



West Ryde Community Church Constitution & By-Laws

Approved 18/03/2018

1. Definitions

In this Constitution, unless contrary to or inconsistent with the context:

- Adherents shall mean those persons who regularly attend meetings of the Church or its auxiliaries and who are not Members;
- Baptist Association shall mean the Baptist Union of New South Wales as provided under the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919 (as amended);
- Church Calendar shall mean the list of activities of the Church, its auxiliaries or agencies and other events approved by the Secretary acting on behalf of the Church and/or the Leadership Team;
- Church Meeting shall mean a meeting of Members as more fully described in Section 6;
- Deacons shall mean the body of Members more fully described in Section 4;
- Eldership shall mean the body of Members more fully described in Section 3;
- Members shall mean those persons accepted into membership as provided in Section 2.3;
- Pastor shall mean a person duly elected by the Church to fulfil the role more fully described in section 5;
- Secretary shall mean the person duly elected by the Church to fulfil the role more fully described in Section 4.1;
- Treasurer shall mean the person duly elected by the Church to fulfil the role more fully described in Section 4.1;
- Year shall mean the calendar period from 1 January to 31 December,

Unless contrary to or inconsistent with the context, words importing:

- the singular includes the plural and vice versa; and
- any gender includes all genders.

1.1 Name

This Church shall be known as the "West Ryde Community Church" (hereinafter referred to as "the Church").

The visual identity of the Church shall communicate our affiliation with the Baptist Association, commonly known as 'Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT'.

1.2 Affiliation

The Church is an affiliated church of the Baptist Association. Therefore, the Church pledges its support to Denominational activities.

In the event that the Church fails to function as provided in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984 (as amended), or should the Church disaffiliate with the Baptist Association, the Baptist Association shall have and may exercise all of the functions with respect to the Church's property.

1.3 Powers of the Church

The Church shall have full power to set down a Constitution and By-laws to govern the operations of the Church, to manage all its affairs in regard to the admission, transfer, exclusion or expulsion of

Members, the election of Church Officers, expenditure of Church moneys and the administration of internal discipline. Any By-laws so fixed by the Church shall appear as an addition to the Constitution.

2. Membership

2.1 Membership

The Church Membership shall consist of persons who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; accept the Statement of Beliefs as per Section 2.2 and have been duly admitted to membership as hereinafter provided. The expectation is that members accepting the Statement of Beliefs will have been baptised as believers by immersion, however allowing those who have made a public declaration of faith in another denominational background, with a conscientious objection to being baptised following this earlier declaration, to become members without actually being baptised as a believer by immersion.

2.2 Statement of Beliefs

As approved by the 1979 Assembly of Baptist Union of NSW and amended to Gender Inclusive Language following 2002 Assembly.

(a) The Nature and Unity of the Godhead

There is one God who is eternal personal Spirit. He is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness and love. God is Triune in essential being and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(b) The Deity and Humanity of Christ

Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Godhead is eternally one with God the Father of whose person and glory Jesus is the accurate expression. To become human He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, the nature of God and human nature were united in one Person; truly God and truly human.

(c) The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity is eternally one with the Father and the Son yet is sent by Them to achieve the divine purpose in the world and in the Church.

(d) The Divine Inspiration of the Scripture

The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy people of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

(e) The Sinfulness of People

People were made in the image of God and for fellowship with God. By transgression of God's command humankind fell from fellowship with God and their nature was corrupted. As a consequence all people are spiritually dead under Satan's dominion and control and subject to God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, apart from God's grace, people are helpless and hopeless.

(f) Christ's Atonement for Human Sin

In order to redeem people from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, Jesus Christ became human and died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute. By His resurrection, God's acceptance of His atoning death was demonstrated. This atonement is sufficient for the whole world, but effective only in those who received it. The sinner is justified and reconciled to God, not through any personal merit, but solely on the basis of God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ received through faith.

(g) The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God's provision of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their sinfulness, leads them to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and so brings them to spiritual birth as God's children and to fellowship in Christ. Working within the life of believers the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, witnesses to their relationship with God, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for effective service and produces graces for holy living.

