

# THE CONSTITUTION OF NORTHWAY BAPTIST CHURCH

Original constitution adopted at a constitution meeting held on 5 November 1992  
Amendment: Acceptance clause, meeting held on 6 July 2002 (page 16)  
Revised constitution adopted at a Special General Meeting held on 30 June 2019

## 1. NAME

The name of the church shall be Northway Baptist Church, (hereafter referred to as "The Church")

## 2. BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Church shall maintain membership with the Baptist Union of Southern Africa but shall be independent of any control by it save as hereinafter provided. The church shall remain in membership of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa unless the church membership shall resolve otherwise by a 90% (ninety percent) vote of members present at a properly constituted meeting of members.

## 3. CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND OBJECTS

- 3.1. The Church recognizes Jesus Christ as its supreme Head and undertakes to manage its affairs according to the New Testament teaching, believing that as the body of Christ it is equipped by His Spirit to act, decide and direct as set out in Article 8.1.
- 3.2. The objects of the Church shall be:
  - 3.2.1. To glorify the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church.
  - 3.2.2. To Proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and to encourage and support the proclamation of that gospel (in accordance with Matthew 28:18-20) to the ends of the earth.
  - 3.2.3. To provide instruction and fellowship for believers, seeking to build them up to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

## 4. STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- 4.1. The Church believes
  - 4.1.1. In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament in their original writings as fully inspired of God and accepts them as the final authority for faith and life (II Tim 3:16).
  - 4.1.2. In one God eternally existing in three persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit (II Cor 13:14, I Peter 1:2).
  - 4.1.3. That Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit born of the virgin Mary and is true God and true man (Luke 1:35, Matt 1:21).
  - 4.1.4. That God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; and that all human beings inherit a sinful nature; which issues (in the case of those who have reached moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt (Gen 1:27, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1-3).
  - 4.1.5. That the Lord Jesus died for our sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, according to the Scriptures, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood (1 Cor 15:3-4, Eph 2:18, Rom 4:25, Rom 5:1).
  - 4.1.6. In the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His ascension into heaven, and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate (John 20:21, Acts 19, I Tim 2:5, 1 John 2:1).
  - 4.1.7. In the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1-2, John 14:3, Tit 2:2-14).
  - 4.1.8. In the personality of the Holy Spirit, His regeneration work, and abiding presence in the true believer.
  - 4.1.9. That all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God (Eph 2:8-9, John 1:12, Eph 1:13-14).

- 4.1.10. That all Christians are called to a life of holiness, devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and service for Him.
- 4.1.11. In the resurrection of both the just and the unjust, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected the offer of salvation.

4.2. Statement of Baptist Principles:

- 4.2.1. The Church as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached, and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association (I Peter 1:8-19, John 3:3-5, Acts 2:38, Rom 10:9).
- 4.2.2. Believer's Baptism as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration, it consists of the immersion in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 4.2.3. The principle of Congressional Church Government namely, that a constituted church meeting is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders.
- 4.2.4. The Priesthood of all Believers, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the ends of the earth.
- 4.2.5. The principle of Religious Liberty, namely, that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by a secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his/her conscience.
- 4.2.6. The principle of Separation of Church and State in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.
- 4.2.7. We believe that God has sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman, therefore we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behaviour is an inherent requirement for membership with the Northway Baptist Church.

## 5. MEMBERSHIP

The membership shall consist of:

- 5.1. Those whose names are in the church register of members at the time of the adoption of this Constitution.
- 5.2. Those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have confessed that faith openly through baptism, have accepted this Constitution and who have been admitted to membership in terms of Article 6.2.
- 5.3. Those who have been accepted by transfer, from some other Protestant Church in terms of Article 6.2.

## **6. ADMISSION OF MEMBERS**

- 6.1. Every application shall be confirmed at a General Meeting.
- 6.2. Application for church membership under Article 5.2 and 5.3 shall be made in the first instance to the Pastor or Secretary. The Leadership Team shall make careful enquiry regarding the applicant's spiritual experience and submit their recommendation to a General Meeting.

## **7. TRANSFER OF MEMBERS TO ANOTHER CHURCH**

- 7.1. Any member in good standing who desires to join another Baptist Church shall be given a letter of transfer upon application to the church concerned.
- 7.2. Any member in good standing who desires to join a Protestant Church other than Baptist shall be given a letter of commendation upon application to the church concerned.
- 7.3. A General Meeting shall be advised of any transfers.

