

Introduction

Welcome to the membership of our Church and to this Membership Manual. We believe that membership is a dynamic relationship where we agree to work together in building the kingdom of God not a formal process of enforcing church government.

We as a Church leadership want to do all we can to help you become part of the exciting and diverse ministries of our church. To facilitate this process this manual will strive to inform you of key aspects of the Church in general and GyMEA Baptist Church specifically. Firstly there is a discussion on the Biblical picture of the Church, then the development and distinctions of the Baptist Denomination. The Manual then moves to GyMEA Baptist Church specifically; our history, our Vision, our church government, key leadership positions and expectations of membership.

I trust you will become as committed to our Vision and excited about our future as our staff and leadership are. Membership is a great opportunity to commit to working together with our church to build the Kingdom of God.

Marc Rader
Senior Pastor



“GYMEA BAPTIST EXISTS TO SEE
PEOPLE EMPOWERED TO LOVE GOD
AND ENGAGE THE WORLD”

What is the Church?

Theologically

The major part of this manual is concerned with what Gymea Baptist Church does but it is important to briefly examine what we believe the Church, as a theological and biblical idea, to be which in turn influences how we function as a church.

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that our relationship with God is not merely as individuals. Throughout the Bible we see God saving individuals in community. Furthermore, we were created for relationship with one another. The Bible is equally clear that sin has fractured our relationships with God and others. Through faith in the sacrificial work of Christ we believe that our relationship with God and with others has been renewed. The community aspect of Christian experience is what we call the church. However, we believe that the church is more than a social club for Christians. It was established by Jesus as an ongoing witness and testimony of the change that the Holy Spirit has made in our lives. This change is so strong that even barriers of gender, nationality and social status are wiped away (Galatians 3:28). It is also the vehicle for the ongoing ministry of reconciliation which was given to us by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

“ ... ESTABLISHED BY JESUS AS AN ONGOING WITNESS AND TESTIMONY OF THE CHANGE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE IN OUR LIVES. ”

Three images of the church found in Paul's writings imply the qualities of a church. The three images are interlocked: the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD- 2 Corinthians 6:16

This picture of the church emphasises God's initiative in choosing us. This is consistent with God's election of Israel whom he did not select out of any number of already existing nations but which he created for himself. This picture carries several implications with it:

- i) We are in relationship with God, chosen by him.
- ii) God cares and provides for his people.
- iii) There is an expectation of loyalty and holiness (which means to be separated from sin and to God) by his people to their God.



THE BODY OF CHRIST - Ephesians 1:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

This is Paul's most extended image of the church and therefore has plenty of rich and meaningful implications for us:

- i) The church is now, as Christ's body was during his earthly ministry, the centre of Christ's activity in the world. We are how he reaches the world.
- ii) As believers we are connected to Christ. He is the head (Colossians 1:18) and controls the whole church.
- iii) We are connected to each other. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian and we need each other's gifts and abilities to be able to do the whole of Christ's work. This connection is not just in the local church but throughout the world; the body is universal.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

The Holy Spirit brought the Christian church into being on that first Christian Pentecost recorded for us in the early chapters of Acts and continues to work within it to the glory of God. In the Spirit is life and this life will impart his qualities to the church - the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit brings power to the church, equips those within the church with the necessary gifts to accomplish the work and makes the church holy and pure for the day of Christ.



What is a Baptist Church?

BAPTIST HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVES

Perhaps the best way to introduce what makes Baptist churches distinct is to look briefly at their history since it is out of a historical context that the distinctives came about. The Baptist denomination was birthed in the aftermath of what is known as the Protestant Reformation that began a whole new era in Christianity. The primary concern of the reformers was to reform the doctrine and practice

“ THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION WAS BIRTHED IN THE AFTERMARTH OF WHAT IS KNOWN AS THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION ”

of the church. Since there was a wide conviction of how far the reformation should go there were any number of variations from the very Catholic form of the Church of England to the starkness of the Swiss Reformed Church and everything in between. The story of the Baptists is tied in with the Puritans who felt that the reformation in England hadn't gone nearly far enough and sought to further purify the church. A more radical group within the Puritan movement, the Separatists, felt that reform from within was impossible and sought to create a new church, an action that led to their persecution.

Though the Baptist movement has no giant founder such as a Martin Luther or John Calvin, many consider John Smyth to be the first Baptist (the most famous Baptist is probably John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress while in prison for preaching without a licence). Smyth, an ordained Anglican priest, was sympathetic to the Puritan movement before casting his lot with the Separatists. He soon became the leader of a group of ministers who were in trouble for their Puritan beliefs. When James VI of Scotland became James I of England he resolved to make the Puritans conform to the Church of England. Smyth and his little flock fled to Holland where they continued to study the Bible and were finally led to the belief that adult baptism was the true biblical model. They acted upon this discovery and re-baptised themselves in late 1609. It is at this time that Thomas Helwys arrived on the scene. It was Helwys who would do as much as any other to mould Baptist beliefs. He was also one of the first to die for his beliefs when he died in prison in 1616 after returning to England. The congregation he left was known as the first General Baptist Church.

Though the first Baptists held many of the common beliefs of other Reformers, such as the primary authority of the Bible for determining belief and practice, the priesthood of all believers (to which we will refer again later), and the importance of preaching, they also held a number of beliefs that made them distinct. Apart from their belief in adult baptism by immersion, in which they differed from the main reformers, the doctrine that got them into the most trouble was their assertion of total religious liberty through the total separation of Church and State. Since the Christian emperor Constantine in the fourth century Church and State had been inseparably entwined and the separation which the Baptists advocated was considered as treason. Other doctrinal distinctives were the need for the individual to respond in faith to the work of God in order to be saved (not just become part of the church) and the general atonement of Christ (in which Jesus died for all humanity not just the elect).