(h) The Church

The Church is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. All regenerate persons are members of the universal Church of God which takes local form wherever groups of believers unite for worship, fellowship and service in accordance with scriptural principles. All believers are called to a priestly ministry in the offering of spiritual sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. God calls individuals to positions of oversight and leadership or to special ministries. The Church recognises such by ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

(i) The Baptism of Believers only by Immersion

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of a person's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In accordance with New Testament Scripture it should be administered only by total immersion which symbolises the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the remission of sins and the believer's dedication to God to live and walk in newness of life.

(j) The Communion

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ instituted by Him to be celebrated with the elements of bread and wine by believers in Christ until the end of the age. It commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord's substitutionary death. The celebration of the ordinance expresses our fellowship with and in the Lord Jesus Christ as members of the Body of which He is the Head.

(k) The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ

At the end of this age, according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in His glory to the earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return.

(l) The Resurrection of the Dead

At the end of the age, there is to be a resurrection both of the righteous and the unrighteous. After death people's bodies return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to be with Him and the unrighteous to be reserved for judgment.

(m) Rewards and Punishment in a Future State

God has appointed a day of final judgment for the world. At that time Jesus Christ will judge every person and each will receive reward or punishment according to their deeds. Those judged righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

2.3 Applications for Membership

Applications for membership must be made to the Pastors or Elders. Every applicant shall be given a copy of the Church Constitution for their consideration and acceptance.

- (a) The Pastors and Elders shall appoint two Members to interview the applicant and having received their report may either admit the person to membership or refuse or defer the application.
- (b) The Pastors and Elders may request a letter of commendation from applicants who come from another Baptist Church.

2.4 Members moving to other Baptist Churches

The Pastors and Elders may approve the writing of a letter of commendation for members moving to another Baptist Church.

2.5 Absence of Members

The Pastors and Elders shall make reasonable endeavour to contact any Member who has ceased regular attendance at worship services. In the event of 12 months absence, the Pastors and Elders would normally advise the Secretary to remove the name of the Member from the Church Roll, or to move the Member to the inactive list if an ongoing connection is desired even though attendance isn't possible for reasons such as personal mobility or health.

2.6 Discipline of Members

The Pastors and Elders shall investigate misconduct by a Member which is of a flagrant character or if there is an indication that the Member no longer accepts the Statement of Beliefs as set out in Section 2.2. If the Pastors and Elders consider it necessary, they should advise the Secretary to remove the name of the Member from the Church Roll.

2.7 Baptism

The Pastors may baptize/authorise the baptism of any believer on application.

2.8 Obligations

- (a) The ministry of this Church is supported by voluntary contributions; therefore, each Member is expected to contribute to the funds of the Church according to ability.

- (b) Each Member, as a faithful steward, according to talents and opportunities given, is expected to attend services of the Church, including prayer meetings, and generally assist in carrying on the various operations of the Church for the advancement of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (c) The Communion of the Lord's Supper shall be observed usually on the morning of the first Sunday in the month and at such other times as the Church may decide. Those who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to partake of the Supper.

3. Leadership Team

3.1 Leadership Team Membership

The Leadership Team shall consist of the Pastoral Team and the Deacons and Elders who are elected in Ministry Stream Leadership positions as appointed by the Church at the November Church Meeting. The types of Ministry Streams and number of Deacons and Elders, to be appointed each year for the following year, shall be confirmed by the Church at the August Members Meeting to enable nominations to be called, but the November Meeting can make adjustments to take into account the available nominations and giftings.

3.2 Eligibility

Deacons and Elders shall be elected from the membership of the Church in accordance with Section 6 'Meetings and Business Procedures'. Deacons and Elders shall have demonstrated spiritual maturity, godly character and gifts appropriate to leadership of the Ministry Stream to which they are being appointed. The relevant biblical material, especially 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 shall assist the Church in the appointment of Deacons and Elders.

3.3 Role

The Leadership Team shall be the coordinating body for the Church Ministry Streams, meeting at least twice between Church Members Meetings and receiving reports from members of the Pastoral Team and each Ministry Stream. The Leadership Team shall bring recommendations to the Church regarding Pastoral Appointments, changes to Ministry Streams and the number of Deacons and Elders to be elected.

3.4 Term of Service

The term of service for any one Ministry Stream is one (1) year. There is no limit on successive terms.

3.5 Nomination

All nominations for these positions will be called for at least six Sundays prior to the November Meeting, and must be given in writing to the Secretary two Sundays before the meeting. The consent of the nominees must first be obtained. No nomination shall be put forward for election unless the Nominee has satisfied all the requirements of the church's Safe Church Policy.

