



CONSTITUTION OF GATEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH

1. NAME

2. The Church shall be known as Gateway Baptist Church Launceston Inc. (ABN 99 285 750 347) - originally founded on 7th September 1877 as the Christian Mission Church.

3. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF TERMS

- 2.1 Church - means Gateway Baptist Church Launceston Inc.
- 2.2 Church Meeting - means a properly constituted meeting to conduct church business matters.
- 2.3 Councillor - means the elected member of the Church Council including any appointed Pastor.
- 2.4 Executive Team - means the Council.
- 2.5 Member - means those on the Active Roll only.
- 2.6 Secret Ballot - means voting by the secret marking of papers.
- 2.7 The Union - means the Baptist Union of Tasmania Inc.

4. PURPOSE

Membership is organised as a Church exclusively for religious, charitable and educational purposes through the following:-

- 3.1 Worship - To exalt God through Spirit-filled worship
- 3.2 Mission - To evangelise the lost
- 3.3 Discipleship - To establish believers in Christ
- 3.4 Ministry - To equip God's people for ministry
- 3.5 Fellowship - To encourage one another in love

5. MEMBERSHIP

Church membership shall consist of people holding the following doctrines as an essential part of their religious belief, and who, in accordance with that belief, have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been immersed into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and have therefore been admitted into full fellowship in accordance with the constitution.

6. DOCTRINES

- 5.1 The Divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
- 5.2 The existence of One God in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- 5.3 The Deity and Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Son of God.
- 5.4 The fallen, sinful, and lost condition of all people.
- 5.5 The complete atonement of Christ for the sin of all people.

- 5.6 The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of humankind, the continued work of sanctification, and the preservation of believers to the heavenly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5.7 Salvation only results from divine grace and is expressed through a person's repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5.8 Belief in the resurrection of the dead and the final judgement of all people by the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. ORDINANCES

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only ordinances in the Scriptures.

- 6.1 **Baptism** consists of the immersion in water of believers upon their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In baptism believers express publicly their faith as they identify with their Lord in his death, burial and resurrection.
- 6.2 **The Lord's Supper** is a memorial of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ until he returns. This ordinance shall normally be observed on the first Sunday morning and the third Sunday evening of each month, and/or at such other times as may be arranged and shall be open to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. LEADERSHIP

- 7.1 In line with the Baptist belief in the priesthood of believers, the governance of the Church shall be vested in the membership, through its duly elected executive team.
- 7.2 The executive team, accountable to the membership through the church meeting, shall exercise the delegated responsibilities following Christian principles, in all matters of the church affairs including those that are not specifically provided for in the Constitution.
- 7.3 Other election for a determinate duration (subject to review and renewal) may be made for specific responsibility or function eg. Pastor, ministry team leaders, etc.

9. THE AUDITOR

The Church shall appoint annually an auditor of the treasurer's accounts for the ensuring year.

10. RECONCILIATION

Matters of disagreements/conflicts shall be reconciled in accord with Matthew 18:15-17 and matters requiring the notice of the Church, according to Galations 6:1. Thereafter, only after careful investigation, at the executive team's discretion, report to the church of the decision for ratification. The decision may include seeking the services of the Union for arbitration if agreed by all parties to the dispute.

11. DISSOLUTION

If the Church is unable to continue and is dissolved at a special church meeting, then all church assets, monies and property after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be distributed as determined by the executive team to a congregation of similar doctrinal beliefs or if unable to for whatever reason, to the Union.

12. REVISIONS TO CONSTITUTION

A periodic review of the Constitution for the betterment and development of the church shall be conducted and revisions approved at a special church meeting be recorded below:

Version	Date Approved	Recorded by	Details

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BY-LAWS

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other ... And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossian 3:12-17)

1. MISSION STATEMENT

- 1.1 Our Message : Jesus Only – Mighty To Save
- 1.2 Our Vision : In The Heart Of The City, With A Heart For Its People

2. AFFILIATION

The Church is a properly recognised constituent church of the Union. The Union is incorporated under the Baptist Union Incorporated Act 1902. Obligations being a constituent church include the submission of a membership fee, any change in the constitution and leadership, minutes and other documentation as requested.

3. NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION

The Church is registered as a charity and not-for-profit organisation with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). The assets and finances of the Church shall be applied solely in furtherance of its purposes and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly by way of profit to the members. Also, the Church is registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST).

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Basis of Fellowship

As members of the Church we will strive to:-

- a. Meet together regularly for worship.
- b. Live holy lives in Christian love, taking care to watch over each other for good, and to encourage one another to love and good works.
- c. Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the church.
- d. Pray for and support one another regularly.
- e. Pray for and support the ministries of the church.
- f. Pray for and support the leaders of the church.
- g. Support the church financially through our tithes and offerings.
- h. Participate at church meetings to facilitate decision making.
- i. Work to extend the Kingdom of God in our own locality and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

4.2 Application for Membership

- a. All persons applying for membership or for restoration shall be visited by two members appointed by the Council.
- b. Each application for membership shall be furnished with a copy of the Church Constitution and By-Laws. The visitors shall discuss the constitution with all applicants for membership.
- c. The report concerning the applicant’s: conversion, baptism, reasons for joining, understanding of Baptist principles and willingness to accept the basis of fellowship shall be presented to a church meeting which shall vote on the application.

4.3 Admission of members

A person may be admitted to membership by one of the following methods:-

- a. Profession of faith and baptism.
- b. Transfer from sister churches.
- c. Restoration.

d. Certification of baptism in other approved fellowships.

All applicants must receive a majority vote at a church meeting.

4.4 Reception of Members

All persons accepted for membership shall be received by the right hand of fellowship preferably at a celebration of the Lord's Supper and shall receive a certificate of membership.

4.5 Roll Book

a. The names and addresses of all members of the church, with the manner of their admission shall be entered in the Church Roll by the Secretary/Office Administrator.

b. The Church Roll shall be revised regularly by the Council before each church meeting. Should any member become irregular in attendance of Sunday worship, or be absent from the Lord's Table for six months, representatives from the Council shall be appointed to visit them. If, on the report of the visitors it appears that the absences are not justified, and the non-attendance persists, the names of these members shall then be transferred to the non-active roll.

5. **CHURCH MEETINGS**

5.1 All authority for the transaction of matters affecting the church is vested in the church meeting.

5.2 The Church meeting shall be held quarterly to consider the life and ministries of the church.

5.3 The Chairperson of the Council or the alternate delegate from the Council shall presides at all church meetings.

5.4 A quorum at any church meeting shall be not less than 25% of those on the current active Church Roll.

5.5 Only members are eligible to vote at any church meeting. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted. Others may attend and participate (but not vote) at the discretion of the members present.

5.6 Resolution for normal meeting agenda item shall be carried by a simple majority vote of members present. For any significant resolution, the members present may so decide on a higher majority vote. Councillor Nominees and Pastor can only be appointed upon a clear two-thirds majority vote by a secret ballot.

5.7 Annual General Meeting

An Annual General Meeting shall be held to elect and/or affirm the positions of the Church Council and to receive annual reports from Pastor, Council and each ministry area including audited annual financial statement.

5.8 Special Church Meeting

a. A Special Church Meeting on a specific matter may be called as necessary by the Council initiative or on the written and signed request of not less than ten (10) members

b. Such specific matter is normally considered as not part of the routine quarterly church meeting agenda eg. major capital expenditure, building additions and/or alterations, paid employment of office staff, etc.

5.9 Notification of Church Meeting

a. Notification of a church meeting shall be notified at Church services for at least two Sundays prior to the meeting including the nature of the meeting and agenda circulated.

b. For special meeting, at least four weeks notice shall be given in writing and meeting agenda circulated unless otherwise determined by the Council to address only very urgent matter beyond the control of the Council.