One final distinctive that gave the Baptist movement its own unique flavour was their belief in local church autonomy; each local church was free to use and develop its own style, language, and ministries. Autonomy soon led to Baptist churches that held to the particular atonement of Christ (in which Jesus died for the elect only) and to debates over open or closed communion (who can partake of communion - all who profess to believe or only accredited members).

Understanding the historical birth of the Baptist church is helpful when we come to look at Baptist distinctives that we still hold today. Today when you enter a Baptist church in Australia you will find many of the same distinctives:

1) The priesthood of all believers

We believe that all are equal before God; equally sinful, equally saved. This equality denies that there is any spiritual difference between the priesthood and the laity. All Christians are filled with the Spirit, all Christians are called to live lives of holiness, all Christians are ministers. There may be different levels of Christian maturity but there are not different levels of Christians.

This understanding influences the organisational form of Baptist Churches. All Baptist Churches are governed congregationally; in other words, since we stand as equals before God each of us has a responsibility to listen to God for his direction in our lives and in our church.

It is the belief in the equality of all believers before God that also guides how the church ministries are run. Individuals who are gifted by God to

“ WE BELIEVE THAT ALL ARE EQUAL BEFORE GOD; EQUALLY SINFUL, EQUALLY ”

provide leadership to his church are empowered by the members of the local church to do so. This is equally true of pastors as it is of elders, deacons, and any other position of leadership. How the roles of pastor, elder and deacon work here at Gynea will be discussed more fully below.

2) Individual faith

We believe that each individual must make a faith decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

3) Believer's baptism

We believe that each and every Christian is commanded by our Lord to make a public profession of faith in the act of baptism by immersion. This is called believer's baptism. Therefore, children, whose parents are committed to raising them in a Christian manner, are not baptised but dedicated to the Lord in the hope and belief that they will one day make an individual profession of faith and be baptised.

4) Open communion

We believe that Jesus instituted a way of remembering him in the sharing together of the bread and wine; symbols of his sacrifice for us. We encourage all who profess Jesus as their Lord and Saviour to share in the Lord's Supper regardless of church background.



5) The authority of the Bible

We believe that the Bible is God's inspired and authoritative word to his people. By inspired we mean that the words that the biblical authors wrote were the words of God and as such can be considered authoritative. The Bible has the right, therefore, to command how we are to live and act in relationship to God and others.

6) Local autonomy

We believe that each Baptist Church is a celebration of diversity and may differ from other Baptist churches in style, language, and ministry. Each church holds its own constitution, hires its own pastors and sets its own budget and direction. These differences, as long as they are within biblical guidelines, are to be appreciated and enjoyed.

Union Connection

Since local church autonomy is a Baptist distinctive it might seem odd at first that there is a denominational headquarters. The Baptist Union of NSW provides several services for the combined Baptist churches. Individual churches choose to work together with the Union in order to train leaders, to support missionaries "Global Interaction", and local ministries such as HopeStreet. Union connections also give the church one unanimous voice in local and state government. It is through the Union that we are connected with Baptists worldwide through the Baptist World Alliance.

The direction and activity of the Union is largely determined at the annual assembly meetings that are attended by delegates from each Baptist church.



GyMEA Baptist Church History

GyMEA Baptist Church was started as a small Sunday School in 1940, by John and Babs Turner in their Hotham Road home. The church affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW in 1949.

To provide for the future an ex-army wartime radar hut was acquired and re-erected on the adjoining land. John and Babs then gifted this debt free to the Baptist Union for the future use of the Baptists of GyMEA.

Titled the Hotham Road Baptist Church, student pastors were provided for a number of years to support the efforts of John as Secretary and the committed men who formed the diaconate.

In tune with the social structure of the community at the time, emphasis was placed on youth activities. A large hall was constructed and further land was acquired for future expansion.

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To conform more with its geographical location, the name of the church was changed in March 1956 and it became known as GyMEA Baptist Church.

After a number of student Pastors, in 1957 Alan Jennaway was appointed as the first full-time Pastor. This was followed in 1960 with the appointment of Rev. Keith Wilson. During his term, the current church building was erected and opened in 1962. In 1967 the Christian Education Centre was completed and was opened, together with the Pre-School.

John Turner a deeply committed and godly man, was the driving force behind all the activities of the work, supported by a very devoted Diaconate up until August 1963. Following all those years of faithful and fruitful service, John and Babs retired from all their involvement and moved to the Blue Mountains.

Other pastors followed, each bringing to the church their special attributes and leading the church in an ever-expanding life.

In 1969 Rev. Kevin Smith was appointed as Pastor and during his term through to 1982, emphasis was placed on youth. In 1975, Rev. John Cox was appointed as Youth Minister followed by Rev. Brian Ward (1977), Rev. Ivor Lewis (1979), Pastor David Waters (1986) and Pastor Neil Dawson (1990). Since 1990 Youth Coordinators Brett Tinker 1996 and Marc Rader 1997 have been appointed.

In 1982, Rev. Kevin Smith accepted a call to another church and Rev. Ivor Lewis, in addition to his role as Youth Pastor, undertook the task of leading the church for the next three years. At this time



Ray Lee House was opened for Senior Care. Rev. Ross Clifford was appointed in 1985 and Ivor Lewis appointed as Minister for Pastoral Care until resigning in 1990.