3.6 Filling of Vacancies

The Leadership Team may choose to appoint acting members of the Leadership Team if these positions are unfilled at the November Church Meeting, except that any person nominated for that position to the Church Meeting and not elected by the Church cannot be so appointed. These acting appointments remain valid only until the next quarterly Church Meeting but, in the interim, the appointee shall have all the responsibilities of, and exercise all the functions of, that position. Nominations to fill these positions must be given in writing to the Secretary two Sundays before the meeting at which they are to be considered.

3.7 Appointment to the Leadership Team

Nominees may be appointed to the Leadership Team if:

- (a) An election is held, normally in the November Church Meeting, to appoint the successful nominees to the Leadership Team; and
- (b) The voting is conducted by secret ballot; and
- (c) The quorum of 25% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (d) Where the number of nominations exceeds the number of vacancies, the nominees with the highest number of votes shall be elected. Where the number of nominations does not exceed the number of vacancies, then each nominee shall obtain at least 75% of the vote in order to be elected.

3.8 Dismissal from the Leadership Team

A member may be dismissed from the Leadership Team if:

- (a) A motion is raised to dismiss a member of the Leadership Team; and
- (b) The voting is conducted by secret ballot; and
- (c) The quorum of 25% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (d) The motion obtains greater than 50% of the vote.

4. Ministry Streams

4.1 Administration

The Secretary, Treasurer, Property Leader and Assistant Secretary shall be elected as Deacons responsible for this Ministry Stream. The Secretary shall ensure that adequate records of all Church and Leadership Team meetings are kept, conduct correspondence for the Church and generally deal with the business of the Church, as well as ensure that an up-to-date Membership Roll is maintained. He/she shall bring regular reports to the Leadership Team and Church Meetings. The Treasurer shall receive all moneys for the Church and make necessary payments, assisted by the Finance Committee. (see By-Laws). He/she shall keep records of all financial transactions, keeping the Leadership Team and Church informed through regular reporting.

The Property Leader shall manage Church property to meet the ministry needs of the church, in a safe and financially sound way, assisted by the Property Committee. (see By-Laws). He/she shall bring regular reports to Leadership Team and Church Meetings.

The Leadership Team, with the approval of the Church Meeting, may decide to delegate one or more of the Administration Roles to a member outside the Leadership Team providing clear representation of that role on the Leadership Team is maintained.

4.2 Pastoral Care

The Elders elected to Pastoral Care shall have responsibility to work with and encourage the Pastoral Team in their ministry of spiritual oversight and pastoral care. The Pastoral Care Team would not normally bring written reports to meetings due to the nature of the ministry. Nominations for Pastoral Care Team members will only be brought by the Leadership Team. Individual church members may recommend someone to be considered by the Leadership Team, for nomination to the Pastoral Care Team.

4.3 Other Ministry Streams

Deacons shall be elected to coordinate other ministry streams, as decided by the Church. They shall represent that stream and provide reports at Leadership Team Meetings and Church Meetings. Possible ministry streams include Worship, Children & Youth, Young Adults, Seniors, Community, Mission & Outreach and Nurture. In determining ministry streams, the guiding principle will be to express the ministry of the Church, as it is articulated in the Church Vision. The choice of streams should clearly uphold the ministry of the Word and Pastoral Care, aimed both at building up the Church and reaching out into the community.

5. Pastoral Team

5.1 Pastoral Team Membership

The Pastoral Team shall consist of one or more Pastors as decided by the Church from time to time. One position on the Pastoral Team shall be designated the Senior Pastor. Members of the Pastoral Team must subscribe to the Statement of Beliefs as listed in Section 2.2. The priority of the Pastoral Team Members is to lead the Church in the fulfillment of the Vision as determined by the Church. Individual responsibilities within the Pastoral Team will be the ultimate responsibility of the Senior Pastor, however these would normally be openly discussed with the Leadership Team. Members of the Pastoral Team shall bring reports to Leadership Team and Church Meetings. Student Pastors may be appointed by the supervising Pastor provided the associated budget is approved by the Church. Student Pastors may attend Pastoral and Leadership Team meetings as observers as part of their work experience.