6. LEADERSHIP

6.1 Nomination and Election of Church Council

- a. All nominations of Councillors shall have due regard to the nominee's verifiable Christian character and witness within the church, and, unless in exceptional circumstances, being over 21 years of age and a church member of not less than 12 months (1 Timothy 3).
- b. Election shall be by nomination in writing in a designated nomination book with signatures of proposer, seconder and nominee, confirming prayerful consideration of the nomination by each signatory, no later than four weeks before the Annual General Meeting.
- c. The number of positions for Councillors, excluding the Pastor/s, is seven (7) and can be so varied by the members at the Annual General Meeting.
- d. The term of elected Councillors would normally be for a three (3) year period, Terms of less than three (3) years can be voted on to provide staggered retirements. About a third of the Councillors, would retire at each Annual General Meeting, but be eligible for re-election.
- e. If for any reason a Councillor can no longer continue or serve out their terms, the remaining Councillors will appoint an eligible member for the remainder of that term. This appointment to be ratified at the next church meeting by a secret ballot.

6.2 Church Council

- a. The Council is responsible to the members in all matters of the church in pursuing its Purpose. It includes:-
 - To direct the spiritual affairs of the Church (1 Timothy 5:17).
 - Caring for the spiritual need of the members (James 5:14).
 - Consider decision-making in biblical matters (Acts 15:1-6 & 16:4).
 - Commissioning of ministries and leaders (Acts 15:22 & 1 Timothy 4:14).
 - Management of the affairs of the church (Acts 6:3).
- b. After each Annual General Meeting, Councillors shall among themselves set apart a Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer.
- c. At least half of the Council forms a quorum.
- d. Every Councillor shall be delegated to exercise oversight and act as ex-officio on the various ministry teams.
- e. The Council shall approve and maintain supervision on the activities of any church group or external group that is using the church's name, property, buildings or equipment.
- f. The Council may develop as necessary, in conjunction with the membership, a statement of Vision, Priorities, etc to inspire the church in a direction that is kept current and relevant.

6.3 Pastor(s)

- a. The Church shall appoint and set apart a Pastor(s) in good standing with the Union as well as other people appropriately trained and gifted by the Holy Spirit to exercise ministries which will help the Church achieve its vision under God.
- b. The Pastor serves as an ex-officio member on the Council as well as the ex-officio leader of the pastoral team, comprising the Councillor/s and appointed member/s entrusted with the spiritual and pastoral oversight functions of eldership.
- c. All matters connected with the appointment of a Pastor shall, in the first instance be introduced to the church meeting as a recommendation from the Council. The services of the Union may be sought if considered necessary.

- d. The call for Pastor shall be made at a special church meeting. The call shall be for an indefinite period subject to periodic performance review and may be terminated after three months' notice from either side.
- e. If the Pastor shall be found guilty of any moral offence or guilty of any misconduct his pastorate shall automatically terminate either upon receipt of a written advice from the Union and/or determined in a special church meeting by a secret ballot.

6.4 Other Leaders

Other ministry team leaders shall be appointed by the Council and be accountable to the Councillor assigned to the area of ministry.

6.5 Financial Delegation

- a. Unauthorised capital or abnormal expenditure exceeding \$2,000 shall be reserved for the approval at a church meeting.
- b. The Treasurer shall prepare a budget covering the anticipated need for the forthcoming year.
- c. The Council shall have the discretion to refuse any donation or gift which comes from what they may deem an unworthy source.
- d. No financial appeals for groups not directly a part of the Church shall be circulated by any person without first obtaining the approval of the Council.
- e. On occasions where services or meetings for any purpose whatsoever are held in the church premises, no charge will be set for admission. In all such cases, contributions will be by donation unless where Goods and Services Tax (GST) receipt is required

6.6 Indemnity

- a. The Council shall effect and maintain insurance cover against liability arising from all actions relating to the execution of authorised duties, undertaken on behalf of the Church by the employed staff and member volunteers including the Councillors.
- b. Appropriate insurance shall be for all risks associated with the church property and the ministries of the church, both on and off the church premises.

6.7 Operations Manual

Council shall develop, adopt and maintain currency as necessary policies and practices for the purpose of governing aspects of the Church's life and mission or expressing a collective opinion about something that is happening in the wider Church or society.

7. REVISION TO BY-LAWS

A periodic review of the By-Laws shall be undertaken by the Council and any additions and/or alterations shall be confirmed in a church meeting and be recorded below:

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