



Kiama Baptist Church Constitution

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CONSTITUTION

1. Name: The name of the Church shall be the Kiama Baptist Church.

2. Doctrinal Position Of This Church (also see appendix 1)

This Church shall hold to the following evangelical doctrines set out in the Baptist Union of NSW Incorporation Act, 1919 (NSW) and amplified by the 1979 Baptist Union of NSW Assembly:

- The nature and unity of the Godhead
- The deity and humanity of Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The divine inspiration of the Scriptures
- The sinfulness of man
- Christ's atonement for the sin of man
- The work of the Holy Spirit in salvation
- The Church
- The baptism of believers only, and by immersion
- The communion
- The return of the Lord Jesus Christ
- The resurrection of the dead
- Rewards and punishments in a future state

3. Government (i.e. Decision-making)

- The Church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW accepting its responsibility to support and share ministries undertaken by the Denomination.
- Recognising the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church shall be governed in line with the fundamental Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church and congregational government. That is, the decision-making of this Church shall be vested in the body of believers who compose its membership.
- Notwithstanding this principle of autonomy, the Church recognises and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and co-operation which are common among Baptist Churches. Therefore, the Church will be interdependent as well as independent.

4. Objective

The Church adopts as its objective (which it believes to be in harmony with the purpose of Christ's Church as declared in the New Testament) the desire to glorify God through:

- The inspiration and maintenance of active spiritual growth among its congregation by the regular assembling for public worship and the administration of the ordinances.
- The proclamation of the truths of the Bible by all means so that persons experience salvation.
- Teaching, training and discipling all who come to faith in the Lord Jesus so that they grow together in love, are loyal to each other and grow to maturity in Christ under the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Proclaiming the sole Lordship of Christ Jesus in the lives of the members of the congregation and seeking to fulfil His desires in the life of the community, nation and wider world through evangelistic and other missionary enterprise. To assist those who are in need in the belief that social action and evangelism are mutually our response to the Gospel.

5. Membership

5A. Eligibility for Membership

Members shall be persons who give evidence of a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who hold to the general beliefs set forth in this Constitution under the heading "Doctrinal Position of this Church" except possibly for the doctrine of the baptism of believers only by immersion. Should a member not believe in the doctrine of the baptism of believers only by immersion then that member must agree to this Church holding to this doctrine. *

* Following legal advice from the Baptist Union of NSW a member who does not personally believe in the doctrine of the "baptism of believers only, and by immersion" shall be precluded from voting in relation to a property transaction by this Church and also from being a delegate of this Church to an Assembly of the Baptist Union of NSW.

5B. Admission to Membership

Applicants for membership shall apply to the Pastor or Church Secretary. Applicants for membership shall be visited by two members appointed by the Diaconate or the Church to discuss their testimony to faith in Jesus Christ, membership responsibilities, the Church Constitution and its various ministries. A report shall be presented to the Church following the visitation. Applicants may be admitted to membership upon 75% majority vote at a properly constituted Church meeting.

Where the applicant for membership has been a member of another Baptist Church, letters of transfer and/or commendation shall be sought and shall be taken into account by the Church meeting when determining the application for membership at a properly constituted Church meeting.

5C. Responsibilities of Members

- a. To endeavour at all times, by God's grace, to remain true to their commitment to Christ as expressed in their baptism.
- b. To join regularly in the worship of the Church.
- c. To lead a life worthy of Christ in love, humility and peace, endeavouring to build each other up through encouragement, counsel and comfort.
- d. To study the Scriptures in private and in groups as the Lord gives opportunity.
- e. To express their gratitude to God, and their responsibilities as His stewards by contributing regularly and wholeheartedly to the financial support of the Church and the wider work of the Union of Churches.
- f. To seek opportunity to use their gifts in the ministry of the Church.
- g. To pray regularly in private and where possible in fellowship for the people and ministry of the Church and the family of Churches.

5D. Membership Roll

A Members' Roll and an Absent Members' Roll shall be kept by the Church Secretary.