5.2 Nomination and Recommendation

A Pastoral Committee shall be formed from the Leadership Team, excluding any Pastor being replaced. The Committee shall call for nominations and seek recommendations from Church Members for discussion within the Committee. The Committee may advise and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate denominational officer. The Committee should discuss potential names until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.

The committee shall communicate privately with this nominee and/or with the appropriate denominational officer, to ascertain their willingness to allow their name to be placed before the Church. The Pastoral Committee shall then notify the Secretary of the recommendation.

5.3 Terms and Conditions

All terms and conditions of a call shall be conveyed to a Pastor in writing, having previously been clarified between the parties, together with full particulars of the Church and its development. The terms of the call will generally be as recommended by the Baptist Association. Acceptance shall be made in writing to the Church indicating acceptance of the terms of the call. The tenure of office of a Pastor may be terminated by two months' notice in writing by either the Pastor or the Church. Upon attaining the age of sixty-five years, the Pastor shall retire from the Pastorate except, however, he/she may retain office after that age by annual vote of the Church.

5.4 Appointment to the Pastoral Team

The recommended nominee may be appointed to the Pastoral Team if:

- (a) A motion is raised to appoint the recommended nominee to the Pastoral Team; and
- (b) Two Sundays prior notice of this motion is given; and
- (c) The voting is conducted by secret ballot; and
- (d) The quorum of 50% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (e) The motion obtains at least 75% of the vote.

In the event that the nomination is not successful, the process shall be repeated, with only one nomination being presented to each subsequent meeting.

5.5 Dismissal from the Pastoral Team

A member may be dismissed from the Pastoral Team if:

- (a) A motion is raised to dismiss a member of the Pastoral Team; and
- (b) Two Sundays prior notice of this motion is given; and
- (c) The voting is conducted by secret ballot; and
- (d) The quorum of 50% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (e) The motion obtains greater than 50% of the vote.

6. Meetings and Business Procedure

6.1 Church Meetings

Church Meetings shall be held quarterly and normally in the months of February (Annual Meeting), May, August and November, in order to conduct the business pertaining to the running of the Church. Our understanding is that in these meetings we seek and follow the will of Almighty God, the Head of the Church.

The agenda for Church meetings should include:

- (a) Devotions and prayer;
- (b) Reports from the Pastoral Team and Ministry Stream Leaders
- (c) A report concerning the membership and movements thereof,
- (d) Spiritual program of the Church including outreach;

- (e) Financial statement to include receipts and payments with comparisons to budget for the year and balances of designated and budgeted funds and balances of bank accounts and other deposits;
- (f) Matters arising / special business;
- (g) Opportunity for the Members to bring forward items of general business for the benefit of the Church.

6.2 Notice of Church Meetings and Matters

Notice of all Church Meetings is to be given on each of the two Sundays before the meeting, unless otherwise stated in the Constitution. The notice should include all matters arising / special business (as per section 6.1(f)) to be considered at the meeting. Where the matter to be considered raises issues of confidentiality, the Leadership Team shall in their discretion be entitled to decide what information is appropriate to be released to the Church prior to the meeting. Where matters normally require two Sundays prior notice, as indicated in this Constitution, this notice may be waived if the meeting first agrees to consider the matter by a majority vote of the members eligible to vote.

Final decision in all matters of business shall rest with the Church. Church Meetings shall not exceed 2 hours duration except by a majority vote of the members eligible to vote.

6.3 Special Church Meetings

Extraordinary Special Church Meetings may be convened by the Leadership Team or by a requisition signed by 25 percent of eligible Members. Special Church Meetings shall comply with the section 6.2.

6.4 Eligibility to Vote

In all cases in this Constitution where a proportion of the membership is shown, it is intended that this shall exclude Members living at such a distance as to preclude regular attendance at worship services, members on the inactive list or members who are themselves subject to the vote.

Absentee, proxy or postal voting will not be accepted at Church Meetings.

Members under the age of 18 shall not be eligible to vote on matters pertaining to purchasing, mortgaging and/or disposing of Church property.

6.5 Quorum

One quarter of the membership eligible to vote shall be a quorum for Church Meetings except where otherwise stipulated in this Constitution. If, within 30 minutes from the time appointed, a quorum is not present, the meeting shall stand adjourned till another meeting to be arranged by the Leadership Team.

6.6 Voting

Normally the vote of the Church shall be by voice or show of hands although a secret ballot may be taken on any occasion where one fifth of the Members present at the meeting requests such a secret ballot.

