



**Church
Constitution
and
Governance Rules
2022
(amended 6th December 2020)**

Blackheath Baptist Church: Constitution

1. NAME

The name of the Church is BLACKHEATH BAPTIST CHURCH.

2. DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THIS CHURCH

The doctrinal position of the church accords with the evangelical doctrines set out in the Baptist Union of NSW Incorporation Act, 1919 (NSW) and subsequent amendments approved by the 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 people
- Christ's atonement for human sin
- The work of the Holy Spirit in salvation
- The Church
- The baptism of believers only by immersion
- The communion
- The return of the Lord Jesus Christ
- The resurrection of the dead
- Rewards and punishments in a future state

A document entitled "Baptist Union of NSW – Statement of Beliefs", available from the Church, provides an expansion of each of these doctrines.

3. MEMBERSHIP (amended at Member's Meeting 6th December 2020)

3A: Application for Membership

Application for membership shall be made through the designated officer of the Church or the Eldership.

3B: Eligibility for Membership

Membership of the Church shall be open to those persons who:

- (1) Accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- (2) Hold to the doctrines, objects and practice of this church as set forth in this constitution.
- (3) Commit to participate in the life of this church and fulfil the 'Responsibilities of Members' as set forth in this constitution.
- (4) Have made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, normally through believers' baptism by immersion.

In accordance with New Testament practice, this church teaches and practices believers' baptism by immersion, administered as close to the point of conversion by the Holy Spirit as possible, as a symbol of new life in Christ.

It would be expected that those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ through the ministry of this or another Baptist church, or have come to faith elsewhere in the recent past, would make their public profession of faith in the form of baptism as a believer by immersion.

However, consideration for membership will also be given to believers who:

- (a) Are from other denominational backgrounds but have not been baptised as a believer by immersion; or
- (b) Have been followers of Christ for many years but have not been baptised as a believer by immersion providing that they have made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

In such cases the requirement of “*a public profession of faith*” in Jesus Christ may be met by:

- i. Baptism as a believer other than by immersion.
- ii. Believers’ confirmation of an earlier infant baptism.
- iii. Some form of public declaration of faith at another Church; or
- iv. A public declaration of faith (e.g. verbal testimony) at this Church.

The above consideration in no way diminishes the importance of believers’ baptism by immersion. Nor does it deny the opportunity for any believer to be baptised by immersion in order to make a public declaration of their faith, should they so desire.

3C: Admission of Members

All applicants for membership, including those transferring from other Baptist churches, shall be instructed on the doctrines, objects, practices and responsibilities of membership as contained in the constitution of this church, and any other relevant statements of our Vision, Values, Strategy and Procedures.

A member of the Eldership or their representative/s shall interview an applicant for membership. Letters of Transfer and/or commendation from other Baptist Churches or from a Church with which the applicant has recently been associated may be taken into consideration.

Applicants may be admitted into membership after recommendation by the Eldership and upon a majority vote at a properly constituted Church Meeting.

3D: Restrictions

To accord with the requirements of the Baptist Union Incorporation Act (1919) and the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust Act [1984]: a member who has not been baptised by immersion may not:

- a) Be called as a Pastor of the Church.
- b) Serve as a delegate of the church to an Assembly of the Baptist Association of NSW, or
- c) Vote at a church meeting on a resolution to give the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust a direction under the Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust Act (1984).

Dismission of Members: Members in good standing may be given an honourable dismissal as occasion may arise.

Exceptional Cases: The Church may at its discretion deal with exceptional cases of admission or dismissal as they may arise.

Termination of Membership: The Eldership shall consider before the Annual General Meeting each year the names of those members who have ceased to attend or communicate with the Church. After every reasonable endeavour to secure continuance in the fellowship of such members, the Eldership shall recommend to the Church the transfer of their names to the Former Members’ Roll.

Church Rolls: A Church Roll shall be maintained recording details of admission and of dismissal of all Church members. A Former Members' Roll shall also be kept.