In 1991, Turner Lodge Retirement Village was opened. With Ross Clifford departing in 1991 to take up a lecturing position in the Baptist Theological College, a search for a new pastor resulted in the appointment of Rev. John Robinson, who had been General Superintendent of the Baptist Union of NSW.

Rev. Karl Faase was then introduced as Associate Pastor in 1994 and on John's retirement in 1996, was appointed as Senior Pastor.

In the middle of 1990's a new community service was started through Gymea Baptist Church. Tea Gardens Cottage first began as a combination of adult education opportunities and a counselling service started by Anthony Sell. A number of years later this changed its name to Southern Community Welfare and grew into a significant counselling and community development service with multiple staff and a wide variety of services.

During 1996 the church completed some building changes with the addition of a new entrance, replacing the pews with stackable chairs and significant changes to the courtyard. Over the past several years further discussion ensued about the future shape and location of the church building. There was a general agreement that the buildings complete in the 1960's would not be adequate for future development. In 2007 the church decided to stay at our present site and develop a new car park on Hotham Road and new auditorium and extensive renovations to the Tea Gardens property. The car park was finished early in 2009 and at the time of writing the auditorium is due to be completed late in 2009.

During 2007 and 2008 the church reassessed its vision statement and direction document to clarify the churches focus for the future. The end result was the launch of a new Vision and ministry document as well as new visual identity for the church in November 2008

Karl has also built a team of dedicated staff around him to head up and lead the various ministries of the church. The names of our current staff members can be found on our website: www.gymeaqbaptist.org.au

Southern Community Welfare

Background

In 1995 GBC added to its community ministries a counseling program. Anthony Sell, a graduate from Tabor College was given an opportunity to develop a service that would offer counseling at a reduced fee making it more accessible to ordinary local residents. Starting at two days a week Anthony's books soon become full and a second part time counselor Jeanene Ecob was approached to join the service. Within a number of years Anthony's position had grown out to a full time position. Funding

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needs were now growing beyond the churches capacity alone and a greater vision had emerged. Southern Community Welfare Inc. (SCW) was established.

In 2006 Jeanene Ecob became the director of SCW following Anthony Sell's departure to take up a position with African Enterprises.

SCW runs various community services and has a number of full time and part time counselors to meet the needs of those in the Christian and wider community

Vision

"to be a unique and innovative provider of professional care for people in need in Southern Sydney".

The key changes were that this service was going to target issues in the community that were under resourced by larger government and non-government agencies. Innovation was a core value and the approach taken to address these gaps in services may not always be conventional. As the central value of affordable accessible services remained, extensive fund raising also began in order to build multiple funding streams to resource the various services being developed.

The motivation

The reason for this enterprise and its relationship with GBC is best understood in light of Isaiah 58 verse 10 "and if you spend yourself in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like a noontday". As we stand with those in need in our world who face circumstances beyond their own capacity to resolve we see the power of the gospel come in the most miraculous ways. The restoration of the human spirit is central to God's design for the church and SCW is simply an extension of that wondrous truth.



Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is our attempt to listen to God and understand what God would have us be in the future.

In 2008 the church launched its new vision and ministry document in an effort to express its purpose and existence.

GyMEA Baptist Church exists to see people empowered to love God and engage the world.

One way of expressing this is by the following diagram:



How does this work out in practise?

Love God

Loving God is at the heart of all we do. We seek to be an active church in response to the love that God has shown us through Jesus.

We therefore seek to obey the command of Jesus expressed through His words in Mark 12:30-31

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
2. You shall love your neighbour as yourself.



Empowered

The ministries of Gymea Baptist Church seek to empower people to grow in their relationship with Jesus and become more like Him. Under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we aim to provide a supportive and formative environment where people can be empowered by godly faith.

This process of “empowering” people we believe has four distinct areas of ministry:-

1. Connect with a loving community
2. Experience God in worship
3. Grow in the knowledge of God and His Word
4. Serve others through spiritual gifts and resources

Engage

As well as the process of being empowered and growing in maturity in Christ we desire for people within our community to be engaged in the world. Christian faith and community is not an end in itself but rather drawing us to be part of God’s work in this world and in other’s lives.

We are seeking to enable people in our Christian community to engage the world in the mission given to the church. The two expressions of this mission are:

1. Share Jesus through our relationships
2. Act for justice locally and globally

These are not mutually exclusive. They are like two wings of one bird, both essential for the bird to fly. In the same way both of these aspects of mission are essential for the church to achieve its mission.



Membership

Why Membership?

Within the Baptist Church is a belief that all who are in Christ are equally equipped to serve the body of Christ and that there is no spiritual distinction between the clergy and the laity. This one premise has several implications:

1. *We are democratic*

Each believer has the Holy Spirit at work in his/her life and is able to hear the word of God each day. Therefore we have established a system of government that makes this a practical outworking of our theology. We are not democratic because of political reasons but theological.

“... THERE IS NO SPIRITUAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CLERGY AND THE LAITY.”

2. *Constitutional government*

Each local Baptist church has its own constitution that determines how the church has decided to be run (organisation, procedures). The constitution can be changed by a majority vote of a membership quorum. (A copy of our local constitution is included in this manual – see Appendix 1).

Membership is set aside for those who are believers and who have undergone believer's baptism by immersion and who wish to be committed to one local church.

How do you become a Member?

There are two primary ways in which one could become a member of Gynea Baptist Church. Both assume that believer's baptism has or will imminently take place. The first is membership transfer where a person from another Baptist church merely wishes to transfer their membership from one Baptist church to another Baptist church. This process is outlined in the constitution section 5.2.c.

