

CBC Constitution

1 Name

The name of this church shall be called “Central Baptist Church”. Hereinafter it is referred to as “the Church”.

2 Affiliation

The Church shall maintain affiliation with the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT (also legally known as Baptist Union of NSW), and through it with the Australian Baptist Ministries (also known as Baptist Union of Australia) and the Baptist World Alliance.

3 Doctrinal Basis

The Church affirms and adheres to the doctrinal basis of the Statement of Beliefs as approved by the 1979 Baptist Union of New South Wales Assembly, and amended to gender inclusive language by the 2002 Assembly. This is set out in Appendix 1 of this document.

4 Purpose

The Church exists for the purpose of proclaiming the kingdom of God, which in accordance with the scriptures, calls us to:

- Worship: Gather regularly for corporate worship;
- The Great Commission: Share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who do not know him, including cooperating with other churches in evangelism, missions at home and overseas;
- Fellowship: Love each other as Jesus Christ loves us, and the cultivation of Christian fellowship within the Church and beyond;
- Spiritual Formation and Discipleship: Grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ through the transforming work of Holy Spirit;
- Education: Educate members in the Scriptures, in Christian service and in the distinctive witness of Baptists;
- Service and Ministry: Use our gifts, abilities and possessions to serve God and others; and
- Social Service: Speak out God’s justice and righteousness in our world, and respond with compassion to those in need.

5. Government

Recognising the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church shall be governed in line with the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church, that is, by the body of believers who compose its membership, with full power to manage its own affairs.

6. Membership

The Church shall have the following two categories of membership:

- (a) Ordinary Members shall be those who have been baptised by immersion following repentance from sin upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and who subscribe to the Church's Statement of Beliefs.
- (b) Associate Members shall be those who have been baptised other than by immersion, who give evidence of repentance from sin and confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and who subscribe to the Church's Statement of Beliefs.

7. Ordinances

- (a) The Ordinance of Believer's Baptism may be administered by a Pastor of the Church at his/her discretion or by any other person invited by the Pastoral Team.
- (b) The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed by each congregation at least once a month and at such other times as may be considered desirable. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to join in this observance.

8. Church Leadership and Governance

Governance is how a leadership group goes about exercising its delegated authority in the life of a church. Congregational governance includes two significant leadership sub-systems, namely, the Leadership Council and the Pastoral Team.

a) Leadership Council

The Leadership Council shall consist of members who demonstrate godly character, chemistry, competency and capacity, with a diversity in age and gender and congregations. The Leadership Council focuses on the overall direction of the Church and strategic matters rather than operational detail, with three overarching responsibilities:

1. Fiduciary responsibilities
 - Called to be faithful stewards for the resources that are entrusted to us to ensure resources are used correctly, effectively, and efficiently;
 - Ensuring the Church's activities remain focused on the Church's purposes;
 - Overseeing budgets, audits, investments, risk management, legal compliance, safe church, and property;
 - Church membership; and
 - Overseeing the work of the Senior Pastor.
2. Strategic responsibilities
 - Determining the vision and setting the overall direction of the Church;
 - Strategic priorities – planning around that vision; and

- Focus on creative adjustments to changing circumstances and trends.
- 3. Generative responsibilities
 - Crisis management - to resolve critical matters in a godly and timely manner; and
 - Problem-solving for major matters and events salient to the Church.

b) Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team is made up of pastors whose responsibilities may include oversight of a particular congregation part-time while also have responsibilities for some specialised area of ministry across the life of the Church. The pastors' responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the Church's ministry and missional focus;
- Providing spiritual leadership and guidance;
- Leading and managing Church activities and Church-wide events, aligned with the Church's vision and strategic priorities;
- Establishing and overseeing the Church-wide ministry teams; and
- Equipping others for ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

c) Church Organisation

The Leadership as outlined in Section 8 shall be accountable to the Church membership.

All ministries within the Church shall be subject to this Constitution and the direction of the Church through the Leadership Council.

9. Church Meetings

The Church community shall hold Church Meetings and Church Forums each year.

- a) Church Meetings shall be called by the Leadership Council, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Church Meetings shall have, but not limited to, the following functions:
 - Present and approve annual financial report and budget;
 - Appoint Pastors;
 - Appoint Leadership Council members and Nomination Committee;
 - Approve changes to Constitution and Church Governance Operating Procedures; and
 - Approve major property decisions.
- b) Church Forums shall be called by the Leadership Council. The non-decision-making Church Forums shall have, but not limited to, the following functions:
 - Exploring issues, problem solving, and discernment process;
 - Vision casting; and
 - Story telling.

10. Church Property

Under the provision of the Saint Andrew's Cathedral Site Agreements and Central Baptist Church Act 1936, the Trustee of the property situated at 619 - 625 George Street, Sydney is the Baptist Union of NSW. The Trustee of all other property owned by the Church shall be the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust.

Baptist Union of NSW holds 20.8% ownership of the Church building on 619 George Street, Sydney.

The assets and income of the Church shall be applied solely in the furtherance of its charitable purpose and the advancement of religion and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the Members except as bona fide reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the Church.

11. Church Dissolution

In the event of the Church being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall:

- (a) In the case of property held in trust pursuant to the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust Act 1984, be dealt with in accordance with that Act and in particular Section 29 which said trusts provide that no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Church.
- (b) In all other cases be transferred to The Association of Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT or to any other organisation with similar purposes and which has rules prohibiting the distribution of its assets and income to its members and which is exempt from income tax.

12. Church Governance Operating Procedures

All matters relating to the function of the Church and its ministries are subject to the Governance Operating Procedures of the Church, as determined by the members from time to time.

The Governance Operating Procedures are subordinate to this Constitution. In the event that the wording of the Governance Operating Procedures is inconsistent with this Constitution, the latter shall prevail.

13. Alterations to the Constitution

Review of the Constitution shall be conducted every 3 years, initiated by the Leadership Council and with the assistance of a special taskforce.

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution of the Church unless agreed to by a three-quarters majority of the members eligible to vote present at a meeting specially convened for the purpose. The quorum for such a meeting shall be 33.3% of the membership eligible to vote. The proposed alteration shall be made available to each Church member two months before the said meeting.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Statement of Beliefs

Version Control

Adopted: 1st December, 1991.

Amended:

- 24th March 24, 1996.
- 4th March, 2001.
- 26th February, 2017.
- 2nd April, 2023.

Appendix 1: Statement of Beliefs

As approved by the 1979 Baptist Union of New South Wales Assembly

(Amended to gender inclusive language by 2002 Assembly)

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. The Holy Spirit

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

4. The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

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.

5. 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.

6. 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 receive 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 of themselves to God to live and walk in newness of life.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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 the judgment.

13. Rewards and Punishments in a Future State

God has appointed a day of final judgement 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.