3E: Responsibilities of Members

It shall be the responsibility of each member to:

- Endeavour at all times by God's grace to remain true to their commitment to Jesus Christ and to live in a manner which conforms to the precepts contained in Scripture;
- Protect the unity of this church by acting in love toward other members;
- Strengthen and grow this church by seeking opportunities to use their spiritual gifts and abilities to serve in the ministry activities and programmes of this church;
- Regularly and generously contribute to the funds of this church;
- Abide by the constitution of this church;
- Continue in regular fellowship and corporate worship with this church*
- Participate in the government and decision-making of this church by attending church meetings, forums and prayer meetings*

* Naturally, these responsibilities cannot apply to those who are no longer able to attend our corporate meetings and to these people the church will always continue to minister.

Dispute: Matters of dispute between members shall not be brought before the Church unless the parties have first complied with the directions in Matthew 18:15-17.

Discipline: Cases appearing to require the exercise of discipline by the Church shall first be reported to the Pastor(s) or Elders. The matter shall then be considered by the Pastor(s) and Elders who may then refer the matter to the Church which shall take such action as it may deem necessary.

Reconciliation: In the event of a dispute arising, either between members of the Church, the Pastor and the Church, or the Church and the Baptist Association, such dispute may be referred for decision to the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT for the appointment of mediators under Section 29 of that Association's Constitution.

Decision in all matters of membership shall rest finally with the Church.

4. PASTOR(S)

4A: Appointment of 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 will be the Lead Pastor, appointed by the Church. The Pastor or Lead Pastor shall normally be ex-officio member of all organisations, although the responsibility may be delegated to another member of the team or Elder.

Pastors will be appointed upon 75% majority or removed upon a simple majority vote of the members present, eligible to vote, and 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.

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 and its development. Pastors may be called to a full time or part time ministry depending on needs and negotiations. Acceptance shall be made in writing to the Church, indicating acceptance of terms of call.

The tenure of the Pastor may be terminated by two months' notice in writing by either the Pastor or the Church.

4B: Continuity of Leadership

Should there be no Pastor/s, the Elder/s will assume pastoral responsibilities. In the absence of a Pastor(s) and Elder(s), their respective responsibilities will be assumed by an Interim Leadership Team appointed by the church for this purpose.

5. ORDINANCES

- (a) **Baptism.** The Pastor may baptise any believer upon application, or alternatively a member of the pastoral team, elders or member of the Church may baptise any believer upon approval of the Pastoral Team.
- (b) **Communion.** Communion shall normally be observed once a month in each service. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to take part in the communion.

6. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND DISSOLUTION

6A: Property Ownership

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

6B: 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 reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the church.

6C: 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 of NSW 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.

7. GOVERNANCE RULES

The church shall conduct itself in accordance with the Governance Rules endorsed by the members.

8. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

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

The quorum for such a meeting shall be 40% of the membership.

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

The Secretary of the Baptist Union of NSW shall be notified of any changes to this Constitution by the Secretary within 14 days of any decision being made by the Church.

Blackheath Baptist Church: Governance Rules

1. OBJECTIVES

The Church adopts as its objective, as declared in the New Testament, the glorification of God through:

- The inspiration and maintenance of active spiritual growth among its congregation by the regular holding of church services and communion.
- The proclamation of the truths of the Bible so that persons experience salvation.
- Teaching, training, discipling and baptising 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 evangelism and other missionary enterprise.
- Assisting those who are in need, believing that social action and evangelism are mutually our response to the Gospel.

2. GOVERNMENT (Decision-making)

- The Church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW accepting its responsibility to support and share in the 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.
- The church shall conduct itself in accordance with the Constitution endorsed by the members.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3A. Members Roll

A Members Roll and a Former Members Roll shall be kept by the Administrator.

3B. Admission to Membership

Applicants for membership shall be visited by two members appointed by the Pastor or the Elders to discuss their testimony to faith in Jesus Christ, membership responsibilities, the Church Constitution, Governance Rules and the various ministries of the church. A report shall be presented to the Pastor or the Elders following the visitation. Successful applicants shall be received into membership by a vote of the church. Where the applicant has been a member of another Baptist church, letters of commendation shall be sought.

3C. Removal from Membership

The elders or other appropriate body will prayerfully review the Members Roll annually.

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 should be followed up by the Elders. Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to moving out of the district in which the Church is situated, then such members may be transferred to a Former Members Roll.

Where the failure to participate in the Worship of the Church relates to some reason other than moving out of 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, the Elders may bring to the church a recommendation for their name to be removed from the Members Roll or transfer them to a Former Members Roll.

Members whose names are on the Former Members Roll shall have no right to vote at any Church meeting.