The second is for those who have never been a member of another Baptist church. This is because they have only recently made a decision to follow Christ in their life and are thus new Christians, or have been part of a church from a different denomination. This process is outlined in the Constitution section 5.2b and the Guidance Notes to clause 5:2 – Admission to Membership (Appendix 1).

People interested in membership of our church, whether new members or transferring their membership from another Baptist Church, need to let the Church Secretary or Pastoral Team know. The person wanting to become a member of our church will be interviewed by two current members of the church. The member's recommendation is given to the diaconate, in association with a letter of transfer for those transferring membership from another Baptist church, who vote to accept the



candidate into membership. The new members of our church are then publicly welcomed in a service shortly afterwards and their name is added to the roll. This is found in section 5.2.a in the constitution.

The membership roll contains two classes of members: active and inactive. Inactive members are those who may have moved to another area and are attending another church but have not cancelled or transferred their membership.

Responsibilities and Expectations of Members

“ AS WITH MEMBERSHIP OF ANY ORGANISATION THERE ARE RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS ”

As with membership of any organisation there are responsibilities and expectations. The church is no different. Members are, due again to the

theological underpinning of membership, to take a responsible part in the decision making of the church. This has two primary expressions each year at our Annual General Meetings (AGM 1 & 2) held in December and February respectively and other church meetings. Constitutionally we need a 10% quorum to constitute a meeting and a 30% quorum for votes regarding Pastoral Team members. As the priesthood of believers we need to be active in seeking the Lord's will and direction for our church and meetings of the membership allow this to take place. Meetings are open to all who attend the church but only members are able to vote. It is at AGM1 that our budget and goals for the year are presented, discussed and if agreed, passed by the quorum.

There are five primary expectations of membership.

1. *Attendance at Worship Services* - Acts 2:42-47; Leviticus 23; Hebrews 10:25.

It is expected that members would consistently attend our church and be committed to one of our services.

2. *Giving* - 2 Corinthians 8:2-5; 9:6-7; Exodus 25:2

It is expected that members would support the church through their giving. The church runs on the voluntary donations of its members. We support tithing as a biblical option but want members to give as they feel led by God to do so and in the proportion that they settle upon.

3. *Small groups* - Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 1:22

It is hoped expected that members would seek to grow in their relationship with God and with others in the context of a small group. The large corporate gatherings on Sundays are important and yet it is also easy to never be truly known or cared for in the broad context. Intimate relationships are healthy and small groups provide the environment that allows personal development and growth.



4. *Ministry involvement* - Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27

It is expected that members actively seek to be involved in the ministry of the church by using their God-given gifts and abilities for the good of the church body. This may mean getting involved in an existing ministry or starting, with the support of the Pastoral Team, a new ministry.

5. *Take membership seriously* - Hebrews 10:25; Galatians 5:13; Acts 2:42-47

It is expected that members would take seriously their commitment to our church by attending church meetings and being available to be at church functions and events. This also includes praying for the direction of the church, for those involved in the ministry and the general support of the church activities.

Leadership

The church as a body delegates the authority under God to certain individuals to lead them. This is the basis of pastoral leadership. Pastoral leadership does not end with paid staff members but also includes the elders and deacons. We will deal with each of these positions below.

Staff

Our current staff structure includes various levels each with their own specific characteristics.

Senior staff

Senior staff members are voted into (or out of) their position by 85% of a 30% quorum of the membership. Together with the elders and deacons they make up the Church Leadership Team. They are usually full-time and their employment is open-ended. When seeking to employ pastoral staff, the church nominates a Pastoral Selection Committee made up of members of the diaconate and elders. The Committee then brings the name of candidates to the church membership.

Ministry staff

Ministry staff are voted into their position by a simple majority at a normal members' meeting. Their job descriptions are very specific and their contracts are for a specific period.

Support staff

These positions require no formal voting procedure. Support staff have no direct ministry connection but serve all ministries with administrative support.

Office Volunteer staff

These positions are part-time and help out in various aspects of office work and can include bulletin copying, book keeping and mail outs.

◆ *Interns*

Interns are a relatively new program at Gynea and their definition is very specific. They minister in a specific ministry area under a specific staff member for 12-18 months. They must be completing



some form of theological training while they are with the church. They help to free up the ministry staff thus allowing the ministry area to have an even greater impact within the church.

Elders

Elders are part of the Church Leadership Team and are concerned with the spiritual welfare of the church, with issues of vision and contention. The requirements of eldership are contained in 1 Timothy 3 and are used to elect those who meet such criteria to this office. They require 85% majority of a 30% quorum and serve for five years.

Deacons

Deacons are individuals who are dedicated to serve the church in more specific ways than the eldership. Each deacon works in one or two specific areas of ministry as well as being part of the Church Leadership Team providing vision and planning for the church. They meet every month to discuss church business.

The process of being appointed to the diaconate is unique to our church. Nominations are received 12 weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting (1). The Pastoral Selection Committee reviews the nominations and only approaches those who they feel have the necessary leadership skills and gifts as well as Christian maturity. Those who are approached and are willing to go further are then interviewed by the Pastoral Selection Committee. Following the interview those who are selected are nominated to the present diaconate who confirm the nominations which then go to the church meeting. At the meeting (AGM 1) the members present vote on the nominations, which require a simple majority. The deacon's term is for two years. The church treasurer and church secretary are nominated and voted in through the same process.

“ ... ALL WHO ARE IN CHRIST ARE
EQUALLY EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE
BODY OF CHRIST. ”



Appendix

GyMEA Baptist Church Constitution

(as amended 5 December 2007)

1. THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

The name of the Church shall be "GyMEA Baptist Church" ("the Church").