5E. Removal from Membership

The Diaconate, Eldership or other appropriate body will prayerfully review the Members' Roll at least every two years.

Members who for a period of six months fail to participate in the Worship of the Church without satisfactory explanation or fail to honour other responsibilities of membership shall receive special attention. Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to removal from the District in which the Church is situated, then such members shall be transferred to an Absent Members Roll. Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to some reason other than removal from the district or where the member in question fails to honour other responsibilities of membership, every effort shall be made to restore such members to worship and fellowship (Matt. 18:15 - 17). Where these efforts fail, a recommendation may be brought to the Church that such members' names be removed from the roll (or transferred to an Absent Members Roll).

No member's name shall be transferred or removed from either the Members' Roll or the Absent Members' Roll except by their request or the decision of a 75% majority of the members voting at a properly constituted Church meeting.

5F. Transfer of Membership

Any member in good standing may request that a letter of commendation be sent to another Baptist Church he or she wishes to join. The Deacons may process the request reporting their action to the next Church meeting.

5G. Offence and Dispute

- a. Where a member becomes an offence to the Church by reason of immoral or un-christian conduct, the Church will make every effort, in the spirit of love and meekness, to restore such a member to fellowship (Matt 18:15 - 17). Where such efforts fail the Church may terminate or suspend for a specified time, his or her membership. Termination or suspension of membership shall be only on the decision of 75% majority of members voting at a properly constituted Church meeting.
- b. In the event of a dispute arising either between the members, the Pastor(s) and the members, or the Church and the Baptist Union, such dispute may, after every effort has been made to resolve it within the Church or through the services of Ministry Support and Development be referred for decision to the Panel of Arbitrators elected by the Assembly, if agreed to by all parties of the dispute.
- c. Matters of offence or dispute between members shall not be brought before the Church unless the parties have first complied with the direction of Matt 18:15-17.

6. Church Officers

Pastors, Church Secretary, Church Treasurer, Deacons and/or Elders, may be appointed as the officers of the Church. Pastors, Church Secretary, Church Treasurer and Deacons shall comprise the Diaconate of the Church. Subject to this Constitution and any resolution passed by a general meeting of members, the Diaconate:

- A) Is to manage the affairs of the Church; and
- B) May exercise all the functions that may be exercised by the Church, other than those functions that are required by this Constitution to be exercised by a general meeting of members of the Church;
- C) May expend funds in accordance with and up to the limit of the budget approved by the Church, allowing for minor variations between budget items; and
- D) Has power to perform all the acts and do all things that appear to the Diaconate to be necessary or desirable for the proper management of the affairs of the Church.

6A. Pastor(s)

The Pastor(s) shall be a person whose credentials are acceptable to the Baptist Union of NSW and holds the doctrines set forth in this Constitution under the heading: "Doctrinal Position of this Church".

Where more than one Pastor is appointed the Pastors shall comprise the Pastoral Team in which one shall be the Pastoral Team Leader. (The Pastor or Pastoral Team Leader shall normally be ex-officio Chair of all organisations, although this responsibility may be delegated to another member of the team or member of the Diaconate.) Pastors will be appointed upon a 75% majority or removed upon a simple majority vote of the members voting at a meeting of which notice has been given on the two Sundays preceding such meeting, the purpose of such meeting having been specified.

The quorum for meeting to call or remove a Pastor shall be 50% of the Members' Role. When calling a Pastor –

- a. Pastorate Committee appointed by the Church shall call for nominations. Members of the congregation may make recommendations for discussion within the Committee by submitting a name, together with reasons supporting the recommendation, in writing to the Committee.
- b. The Committee may advise of the vacancy and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate denominational officer.

- c. Should more than one name come before the Committee, discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.
- d. The Committee shall communicate privately with this nominee and/or with the appropriate Union officer, to ascertain their willingness to allow their name to be placed before the Church.
- e. Should this nominee be willing, the name shall be submitted to the Church. Only one name shall be before the Church at any one time.
- f. In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.