3D. Transfer of Membership

Any member in good standing may request that a letter of commendation be sent to another Baptist Church they wish to join. The Elders may process the request, reporting their action to the next Church meeting for confirmation.

4. 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 the member to fellowship (Matt. 18:15 - 17). Where such efforts fail, the Church may terminate, or suspend for a specified time, the membership. Termination or suspension of membership shall be only on the decision of a 75% majority of members present and voting at a 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 Matthew 18:15-17.

5. PASTORS and ELDERS

5A. Pastors

When calling a Pastor:

- (a) 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 the Baptist Union 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 denominational 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 Elders who if they approve shall present the recommendation to the Church. Only one name shall be before the Church at any one time. The Pastor shall be elected upon a 75% majority vote of members present and entitled to vote at an Extraordinary Church Meeting called for the purpose.
- (f) In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.

5B. Elders

The Church may appoint Elders from the members of the Church, who shall support the spiritual ministry of the Pastor/s and share with the Pastor/s in the pastoral care of the Church. Members of the Church who are over the age of 21 years and who have been in membership for at least six months may be appointed to the office of Elder by the Church at the Annual Meeting.

The biblical material, especially 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, should be considered by the Church when appointing Elders. Elders shall be appointed upon a 75% majority vote of members present, eligible to vote, and voting at the Annual Meeting.

Elders shall be responsible to the Church, in co-operation with the Pastor/s, to:

- (a) Assist in shepherding those who are part of or associated with the Church, willingly and ably encouraging and building up such people and being an example to the Church in Christ-like living;
- (b) Participate in the visitation, care, and support of all who attend the Church;
- (c) Participate in the preaching and teaching ministry of the Church when they are recognised as having these gifts and are invited to do so by the Pastoral Team Leader;

The term of office shall be two years with eligibility for re-appointment. A maximum of three terms may be served consecutively. A minimum period of 1 year shall apply before a person, having served three terms, can be again nominated for the position of Elder.

6. OTHER CHURCH APPOINTMENTS

6A. Administrator (Amended at Member's Meeting 6th December 2020)

An Administrator shall be employed by the Church members on the recommendation of the Elders or elected by the Church members at the Annual Meeting. The Administrator shall be a member of the Management Team by

virtue of office. If the administrator is elected, the term of appointment shall be two years.

The Administrator shall ensure that adequate records of all Church, Management Team 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 and otherwise, he/she will ensure an adequate flow of information from the various Committees to the Church members.

The Administrator will keep an up-to-date Members Roll and Former Members Roll of the Church, which will be available for members to scrutinise.

6B. Treasurer

A Treasurer shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Meeting. The Treasurer will automatically be a member of the Management Team by virtue of office.

The term of appointment shall be two years.

The Treasurer shall receive all moneys for the Church and make such payments as may be directed. He/she shall keep a record of all financial transactions, keeping the Church informed through regular reporting.

The Treasurer shall present a Financial Statement and Balance Sheet to the Annual Meeting covering the income and expenditure for the current year to date. The Treasurer shall also present a proposed Budget for the ensuing financial year. This budget shall be approved by the church. At the first Church Meeting of the financial year, the Treasurer shall present an audited Financial Report for the previous Financial Year. At all Church Meetings, the Treasurer will present a financial statement covering the income and expenditure for the previous period, and year to date.

6C. Management Team

Nominations for the Management Team shall be presented by the Administrator in consultation with the Elders to the Annual Church Meeting. These Appointments shall be ratified by the Church at the AGM.

The Management Team shall attend to the day to day administrative matters of the church, to ensure the efficient operation of the church.

The number of members of the Management Team, shall be determined by the Administrator in consultation with the Elders.

A Pastor or Elder may attend meetings of the Management Team.

Other Elected Roles

Members may elect persons to such other leadership roles as the church deems appropriate, in order to function effectively.

6D. Employees

The Church members may, on the recommendation of the Elders, resolve to employ clerical or other paid support staff, in order to function effectively. The Elders and Administrator shall determine the employment details of any such employee/s. All persons paid wages, salaries, stipends or other employment related benefits by the Church, are employees of the Church.

6E. Church Officers

Pastor/s, Elder/s, Church Administrator, Treasurer are the Officers of the Church. Such Officers will attend to the affairs of the Church within the framework of the Constitution and Governance Rules, and are responsible for the adherence to Laws and Legislation that are in force from time to time.