2. THE BASIS OF THE CHURCH

The Church shall consist of baptised believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been duly admitted to membership. Such persons shall hold as an essential part of their religious belief the following doctrines:

- a) That there is one God in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- b) That all people are sinners in need of salvation.
- c) That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.
- d) That Jesus Christ by His death upon the cross made full atonement for all sin. This atonement is the only ground of salvation and is sufficient for all people.
- e) That the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, regenerates and sanctifies the believer.
- f) That the Holy Scriptures, namely the 66 books of the Bible, were given by Divine inspiration, and as such are the Word of God and the ultimate authority in all aspects of faith and practice.
- g) That justification is by faith in Christ alone.
- h) That there will be a bodily resurrection of the dead, both of the saved unto life, and the unsaved unto condemnation.
- i) That the Lord Jesus Christ will return bodily from heaven in power to judge sin and rule the world.
- j) That Christian baptism practised by the Church is by immersion in water for believers only.



3. OBJECTS OF THE CHURCH

The aims and objects of the Church shall be as follows:

- a) To proclaim the gospel by which all people may be saved and to teach the truths of the Word of God so that they shall grow in the Christian life and be equipped for Christian service.
- b) To proclaim the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of its members and to seek to fulfil His programme in the life of the community, the nation and the wider world beyond, through vigorous evangelistic and missionary enterprises.
- c) To conduct services for the worship of God as the Church is led by the Spirit of God.
- d) To observe the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and believer's baptism.
- e) To meet regularly for united prayer, the reading of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Word of God.
- f) To mutually comfort, strengthen, instruct, help, exhort and pray for one another.
- g) To demonstrate the love of Christ through practical service in the Church and the community.
- h) To co-operate with local churches for the extension of the Kingdom of God.
- i) To affiliate with and actively support the various departments of the Baptist Union of NSW.

4. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

- a) The ordinances of the Church shall be believer's baptism and the Lord's supper.
- b) A member of the Senior Staff Team or with the consent of the Senior Staff Team any person approved by the Church Leadership Team may baptise any person who gives clear evidence of saving faith in Christ.
- c) All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to partake in the Lord's supper whenever it is held.

5. MEMBERSHIP

1. Responsibilities of Members

It shall be the responsibility of each member to live in a manner which conforms to the precepts contained in the Scriptures, and in particular:



- a) To support the regular worship services of the Church.
- b) To attend the Lord's supper regularly.
- c) To participate in Christian service, giving loyal support to all organisations and activities conducted by the Church.
- d) To fully support the financial objectives of the Church through regular and sacrificial giving.
- e) To be involved in the prayer and Bible Study programme of the Church.
- f) To attend Church meetings.
- g) To keep confidential the business matters of the Church.

2. Admission to Membership

- a) Application for membership shall be made through the Secretary of the Church. Applicants will be interviewed by two (2) members appointed by the Senior Staff Team for the purpose of ascertaining the applicant's fitness for membership including a commitment to the basis, objects and ordinances of the Church as stated in this Constitution and to answer and explain any questions relating to the Constitution and policy. The applicant will be a baptised believer who has made a public declaration of their faith in Jesus Christ. The Senior Staff Team will recommend and with the Church Leadership Team meeting jointly or separately will decide by resolution on the application for membership. Membership shall date from such meeting (immediately following which the applicant shall be advised) and public recognition will be given at the next suitable service.
- b) In the case that an applicant has not been baptised by immersion for a good and acceptable reason however have made a meaningful and public declaration of their commitment to and faith in Jesus Christ, the applicant may still be recommended for membership. The Church will decide from time to time what amounts to a good and acceptable reason as described in the guidance note.
- c) In cases of transfer from another Baptist Church the Secretary shall seek a letter of transfer from the sister Church. If possible this letter will be sought in time to be read at the Church Leadership Team meeting at which the application is considered. If such letter is not then available the Church Leadership Team may, if it thinks fit, proceed without it.

Guidance Notes to clause 5.2- Admission to Membership (Appendix 1.)



3. Termination of Membership

Membership May Be Terminated:

a) By transfer to another Baptist Church. If a member in good standing wishes to join another Baptist Church such Church, upon request, shall be granted a letter of transfer and the member's name removed from the Roll of Members. The Secretary shall be empowered to grant such letters and report such grantings to the next Church meeting.

Guidance notes to clause 5.3a – Termination of Membership (Appendix 2.)

b) By personal request for removal of name. If a member feels unable or unwilling to agree with the doctrine or policy of the Church, or for other reasons, the member may request the removal of his/her name from the Roll of Members. Such request will be submitted to the Church Leadership Team through the Secretary and appropriate action taken.

c) By resolution of the Church. Should any member become an offence to the Church by reason of unchristian conduct the Church may by resolution remove the member's name from the Roll of Members. This shall only be done after the Senior Staff Team has sought to bring that person to repentance and loyalty to Christ.

d) By death of the member. Should any member die their name shall be removed from the Roll of Members from the date of death and a report shall be made to the next Church meeting.

4. Right of Appeal

Any person whose membership has been terminated may appeal through the Secretary to the Church Leadership Team which may recommend to a meeting of the Church that such termination be reconsidered.

5. Revision of Roll of Members

The Church Leadership Team shall review the Roll of Members at least once in every successive period of twelve (12) months and shall submit its recommendations to the Church which may, pursuant to such recommendation remove the name of one or more members from the Roll of Members or place such name or names on a list of non-active members. Members so removed or placed on the list of non-active members shall be notified in writing by the Secretary within two (2) weeks. Members placed on the list of non-active members shall simultaneously be advised of their loss of voting rights. Non-active members may apply to the Secretary for re-admission to the Roll of Members. Applicants will be interviewed as designated by the Senior Staff Team for the purpose of



ascertaining the applicant's fitness for re-admission. The Senior Staff Team will recommend, and with the Church Leadership Team meeting jointly or separately, decide by resolution on the application for re-admission to the Roll of Members.

6. GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

The government of the Church, in line with the fundamental Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local fellowship, shall be vested in the body of believers who compose its membership. The Church shall have full power to manage its own affairs as herein provided.

MINISTRIES

1. PASTORS SENIOR STAFF AND ELDERS

a) APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF PASTORS, SENIOR STAFF AND ELDERS

Pastors, Senior Staff and Elders shall be appointed to office, and may be removed from office, by resolution of the Church passed by a majority of not less than four-fifths (4/5) of the members present and eligible to vote at a meeting called exclusively for the purpose of considering such appointment or removal, of which not less than fourteen (14) days' written notice specifying the intention to propose the resolution has been duly given to each member. Notice of such meeting shall be given by proclamation to the Church at all services on each of the two (2) Sundays preceding the meeting. One (1) pastor shall be appointed by resolution of the Church to be the Senior Pastor of the Church.

b) PROCEDURE FOR CALLING A PASTOR, SENIOR STAFF OR ELDER

- i. In the event that the Church decides to appoint a Pastor, a Senior Staff or an Elder any member may submit to the Church Leadership Team a written recommendation in respect of any person who, in the opinion of that member, would be a fit and proper person to hold the office of Pastor, Senior Staff or Elder.
- ii. All such recommendations shall be submitted to a committee appointed by the Church, consisting of members of the Church Leadership Team and/or other members of the Church, which shall give due consideration to such recommendations and make all reasonable enquiries to determine the suitability of each person so recommended.
- iii. The said committee may communicate privately with any person considered suitable to hold the office of Pastor, Senior Staff or Elder and may, upon ascertaining the willingness of such person to be considered by the Church in general meeting, recommend to the Church through the Church Leadership Team that such person be appointed to the Senior Staff Team..



- iv. At no time shall more than one recommendation be made to the Church with respect to the filling of any one position on the Senior Staff Team

c) **TERM OF OFFICE**

Pastors and Senior Staff will usually be called for an indefinite period. Elders are called for a 5-year period and are eligible for re-appointment in accordance with the procedures in Clauses 6(1)(a) and 6(1)(b).

d) **RETIREMENT**

Any Pastor, Senior Staff or Elder may be offered participation in a voluntary phased-in retirement scheme, voluntary retirement scheme, retirement incentives scheme, voluntary severance scheme or other like scheme. At any time the Church may access the provisions of Clause 6 (1)(a).

2. INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR

In the event that the office of Senior Pastor is vacant the Church may appoint an Interim Senior Pastor. The appointment shall be on the recommendation of the Church Leadership Team passed by a simple majority at an Extraordinary Church Meeting called for the purpose of appointing an Interim Senior Pastor and that the term be until a Senior Pastor is appointed in accordance with the Constitution or the Church otherwise determines.

3. MINISTRY STAFF

The Church may on the recommendation of the Church Leadership Team by resolution appoint Ministry Staff as considered necessary and appropriate to lead and assist the members to achieve the objects of the Church.

4. CHURCH LEADERSHIP TEAM

Subject to the decision of the Church meeting, the administration of the Church and the spiritual oversight and pastoral care of the members and attenders shall be attended to by the Church Leadership Team. The Church Leadership Team shall consist of the Senior Pastor, Senior Staff, Elders and the Deacons. The Church Leadership Team may operate as a single group or in sub-groups with specific functions.

a) **QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS**

All members twenty one (21) years of age and over who have been in membership for at least six (6) months and who sincerely seek to fulfil the principles of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 shall be eligible to be a Deacon.



b) NUMBERS OF DEACONS

The number and function of Deacons shall be determined by the Church from time to time.

c) APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS

- i. Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least twelve (12) weeks prior to the Annual Election.
- ii. All such nominations shall be submitted to a committee appointed by the Church, consisting of members of the Church Leadership Team and/or other members of the Church, which shall give due consideration to such nominations and make all reasonable enquiries to determine the suitability of each person so nominated.
- iii. The said committee may communicate privately with any person considered suitable to hold the office of Deacon and may, upon ascertaining the willingness of such person to be nominated, recommend to the Church Leadership Team that the nomination be endorsed.
- iv. A list of people nominated for the office of Deacon shall be available to members on the Sunday prior to the Annual Election.
- v. At the Annual Election a ballot shall be conducted for the appointment of Deacons. No nominee shall be appointed unless securing a majority of votes of members present and eligible to vote at such election, provided that:
 - A. In the event that more than the required number of nominees secures the said majority, the nominees with the greatest number of votes shall be appointed.
 - B. In the event that an insufficient number of nominees secures the said majority, a further ballot shall be conducted in respect of the remaining nominees.
 - C. Notwithstanding the provisions of this clause, in the event that there are more than two nominees for one position on the Church Leadership Team and none of these nominees secures the said majority, a further ballot shall be conducted in respect of the two nominees who have secured the greatest number of votes.
- vi. Deacons shall be appointed for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-appointment at the end of the said period. One half of the number of Deacons shall retire at the expiration of each period of one year.