6.7 Other Appointments

The Church may, at its discretion, make such appointments of individuals, Ministries, Teams and Committees as the Leadership Team determines. All appointments shall satisfy all the requirements of the church's Safe Church Policy.

6.8 Other Elected Officials

All nominations for the Finance Committee and Auditor will be called for at least six Sundays prior to the November Meeting, and must be given in writing to the Secretary two Sundays before the meeting. The consent of the nominees must first be obtained. No nomination shall be put forward for election unless the Nominee has satisfied all the requirements of the church's Safe Church Policy.

Nominees may be appointed to the offices of Finance Committee and Auditor if:

- (a) An election is held, normally in the November Church Meeting, to appoint successful nominees to the offices of Finance Committee or as Auditor; and
- (b) The voting is conducted by secret ballot; and
- (c) The quorum of 25% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (d) Where the number of nominations exceeds the number of vacancies, the nominees with the highest number of votes shall be elected. Where the number of nominations does not exceed the number of vacancies, then each nominee shall obtain at least 75% of the vote in order to be elected.

In the event of a vacancy in the Finance Committee or in the position of Auditor, the Leadership Team shall appoint a member to the vacancy and be confirmed by the Church at the following Church Meeting.

6.9 Consultation

Appropriate consultation with the Church shall be proportionate to the significance of the matter being introduced. Important matters would rarely be introduced and decided on in the same meeting.

6.10 Alterations to Church Constitution and By-laws

Alterations to the Church Constitution and/or By-Laws may be made if:

- (a) A motion is raised, in any Church Meeting, to approve alterations to the Church Constitution and/or By-Laws; and
- (b) Two Sundays prior notice of this motion is given; and
- (c) The quorum of 25% of the membership eligible to vote is present; and
- (d) The motion obtains at least 2/3 (67%) of the vote.

6.11 Audit

An auditor shall be appointed by the Church and an audit in terms of recognised Australian audit practice shall be conducted at least annually.

6.12 Confidentiality

Matters of business from Church Meetings should not be discussed outside the membership.

By-Laws and Composition of the Finance Committee

This committee is formed for the express purpose of relieving the Leadership Team of much of the detailed work involved in the financial affairs of the Church.

Responsibilities

The committee is responsible directly to the Leadership Team and its recommendations to Church Members must first be approved by the Leadership Team before being brought before the Church.

Management

- (a) The committee shall consist of five Members, namely the Treasurer, and four persons elected annually by the Church. The Treasurer shall lead the committee.
- (b) The Leadership Team shall have the power to fill any vacancy on the committee at any time during the year as required.

Powers and Objects

- (a) To deal with all financial matters relating to the Church, including authorisation and payment of all accounts within the limits of the budget
- (b) To prepare a financial budget of the Church income and expenditure for each year and present it to the November Church Meeting.
- (c) To oversee achievement of each Church budget; and provide regular communication to the Church.
- (d) To review and recommend the remuneration package to be paid to the Pastor(s) of the Church and any other paid staff.
- (e) To investigate the possibility of opening loan funds for the Church and to implement and administer same.
- (f) To give or withhold approval to any auxiliary for the holding of any special appeal for finance as circumstances dictate in conjunction with the Leadership Team.

By-Laws and Composition of the Property Committee

This committee is formed for the purpose of relieving the Leadership Team of the detailed work involved in the maintenance and general upkeep of all church owned property and related equipment.

Responsibilities

The committee is responsible directly to the Leadership Team for matters of general maintenance and upkeep of all church owned property and related equipment. Major additions and alterations are to have the approval of the Leadership Team before being brought before the Church.

Management

The property committee shall be chaired by the Property Leader who is a member of the Leadership Team and is elected annually by the Church. The Property Leader will appoint persons to specified roles as part of the Property Committee at any time as required to enable committee responsibilities to be fulfilled.

Powers and Objects

- (a) To deal with all matters relating to the general maintenance and upkeep of all Church property and related equipment including authorisation to purchase items or approve work to be done within an allocation determined annually by the Church.
- (b) To prepare a budget report each year in consultation with the finance committee for allocation of funds to matters of property and related equipment within the responsibility of the Property Committee. To present such report to the Leadership Team for approval before being brought before the Church Meeting.
- (c) As necessary, arrange special working parties for specific projects.



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