6F. Nominations

Members of the Church are to be invited to submit the names of prospective Elders, Church Administrator, Treasurer, Church Management Team to the eldership.

Church organisations and ministries are to submit nominations or prospective leaders to the Eldership. The Elders shall present names considered appropriate to the church for voting.

6G. Election of Officeholders to Fill Casual Vacancies

In the event of any elected position holder being unable to fulfill their full term the Elders may appoint someone to fulfill the remainder of their term.

The casual filling of any vacancies shall be ratified at the next Church Meeting.

6H. Removal of Officeholders

Anyone elected to office may be removed from office by a simple majority of the members present at a Church meeting.

7. CHURCH MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

7A. Meetings

Church meetings shall normally be held at least half yearly.

Additional Church meetings may be convened by the Pastor/s, or upon requisition signed by 10% of the members or a majority of the Elders. A meeting may be called for a special purpose and only consider matters of which written notice has been given.

Notice of all Church Meetings shall be given at services on at least the two Sundays prior to the meeting.

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

The Pastoral Team or the Eldership shall at their discretion, nominate the chairperson of Church Meetings. Alternatively, for special reasons, in consultation with Ministry Support and Development of the Baptist Union of NSW, an outside chairperson may be appointed. Such a chairman shall be a member in good standing in a Church affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW. The Church Meeting shall be a meeting of those persons on the Members Roll.

The quorum at the Annual Meeting shall be one-quarter of the members, In the event of the annual meeting having to be recalled by lack of a quorum, then, the quorum at such recalled annual meeting shall be one-sixth of the membership. At all other church business meetings the quorum shall be one-quarter of the members.

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 the right to vote.

7B. Procedure

All matters affecting the management and general interests of the Church shall normally be submitted to the Elders and Management Team before presentation to the Church.

Except in the case of the election of the Officers of the Church, where voting shall be by ballot, voting shall be by voices or show of hands, or as determined by the chairperson. The Chairperson may only exercise one vote.

Any person who has a financial or other pecuniary interest in a matter which the Church wishes to discuss, shall retire from the meeting during such portion of the discussion as the majority of the members present shall determine.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

If a matter is declared confidential it will be treated as confidential by all who attend a Church Meeting, until such time as the matters discussed have been made public by a person authorised by the church, or the Eldership, to do so.

9. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

The Pastoral Team Leader(Lead Pastor) has the discretion to preside at all meetings of the Church, Elders and Management Team and Church organisations.

All organisations associated with the Church shall formulate and present, for approval to the Elders, guidelines governing their operations annually.

The leaders of Church organisations shall normally be ratified by the Church at the Annual Meeting, upon nomination from the respective organisations, provided that any Church member may submit a nomination.

All organisations shall submit to the Elders the names of all appointees to their various offices other than those elected at the Annual Meeting. If required, the Elders may seek further discussion on these appointments.

10. GENERAL

10A. Property

Church buildings and property shall not be used or occupied by people or organisations for any purpose except with prior consent of the Administrator, who may give such consent in accordance with the decisions and guidelines laid down by the Church.

10B. Insurance

Insurance policies, as recommended by the Baptist Union of NSW, will be held by the Church. Property and Property Contents related policies will have "insured values" which fairly approximate the replacement value of the property and contents insured.

10C. The Ministry

The ministry of the Church shall be supported and expenses met by voluntary contributions, or any other method approved by members. Cheques shall be

signed on behalf of the Church by two members of the Elders or Management Team, one of whom would normally be the Treasurer.

10D. Financial Year

The financial year of the Church shall close on the last day of December.

10E. Auditor

An auditor shall be appointed by the Church and shall audit the financial records of the Church for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

10F. Other

In order to satisfy the requirements of the Incorporation Act and the Property Trust Act, only persons who have been baptised as believers by immersion can:

- be called as a Pastor
- be a delegate to Assembly
- be entitled to vote on a resolution concerning property (see Section 42 of the Property Trust Act)

11. ALTERATIONS TO GOVERNANCE RULES

No alteration shall be made to the Governance Rules except by a simple majority of members present, eligible to vote, and voting at a meeting.

The quorum for such a meeting shall be one-quarter of the membership, Any proposed change to the Church Governance Rules shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the Elders and shall be distributed by the Administrator to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.