- vii. Casual vacancies for Deacon may be filled by a person elected at any appropriate time in accordance with the procedures contained in this clause, and any such person shall hold office until the expiration of the term of office of the person replaced.
- viii. Deacons will be required to stand down after three (3) successive two-year terms. Such persons will not be eligible for election to the office of Deacon until twelve (12) months after stand down.

d) CHURCH LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETINGS

The Church Leadership Team shall meet as a single group or in sub-groups within four (4) weeks prior to every Church meeting, and at other times as deemed necessary. Sub-groups shall combine to meet as the full Church Leadership Team prior to both of the Annual Church Meetings and prior to the mid-year Ordinary Church Meeting. The quorum at all meetings of the full Church Leadership Team shall be fifty percent (50%) of the total membership of the Church Leadership Team. The quorum at all meetings of each sub-group of the Church Leadership Team shall be fifty percent (50%) of the total membership of that sub-group. Voting shall be in accordance with Clause 10(5)(c).

5. SECRETARY AND TREASURER

At the Annual Election a ballot shall be conducted for the appointment of persons to the offices of Secretary and Treasurer. Procedures for appointment to these offices shall be the same as stated for Deacons in Clause 6(3)(c). Persons elected to these offices shall be deemed to have been elected to the office of Deacon and taking account of other appointments to the Church Leadership Team shall have the same maximum term of office.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER OFFICERS

The Church may by resolution appoint administrative and other officers on terms and conditions as it deems fit.

7. ORGANISATIONS OF THE CHURCH

(Organisations that the Church Leadership Team deem to be organisations of the church)

1. The Church shall have the power to create or dissolve subsidiary organisations to further its objectives. All organisations of the Church which, in the opinion of the Church, ought to be governed by a constitution shall submit a constitution to the Church Leadership Team for approval.



2. The chief officer of each organisation of the Church shall inform the Secretary in writing of the proposed appointment of officers of such organisations, and no such appointment shall proceed unless approved by the Church.
3. The Senior Pastor may, at their discretion, preside at all business meetings of the Church, Church Leadership Team and Church organisations. In the absence of the Senior Pastor another member of the Church Leadership Team may be appointed by the Church Leadership Team to preside.
4. The members of the Senior Staff Team and the Secretary shall be eligible to attend all meetings of the Church organisations and shall be notified of business meetings of organisations.
5. The chief officer of each Church organisation shall be a member elected by the Church at the Annual Election. Nominations for such offices may be made by any member. Nominees to the above positions shall be from within the membership of the Church.
6. All organisations shall submit to the Church Leadership Team the names of all other appointees to its various offices, other than those elected at the Annual Election. The Church shall, after consideration by the Church Leadership Team, have power to veto such appointments or any decisions made by such organisations.
7. All organisations identified with the Church shall be subject to the rules and Constitution and by-laws of the Church and shall submit all decisions that affect the management of the Church to the Church Leadership Team for its approval before carrying such decisions into effect.

8. CASUAL VACANCIES

In the event of the resignation of the Secretary or Treasurer the vacancy will be filled in accordance with the procedure in Clause 6(4)(c)(vii). In the event of the resignation of the chief officer of any Church organisation during the year the Church Leadership Team shall fill such position until the next Annual Election.

9. CHURCH COMMITTEES

The Church and/or Church Leadership Team may from time to time appoint such committees as it deems fit. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, such committees shall act in an advisory capacity only and shall make their recommendations to the Church Leadership Team, unless otherwise determined by the Church or Church Leadership Team. The Church Leadership Team may at any time appoint a person to fill a casual vacancy in such a committee.



10. CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. Ordinary Church Meetings

The Church shall meet at least once per year in addition to the Annual Church Meetings for the purpose of fellowship and prayer, and to consider matters relating to Church family life, outreach and general ministry.

2. Extraordinary Church Meetings

A meeting of the Church may be convened at any time by resolution of the Church Leadership Team or by requisition of not less than twenty percent (20%) of the members eligible to vote for the purpose of conducting special business, notice of which has been duly given.

3. Annual Church Meetings

A Church meeting (known as the Annual Election or Annual General Meeting I) for the annual election of officers, approval of Church objectives and budget for the following calendar year will be held as close as practicable to the end of the calendar year. A Church meeting (known as Annual General Meeting II) for the presentation and review of annual reports and audited financial statements for the preceding financial (calendar) year will be held as soon as practicable but not later than April in each year. The minutes of the Annual Meetings shall be confirmed at the next ordinary Church meeting.

4. Notice of Meetings

Notice of an ordinary Church meeting shall be given at all services on the Sunday immediately preceding such meeting. Notice of the Annual Church meetings or of an Extraordinary Meeting shall be given at all services on the two (2) Sundays immediately preceding such meeting.

5. Voting

- a. No member on the non-active list or under the age of seventeen (17) years shall be entitled to vote.
- b. In matters connected with the acquisition, mortgaging or disposal of real property the voting age shall be as prescribed by the Baptist Church of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984.
- c. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every question submitted to a meeting of the Church or the Church Leadership Team shall be decided, in accordance with the determination of the meeting, by a show of hands or on the voices or by ballot.



11. QUORUM

1. At Church meetings held for the purpose of appointing or removing a member of the Senior Staff Team the quorum shall be one third (1/3) of the membership of the Church eligible to vote.
2. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the quorum for other Church meetings to be held during the ensuing twelve (12) months shall be determined by the Church at the Annual Election, provided that the quorum shall not be less than ten percent (10%) of the members of the Church eligible to vote in the case of Extraordinary Church Meetings and Annual Church Meetings. Should there be fewer than ten percent (10%) of the members present and eligible to vote at an ordinary Church meeting, any resolutions made at an ordinary Church meeting shall be confirmed at a subsequent Extraordinary or Annual Church Meeting.
3. If a quorum is not present within thirty (30) minutes of the time appointed for a meeting to commence, such meeting shall be adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or to such time and place as may be determined by the Church Leadership Team. Notice of the holding of such further meeting shall be given at all services conducted on the Sunday immediately preceding such meeting. Except for Church meetings held for the purpose of appointing or removing a member of the Senior Staff Team notwithstanding the absence of a quorum, such further meeting shall be competent to transact the business of the adjourned meeting.
4. If the attendance of members falls below the specified quorum during the course of a meeting, the meeting shall be adjourned and the procedures and conditions prescribed in Clause 11(3) for calling a further meeting shall apply.

12. ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH

1. The Secretary shall compile an Agenda for all Church meetings, keep minutes of the proceedings of Church meetings and meetings of the Church Leadership Team and do all things reasonable or necessary in relation to the business matters of the Church.
2.
 - a. Church funds shall be received by the Treasurer and shall be deposited in a bank or other authorised Trustee Investment approved by the Church Leadership Team.
 - b. The signatories to such accounts shall be such persons as may be determined from time to time by the Church Leadership Team, provided that the Treasurer shall be signatory to all accounts operated by the Church or organisations of the Church.
 - c. The Treasurer shall make payments as directed by the Church and shall present a Financial Statement at each Ordinary Meeting of the Church and an audited Financial Statement at the Annual General Meeting II.
 - d. The Treasurer shall cause proper accounting records to be kept and shall determine whether and to what extent and at what times and places the accounting records



shall be open to the inspection of members not being Church Leadership Team or members of the Senior Staff Team, and no member (not being a Church Leadership Team Member or member of the Senior Staff Team) shall have any right of inspecting any such record except as authorised by the Church Leadership Team or by the members in General Meeting.

- e. An auditor shall be appointed at each Annual Election for the purpose of auditing the books of the Church.
3. The Trustee of the Church property shall be '*The Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust*'.
4. Church buildings and property shall not be used or occupied by persons or organisation for any purpose except where prior consent in accordance with the decisions relating thereto has been given by the Church or Church Leadership Team.
5. Fire insurance shall be effected on all Church buildings and property. The Church Leadership Team shall effect such other insurances as it deems fit.

13. 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.
- b) In all other cases be transferred to the Baptist Union 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.

14. ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

1. No alteration or addition shall be made to this Constitution except by resolution of the Church passed by a majority of not less than three quarters (3/4) of the members present and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose.
2. Any proposed alteration or addition shall be given in writing as a notice of motion to the Secretary and shall be made available to all members not less than one (1) month before the date of such meeting.



Appendix 1. Admission to Membership Clause 5.2

Persons appointed by the Senior Staff Team to interview an applicant for membership, if faced with an applicant for membership who has not been baptised by immersion in water as a believer but offers a good and acceptable reason, shall be guided by the following when ascertaining the applicant's fitness for membership and shall include the reason as part of their report to the Senior Staff team. The Senior Staff Team shall include the reason in the subsequent recommendation to the Church Leadership Team. The Church Leadership Team may accept into membership a believer not baptised by immersion in water with reason where otherwise assessed as fit for membership.

A good and acceptable reason allowing a recommendation for acceptance into membership includes the following:

- a. They are physically unable to be baptised by immersion due to a medical condition for example;
- b. They have been baptised as a believer upon confession of faith in another mode such as sprinkling;
- c. They have been baptised as infants and have made a subsequent public confession of their faith and, for reason of conscience, feel that it would undermine the significance of their baptism and confirmation to repeat the act of baptism.

Reasons that fall short of being a good and acceptable reason allowing a recommendation for acceptance into membership include:

- d. They have been baptised as infants but have not made a subsequent public confession of their faith;
- e. They have not been baptised, fail to accept the importance of baptism and are not prepared to be baptised by immersion.

All applicants who have not been baptised by immersion are to be offered, without coercion, the opportunity to be baptised in that manner. An Applicant who has offered a good and acceptable reason for not being baptised by immersion in water are nevertheless to acknowledge and commit to the basis of the Church and specifically "That Christian baptism practised by the Church is by immersion in water for believers only."

Where an applicant seeking membership is known to have not been baptised by full immersion in water, the Senior Staff Team shall seek to include an Elder, someone on the Senior Staff Team or the Church Leadership Team as one of the two members appointed to ascertain the applicant's fitness for membership and to answer and explain any questions relating to the Constitution and policy.



Appendix 2. Termination of Membership Clause 5.3a

Related matter – Termination of Membership by transfer to another Baptist Church.

In case of termination of membership of the Church by transfer to another Baptist Church, a brief statement of the policy adopted by the Church in relation to baptism and membership shall be provided as a matter of course and courtesy to that Baptist Church. The suggested brief statement would read:

“Please be advised that Christian baptism practiced by Gynea Baptist Church is by immersion in water for believers only. A person who has not been baptised in this manner with a good and acceptable reason (medical or conscience) may nevertheless have been ascertained as acceptable for membership of Gynea Baptist Church. This may or may not apply to the above named person seeking transfer to your Church and you are advised of this policy merely as a matter of courtesy. Please contact the undersigned should you require further explanation or background. No details regarding any specific person are available or will be provided.”

No specific details will be provided in relation to a member who is transferring membership and no record will be kept as to the mode of baptism for each member. The receiving Baptist church would need to make their own enquiries of the person should that be an issue that they needed to traverse.

DPM/LG/KW: April 1988
Amended 26 July 1988
Amended 21 October 1992
Amended 9 March 1994
Amended 18 April 1999
Amended 29 August 2004
Amended 5 December 2007

