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1.NAME

The name of the church shall be Tamworth Baptist Church.

2. BASIS

Membership shall consist of persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and have been baptised as believers into the Lord Jesus Christ upon profession of their faith. Such persons shall give evidence of their faith by their manner of life and shall hold to the following evangelical doctrines:

 \* The Nature and Unity of the Godhead

There is one God Who is eternal personal Spirit. He is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness and love. He is triune in essential being and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

 \* The Deity and Humanity of Christ

Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Godhead is eternally one with God the Father of Whose person and glory He is the accurate expression. To become man He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, truly God and truly man.

 \* The Holy Spirit

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

 \* The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy men of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

 \* The Sinfulness of Man

Man was made in the image of God and for fellowship with Him. By transgression of God's command he fell from fellowship with God and his nature was corrupted. As a consequence, all men are spiritually dead under Satan’s dominion and control and subject to God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, apart from God's grace, man is helpless and hopeless.

 \* Christ's Atonement for the Sin of Man

In order to redeem mankind from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, Jesus Christ became man and died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute. By His resurrection, God's acceptance of His atoning death was demonstrated. This atonement is sufficient for the whole world but effective only in those who receive it. The sinner is justified and reconciled to God, not through any personal merit but solely on the basis of God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ received through faith.

 \* The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God's provision of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their sinfulness, leads them to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and so brings them to spiritual birth as God's children and to fellowship in Christ. Working within the life of believers the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, witnesses to their relationship with God, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for effective service and produce graces for holy living.

 \* The Church

The Church is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. All regenerate persons are members of the universal Church of God which takes local form wherever groups of believers unite for worship, fellowship and service in accordance with scriptural sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. The Church recognises such by ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

 \* The Baptism of Believers only by Immersion

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of a person's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In accordance with New Testament Scripture it should be administered only by total immersion which symbolises the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the remission of sins and the believer's dedication of himself to God to live and walk in newness of life.

 \* The Communion

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ instituted by Him to be celebrated with the elements of bread and wine by believers in Christ until the end of the age. It commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord's substitutionary death. The celebration of the ordinance expresses our fellowship with and in the Lord Jesus Christ as members of the Body of which He is the Head.

 \* The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ

At the end of this age, according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in His glory to the earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return.

 \* The Resurrection of the Dead

At the end of this age, there is to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. After death the bodies of men return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God - the righteous to be with Him and the unrighteous to be reserved for the judgement.

 \* Rewards and Punishments in a Future State

God has appointed a day of final judgement for the world. At that time Jesus Christ will judge every man and each will receive reward or punishment according to his deeds. Those judged righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

3. GOVERNMENT

a) The church shall be affiliated with the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW and ACT, accepting its responsibility to support and share the ministries undertaken by the denomination.

b) 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.

Government shall be vested in the body of believers who comprise its membership.

c) 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. OBJECTS

The church adopts the following objects which it believes to be in harmony with the purpose of Christ's Church as declared in the New Testament.

To glorify God through:

a) The inspiration and maintenance of active spiritual growth among its congregation by the regular assembling for public worship and administration of the ordinances.

b) The proclamation of the truths of the Bible by all means so that persons experience salvation.

c) 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.

d) Proclaiming the sole Lordship of Christ Jesus in the lives of 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.

e) To assist those who are in need in the belief that social action and evangelism are mutually our response to the Gospel.

5. MEMBERSHIP

 Members shall be persons who give evidence of a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been baptised upon profession of faith and agree to hold doctrines set forth in the constitution.

1. Admission

Applicants for membership shall apply to the pastor, elder or the secretary. Often the initiative will be taken by the pastor or the church leadership. Applicants shall be visited by two members appointed 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 majority vote at a properly constituted church meeting.

Letters of transfer and/or commendation shall be sought and shall be taken into account by the church meeting.

b) Responsibilities of members

1. To endeavour at all times, by God's grace, to remain true to their commitment to Christ as expressed in their baptism.

2. To join in regularly in the worship of the Church.

3. To lead a life worthy of Christ in love, humility and peace, endeavouring to build each other up through encouragement, counsel and comfort.

4. To study the Scriptures in private and in groups as the Lord gives opportunity.

5. 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 Association of Churches.

6. To seek opportunity to use their gifts in the ministry of the church.

7. To pray regularly in private and where possible in fellowship for the people and ministry of the church and the family of churches.

c) Membership Roll

A roll of members shall be kept by the church secretary. The eldership will prayerfully review the membership roll at least every two years.

Members who for a period of six months fail to participate in the worship of the church or fail to honour other responsibilities of membership shall receive special attention. Every effort shall be made to restore such members to worship and fellowship. (Matt. 18: 12-14). Where these efforts fail, a recommendation may be brought to the church that such members’ names be removed from the roll or transferred to the non-active roll.