All terms and conditions of a call shall be conveyed to a Pastor in writing, having previously been clarified between both parties, together with full particulars of the Church

Acceptance shall be made in writing to the Church indicating acceptance of terms of call.

The tenure of office of a Pastor may be terminated by two months' notice in writing by either the Church or the Pastor or such other period as set out in the terms and conditions of appointment.

6B. Church Secretary

A Church Secretary should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Church Secretary will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for deacons will apply in relation to the Church Secretary.

The Church Secretary shall ensure that adequate records of all Church, Diaconate and Committee meetings are kept, conduct correspondence for the Church and generally deal with the business of the Church.

By means of an annual report or otherwise, he/she will ensure an adequate flow of information from the various Committees to the Church members.

The Church Secretary shall keep an up-to-date Members' Roll and Absent Members' Roll of the Church which shall be available for members to scrutinise.

Unsuccessful nominees for Secretary may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for Deacons.

6C. Church Treasurer

A Church Treasurer should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Church Treasurer will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for Deacons will apply in relation to the Treasurer.

The Church Treasurer, with the oversight of the Diaconate, shall manage the financial affairs of the church including:

- The maintenance of proper accounting records
- the receipt and expenditure of monies
- the control and safe custody of monies and other assets held by the church
- the remuneration of Pastors and other paid staff (if any) and the maintenance of records of leave and other entitlements
- proper and appropriate insurance cover for the Church, its staff, assets and programs
- the preparation of regular financial reports and returns, including an annual and quarterly financial report to members
- the preparation of the annual budget and the presentation of the budget to the Church for adoption at the Annual Church meeting

Unsuccessful nominees for Treasurer may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for deacons.

6D. Elders

The Church may appoint Elders from the membership of the Church.

Elders shall be responsible in co-operation with the Pastor(s) for:

- a) the spiritual oversight of the Church.
- b) the pastoral ministry of the Church, in response to 1 Peter 5: 1 – 3

Elders shall provide discernment and wisdom in matters within the church, being willing and able to encourage sound doctrine and setting an example

Elders shall teach, care and discipline in areas invited to do so by the Pastor(s) based on their gifting and the needs of the Church

Elders shall work with the Pastor(s) and Deacons in setting the vision, strategic direction, and goals of the church

Elders shall review the Members' Role and Absent Members' Roll at least every two years.

The biblical material, especially 1 Timothy 3: 2 - 7; Titus 1:7 - 9 and 1 Peter 5: 1 - 4, shall assist the Church in appointing Elders. Only persons of known maturity, spirituality and gifts appropriate to the office shall be appointed upon 75% majority vote at a Church Meeting and upon the nomination in writing of the Pastor(s) and existing Elder(s) or the Diaconate. Such nominees shall have been in membership in the Church for at least six months.

The term of office shall be one, two or three year(s) with eligibility for re-appointment. Elders, while meeting separately, may from time to time meet with the Diaconate for mutual benefit.

6E. Deacons

Members of the Church, who are over the age of 18 years and have been in membership for at least six months may be appointed to the office of Deacon by the church at the Annual Church Meeting.

The number of Deacons, in addition to the Church Secretary and Church Treasurer, to be appointed shall be determined at the members' meeting prior to the Annual Meeting. Nominees shall give evidence of spiritual maturity and fulfill the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3: 8 -13.

Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be invited from the members at least two weeks prior to the Annual Church Meeting. All such nominations should be in writing, signed by the nominator and nominee and in the hands of the Church Secretary not later than a week before the Annual Meeting. The names obtaining the highest number of votes and who secure a 75% majority endorsement shall be deemed elected. The Deacons, as far as shall be in their power, shall attend and sustain all meetings connected with the Church and shall maintain discipline in the Church. The Diaconate is to manage the affairs of the Church in accordance with this Constitution limited by the powers set out at clause 6.

The Diaconate shall meet monthly and at other times as required. The Pastoral Team Leader may be the chair, or a chair may be appointed from among the Deacons.

6F. Term of Office and Casual Vacancies

The term of appointments to positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Deacon will be for 12 months commencing at the Annual Meeting, or a lesser period till the next Annual Meeting in the case of appointment at a meeting other than the Annual Meeting.

