unless providentially hindered the elders shall be comprised of not less than two men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9.
- 2.3.2 Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of The Church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and 1 Peter 5: 1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding The Church.
- 2.3.3 Members shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, and appoint them in accordance with the constitution.
- 2.3.4 Members may submit names to the elders for their consideration, however, all nominations for elders will come from the existing eldership.
- 2.3.5 The members may appoint a man to a paid elder (pastor) position. He shall perform the duties of an elder described above and shall be recognized by The Church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching. The same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, The Church shall be given adequate opportunity to assess the gifts and spiritual life of any potential paid elder (pastor).
- 2.3.6 An elder may resign his paid position or from the eldership. If he resigns from his paid post he should, if possible, give at least 12 months' notice of such intention.
- 2.3.7 An elder may be removed from the eldership by The Church if:
  - a. he fails to fulfil his duties as defined in God's Word, or
  - b. his life and or teaching violate the Constitution.
- 2.3.8 Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 and those of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-21.
- 2.3.9 Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote by secret ballot of the members at any members' meeting.

## 2.4 Deacons

- 2.4.1 The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3: 8–13 and Acts 6: 1–7. The members shall recognize, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to The Church, and who possess particular gifts of service.
- 2.4.2 Their duties are to:
  - a. encourage generosity
  - b. distribute the gifts of The Church
  - c. be vigilant for opportunities to do good to all people in need, especially those in need in The Church.
- 2.4.3 The same method of appointment applies as for the elders.
- 2.4.4 The deacons are to meet regularly to review the discharge of their duties.

- 2.4.5 The deacons are to regularly & thoroughly acquaint the elders of their decisions and activities as deacons.
- 2.4.6 A deacon may be removed from office by The Church for:
  - a. failing to fulfil the duties of deacon as defined in God's Word , or
  - b. a life and or beliefs which violate the Constitution.
- 2.4.7 A deacon may be removed from office by the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting by secret ballot at any members' meeting.

## 2.5 Appointment of Officers

### 2.5.1 Principles

The process for appointing officers shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfil the following principles:

- a. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the appointment process.
- b. All nominees for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
- c. The appointment process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- d. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement of the whole congregation in the nomination process.
- e. Any member with reason to believe that a nominee is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders.
- f. Members intending to speak in opposition to a nominee should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting.

### 2.5.2 Procedure

- a. A nomination is presented to members by the elders at a members' meeting. The Church will also be notified.
- b. A period of at least three months will be given for the membership to pray and ask questions of the nominee (or the elders) with regard to their qualifications.
- c. Where a paid elder is being sought then the searching process will be discussed and agreed on by a majority at a members' meeting.
- d. Where the nominee is being considered as a paid elder The Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess his suitability for this office. This nomination may also include membership for him (and his wife if he is married) in The Church.
- e. Members are notified that a meeting will be held to vote on the nomination. Notice must be given at two Sunday morning services prior to the vote at a members' meeting.
- f. A secret ballot is taken with a two thirds majority of the members present and those who have submitted their votes in writing to the elders required for the nomination to succeed.
- g. The result will be immediately made known and The Church notified.

## 2.6 Treasurer

- 2.6.1 The treasurer, who shall not be an elder, deacon, or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of The Church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate.
- 2.6.2 The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of The Church at each members' meeting. This responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders.
- 2.6.3 The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to The Church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to The Church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of The Church.
- 2.6.4 The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions and of the financial condition of The Church.
- 2.6.5 The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and appointed by the members.

## 2.7 Other Leadership Positions

- 2.7.1 Although not officers of The Church, there is a need for positions of helps in The Church such as: Sunday School teachers; Youth leaders; Small group leaders; Music leaders and any other helps The Church feels should be included to build The Church.
- 2.7.2 They shall hold positions only as long as they meet the biblical qualifications for their office in the esteem of The Church. Each person must be in good standing with The Church, and have the approval of the elders.
- 2.7.3 All teaching and preaching from these leaders is expected to be consistent with the Constitution.

## 3. Meetings

### 3.1 Regular Worship Services

- 3.1.1 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as The Church determines.

### 3.2 Congregational Meetings

- 3.2.1 Congregational meetings are held annually and will usually follow the morning worship service.
- 3.2.2 They will be moderated by an elder.

### 3.3 Members' Meetings

- 3.3.1 These are held annually and when the need arises.
- 3.3.2 All members are expected to be present if at all possible at such meetings.
- 3.3.3 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ and will seek the oneness in spirit and purpose mentioned in the Scriptures.

- 3.3.4 An elder, preferably not being one who is a paid elder, will moderate this meeting. If this is not possible then the meeting will elect a moderator.
- 3.3.5 A simple majority vote of the members shall be required to make any resolution valid except those specified as requiring a two thirds majority in the constitution.  
An abstention will be counted in favour of the status quo.
- 3.3.6 Notices and agendas for members' meetings will be given by the elders at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meetings.
- 3.3.7 If haste is necessary for the discussion of a matter by the members then the elders may see fit to call an earlier meeting by taking all reasonable steps to have all the members contacted personally.

## **4. Charitable Status**

- 4.1 Any income, benefit or advantage received by The Church must be used to advance the charitable purposes of The Church and may not be used for the private pecuniary profit of any individual.
- 4.2 No member of The Church or person associated with that member if standing to benefit charitably in the normal course of The Church's activities may influence the administration or application of that benefit.
- 4.3 Any payments to a member of The Church or person associated with that member must be for goods or services that advance the charitable purpose of The Church and be reasonable and relative to the payment that would have been made between unrelated parties.
- 4.4 Should dissolution of The Church be deemed appropriate the assets of The Church shall be disposed of to Christian charities within New Zealand.
- 4.5 No alteration to the Constitution shall be permitted which will alter the charitable status of the Shore Baptist Church.

## **5. A Covenant for Members**

With the Lord's help,

I commit myself to knowing Christ and making Him known, both to my family and to those around me and to supporting those who make Him known both here and overseas.

I commit myself to the Body of Christ of which I am a part by His grace: to regularly meeting with The Church on the Lord's Day and at a time set aside for Bible study and prayer and to ensuring that some form of regular fellowship is maintained especially with other Churches subscribing to the Baptist Confession of Faith 1689.

## **6. Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting.

The revised version of this Constitution shall be made available to The Church at the earliest possible opportunity.