No member’s name shall be transferred or removed from the roll except by their request or the decision of a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a properly constituted church meeting.

Members of good standing unable to honour the responsibilities of membership due to infirmity may be transferred to an inactive membership roll at their request or by three-fourths majority of a members meeting. Members on the inactive roll are neither counted in a quorum nor able to vote but remain honoured members of the church family.

d) Transfer of Members

Any member in good standing may request that a letter of transfer be sent to another Baptist church he or she wishes to join or a letter of commendation to a church of another denomination. The deacons may process the request reporting their action to the next church meeting for confirmation.

e) Offence and Dispute

1. Where a member becomes an offence to the church by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, the church will make every effort, in the spirit of love and meekness, to restore such a member to fellowship. 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 three-fourths majority of members present and voting at a properly constituted church meeting.

2. In the event of a dispute arising either between the members, the pastor(s) and the members, or the church and Association of Baptist Churches, such dispute may, after effort has been made to resolve it within the church or through the services of the relevant officers of the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW and ACT, be referred for decision to the panel arbitrators elected by the Assembly, if agreed to by all parties ofthe dispute.

3. Matters of offence ordispute between members shall not be brought before the church unless the parties have first complied with direction ofMatt 18: 15-17.

6. CHURCH OFFICERS

Pastor(s) and elder(s) shall comprise the eldership of the church under the direction of the senior pastor. The eldership shall lead in the teaching, equipping, discipling and disciplining of the church within the framework of the church’s determined policy.

Pastor(s), elder(s), secretary, treasurer and deacons shall comprise the diaconate of the church which shall attend to the affairs ofthe church, under the direction of the elders, within the framework ofthe church's determined policy.

a. Pastor(s)

The Pastor(s) shall be person(s) acceptable according to 1 Timothy and Titus, of proven competence for Gospel ministry, and holding the doctrines set forth in the constitution.

Where more than one pastor is appointed the pastors shall comprise the pastoral team in which one shall be the senior pastor, who normally shall be ex-officio president ofall organisations, although this responsibility may be delegated by the pastor or, in the absence of a pastor, by the eldership to a suitable member ofthe church. Pastors will be appointed (or removed) upon a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting (by secret ballot) at a meeting ofwhich notice has been given on two Sundays preceding such meeting, the purpose ofsuch meeting having been specified. The quorum for such meeting shall be two-thirds of the resident membership eligible to vote.

When calling a Pastor

1. A pastorate committee appointed by the church shall include any existing pastor(s) and some elders and other members and attenders. The committee call for nominations for pastor. Members ofthe congregation may make recommendations for discussion within the committee by submitting a name, together with reasons supporting the recommendation, in writing to the committee.

2. The committee may advise the relevant officers of the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT of the vacancy and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate officer.

3. Should more than one name come before the committee, discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.

4. The committee shall communicate privately with this nominee, and/or with the appropriate association officer, to ascertain his willingness to allow his name to be placed before the church.

5. 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.

6. In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.

The terms of call will generally be as recommended by the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW and ACT and should be extended without stating any length of tenure. All terms and conditions of 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.

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

Termination: the tenure of office of a pastor may be terminated by two months notice in writing by either the church or pastor. The church can decide under certain circumstances on the early termination of the pastor.

b. Secretary

The secretary shall be elected to the diaconate every two years by the members at the annual church meeting

The 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.

Through an annual report, and otherwise, (s)he will ensure an adequate flow of information from the various committees to the church members.

The secretary shall keep an up-to-date roll of members of the church which shall be available for members to scrutinize.

c. Treasurer

The treasurer shall be elected to the diaconate every two years by the members at the annual church meeting.

 The treasurer shall receive all monies for the church and make payment as may be directed. All offerings shall be counted by at least two persons. (S)he shall keep a record of all financial transactions, keeping the church informed through regular reporting and be responsible for preparing the annual budget. A statement shall be presented to the annual church meeting covering the income and expenditure for the past year. Such statement shall be audited.

d. Elders

The church shall appoint elders from the membership of the church, who shall share with the pastor(s) in the teaching and leading of the church.

Elders shall be responsible to the church through the pastor(s) and hold one another mutually accountable before God. The elders shall:

1. Assist in shepherding those who are part of or associated with the church, willingly and ably encouraging and building up such persons, and being an example to the church in Christlike living.

2. Visit such persons mentioned in (1)

3. Participate in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church where they are recognised as having these gifts and are invited to do so by the pastor(s).

4. Participate in the leadership of the church including oversight of ministries, determining church direction and in matters of church discipline.

The biblical material especially 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1: 6-9 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 three-fourth majority vote at the annual church meeting and upon the unanimous nomination in writing of the pastor(s) and existing elder(s).

The term of office shall be two years with eligibility for reappointment.