Casual vacancies in these positions may be filled as required by any church meeting after two weeks' notice of such election has been given.

7. Church Meetings and Procedures

In this Constitution the term 'meeting' refers to a Church meeting comprising of Quarterly Meeting, Annual Meeting and Extraordinary Meeting.

7A. Meetings

The Church shall meet quarterly.

Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Pastor(s), or upon requisition signed by 10% of the Church membership or a majority of the Diaconate. An Extraordinary Meeting may be called for a special purpose and only consider matters of which written notice has been given.

Notice of all Church Meetings including Extraordinary Meetings shall be given at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

An Annual Church Meeting shall be called each year to receive reports and conduct elections as herein prescribed.

Meetings shall be chaired by the Pastor / Pastoral team leader or his / her delegate being a Church member. Alternatively, for special reasons, in consultation with the Baptist Union of NSW an outside chair may be appointed.

The Church Meeting shall be a meeting of those persons on the Members' Roll. Members on the Absentee Roll and Non-Church members may be invited to be present at and to take part in the whole or any part of a Church Meeting, without right to vote.

"The quorum for all Church Meetings shall be 25% of the Church membership, (or as determined by each Annual Church Meeting), recorded on the Members' Roll at the end

of the last financial year. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the appointed starting time of the meeting, the meeting shall stand adjourned usually to the same day, time and place in the next week. Notice of the adjourned meeting will be communicated to the church congregation as soon as possible. Such meeting will be competent to deal with the matters adjourned notwithstanding the absence of a quorum."

Members under 18 years of age may not be entitled to vote.

7B. Procedure

All questions affecting the management and general interests of the Church shall normally be submitted to the Diaconate before presentation to the Church.

The vote of the Church shall be taken ordinarily on the voices or by a show of hands, but all voting for the election of officers mentioned herein will be by ballot or as determined by the meeting. The Chair may only exercise one vote.

Any member who is entitled to vote and who will be absent for a meeting may apply to the Diaconate in writing for pre-voting consideration. Written application to be received by the Secretary at least one week prior to the meeting.

8. Church Organisations

From time to time the Church may determine that an associated ministry, program or group has attained the standing of an organisation that is to be subject to the requirements of this Constitution. Such organisations and their objectives and functions are to be approved by the Church.

All organisations associated with and approved by the Church shall formulate and present, for approval to the Diaconate, guidelines governing their operations.

The leader of Church organisations shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting, upon nomination from the respective organisations, provided that any Church member may submit a nomination. A closing date for nominations should be set.

All organisations shall submit to the Diaconate the names of all appointees to their various offices other than those elected at the Annual Church meeting. The Diaconate

shall then submit a report to a Church meeting that shall have the right to discuss and confirm appointments.

The Church meeting may appoint groups for specific functions to assist in the general operation of the Church's ministry. Such groups shall report to the Church.

The (senior) Pastor may, at their discretion, preside at all meetings of the Church, Diaconate and Church organisation.

9. Sundry

9A. Ordinances

- a. Baptism - The Pastor, or their appointee, may baptise any believer, upon application and at the Pastor's discretion.
- b. The Lord's Supper - The Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to take part in the Supper.

9B. The Trustees

The Trustees of all Church properties shall be the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust.

9C. Property

Church buildings and properties shall not be used or occupied by people or organisations for any purpose except where previous consent has been obtained from the Church Secretary, who may give such consent in accordance with the decisions and guidelines laid down by the Church.

9D. Insurance

Insurance shall be effected on all Church buildings and property in accordance with the requirements of the Baptist Union of NSW.

9E. Application of Church Assets and Income

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 remuneration where a member is an employee of the church, fee for services where a member is a contractor to the church and reimbursement of expenses incurred by a member on behalf of the church.

9F. 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 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.

10. Alterations to Constitution

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution except by a 75% majority of members eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose.

Any proposed change to the Constitution shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the Diaconate and shall be distributed by the Secretary to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.