The eldership, while meeting as part of the diaconate, may meet separately as is convenient for leading the church.

e. Deacons

Deacons are elected to specific roles to meet identified needs in congregational life.

Members of the church, (male or female) who have been in membership for at least twelve months and are over 21 years of age may be appointed to the office of deacon by the church at the annual church meeting.

At the members meeting prior to the annual church meeting the number and roles of deacons needed to meet the needs of congregational life shall be determined .

Nominees shall give evidence of spiritual maturity and fulfil the qualifications of 1Timothy 3:8-13.

The diaconate shall normally meet monthly and at times as required. The senior pastor may be chairman or a chairman may be appointed from the diaconate. The quorum for diaconate meetings shall be not less than half the number of elected members of the diaconate.

Nominations for each vacant diaconate role shall be invited from the members four Sundays prior to the annual church meeting. All such nominations should be in writing, signed by the nominator and nominee, include the role nominated for, and be in the hands of the church secretary not later than two Sundays preceding the annual meeting. Vacancies during the year may be filled in similar manner, after two Sundays notice of such election has been given. More than one nominee may be presented for any vacant diaconate role. Members may vote for only one nominee per vacant diaconate role. For each vacant role the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes above a two-thirds majority is elected. In the case of multiple candidates producing an outcome of less than a two-thirds majority for any role a second vote should be taken with all nominees excluded other than the highest polling nominee who may be elected by a two-thirds majority.

The deacons, as far as shall be in their power, shall attend and sustain all meetings connected with the church, shall assist in visiting the sick, and shall be empowered to transact the routine business of the church.

Each year, the number of deacons decided upon by the church shall be elected for a term of twoyears. Those retiring from office after twoyears shall be eligible for re-election. Vacancies filled mid-term will be for the remaining period of that term.

7. CHURCH MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

a. 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 elders.

An extraordinary meeting may be called for a special purpose and only consider matters of which written notice has been given.

An annual church meeting shall be called each year to receive reports and conduct elections as herein prescribed, such meeting to be within two months of the end of the church financial year which will close on 30th June each year.

When there is no (senior) pastor, the eldership shall be responsible for appointing a chairman. Alternatively, for special reasons in consultation with the relevant officers of the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT, an outside chairman may be appointed. Such a chairman shall be a member in good standing in a church affiliated with the Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT.

Non church members may be invited to be present at a church meeting without right to vote.

Except in the case of calling a pastor, and altering the constitution, the quorum for all church meetings shall be 25% of the resident church membership, recorded on the roll of members at the time of the meeting. If a quorum is not present within thirty 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 given at the intervening services.

Such meeting will be competent to deal with matters adjourned notwithstanding the absence of a quorum.

It should be noted that members under eighteen years of age may not vote on matters pertaining to the purchase or sale of property.

b. Procedure

All questions affecting the management and general interests of the church shall be submitted to the eldership before presentation to the church.

The vote of the church shall be taken ordinarily on the voices or by show of hands, but all voting for the election of pastor(s), officers and leaders of organisations mentioned herein will be by secret ballot. The chairman may only exercise one vote.

8 CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

The (senior) pastor may, at his discretion, preside at all meetings of the church, diaconate and church organisations.

All organisations associated with the church shall formulate and present, for approval to the eldership, guidelines governing their operations.

The leaders of church organisations shall be elected by ballot at the annual church meeting, upon nomination from the respective organisations, provided that any church member may submit a nomination. A closing date for nomination should be set.

All organisations shall submit to the eldership the names of all appointees to

their various offices other than those elected at the annual church meeting. The eldership shall then submit a report to a church meeting which shall have the right to discuss and confirm appointments.

9. SUNDRY

a. Ordinances - The pastor may baptise any believer upon application at his discretion. Alternatively a member of the pastoral team, diaconate, eldership or member of the church may baptise any believer upon approval of the eldership.

The Lord's Supper shall be regularly observed. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to take part in the Supper. Church members absent from the Lord's Table for six consecutive months shall be visited.

b. The Trustees - of all church properties shall be the Baptist Churches of N.S. W. Property Trust.

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

d. Insurance - Shall be effected on all church buildings and property and in any other manner recommended by the relevant officers of the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT, normally through the Baptist Insurance Pty Ltd.

e. The Ministry - of the Church shall be supported and expenses met by voluntary contributions. Cheques shall be signed on behalf of the church by two of the elected diaconate, one of whom shall be the treasurer.

f. Auditors - Shall not be affiliated with the church and shall be appointed at the annual church meeting and shall audit the financial records of the church for presentation at the next annual church meeting.

10. ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

No alteration shall be made to the constitution except by a three-fourths majority of members present and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose. The quorum for such a meeting shall be two-thirds of the resident membership.

Any proposed change to the constitution shall be given in writing as a notice of motion to the eldership and shall be distributed by the secretary to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.