## **8. PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

- 8.1. Under the divine Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ the final authority and responsibility in all matters touching the life and service of the Church rests with the membership. Each individual member has the responsibility and right to participate fully in the church's life and government, including the appointment of its leadership.
- 8.2. Every member shall be entitled and expected to attend General Meetings, unless prevented by some reasonable cause, and to exercise his/her vote for the welfare of the whole church, in a spirit of prayer and love.
- 8.3. Members shall be expected to support the ministry and maintain the fellowship of the church by:
  - 8.3.1. Prayer
  - 8.3.2. Attendance at services whenever possible
  - 8.3.3. Engaging in some specific service
  - 8.3.4. Conscientious giving as God's provision enables
  - 8.3.5. Introducing strangers to the church.

## **9. MEMBER CARE AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

- 9.1. If any member is absent from service of the church and/or neglects to comply with any of the privileges and obligations of membership for a period of six months or more, without apparent good reason, the Leadership Team shall make enquiry. Should no satisfactory response result, the Leadership Team may submit a recommendation to a General Meeting.
- 9.2. In the unhappy event of any allegation of unworthy conduct or erroneous belief against any member, the Leadership Team shall, if careful enquiry makes such a course necessary, report to a General Meeting for appropriate action.
- 9.3. The suspension or expulsion of any member shall be resorted to only if all efforts at restoration prove unsuccessful.
- 9.4. In purely personal matters, members shall be expected to act in accordance with the Lord's injunction in Matthew 18:15-17.

## **10. THE ORDINANCES**

- 10.1. Baptism:  
Believers Baptism shall be made available not only to those wishing to join the church, but to others also who desire to confess the Lord Jesus in His appointed way.
- 10.2. The Lord's Supper:  
The Lord's Supper shall be observed at such times as the Church shall decide. Attendance shall be open to all who love the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

## 11. GENERAL MEETINGS

- 11.1. Annual General Meeting:
  - 11.1.1. The Church business year shall end on the last day of February and the Annual General Meeting shall be held as soon thereafter as possible, but not later than 31 May.
  - 11.1.2. Reports and audited financial statements shall be submitted by the Secretary and Treasurer respectively.
  - 11.1.3. Reports shall be submitted by all departments of the Church.
  - 11.1.4. The elections of Ministers of Mercy and/or Overseers, if required, shall take place.
  - 11.1.5. The agenda shall be available to all members at the Church Service(s) on the Sunday prior to the meeting.
  
- 11.2. Special General Meeting:
  - Special General Meetings shall be convened:
    - 11.2.1. On the initiative of the Leadership Team
    - 11.2.2. Or, upon written request of at least 10 members (stating the purpose), and within one month of such request.
  
- 11.3. Quorum
  - 11.3.1. 15% of the total membership present when a meeting proceeds to business, shall constitute a Quorum.
  - 11.3.2. If a General Meeting fails to procure a Quorum it shall automatically reconvene at the same time and place seven days later, and the members then present shall constitute a Quorum.
  
- 11.4. Notice of Meetings
  - 11.4.1. Notice of all General Meetings shall be given on two Sundays preceding the date of the meeting.
  - 11.4.2. The non-receipt of the notice shall not invalidate the proceedings at the meeting.
  
- 11.5. Voting
  - 11.5.1. Only members who have attained the age of 18 years shall be entitled to vote.
  - 11.5.2. Only members in membership for more than six months at the time of the meeting shall be entitled to vote.
  - 11.5.3. Unless otherwise required elsewhere in the Constitution all matters shall be decided by the majority vote of those present.
  - 11.5.4. Voting shall be by show of hands unless –
  - 11.5.5. Otherwise required elsewhere in this Constitution.
  - 11.5.6. When one member requests a ballot.
  - 11.5.7. Postal or proxy votes will only be allowed if the person is physically unable to attend.
  
- 11.6. Chairman
  - 11.6.1. The Pastor or an Overseer, or in the event of there being more than one Pastor, the Senior Pastor, shall be ex-officio Chairman of all General and Leadership Team meetings - except when his own position is under consideration or when he may elect to vacate the Chair.
  - 11.6.2. In the absence of the Pastor the meeting shall elect a Chairman for that meeting.
  - 11.6.3. The Chairman shall have a deliberate and casting vote.
  - 11.6.4. If 1/3rd of members present and entitled to vote object to any matter, raised without proper prior notice, the Chairman shall rule that it be referred to a future General Meeting.

## **12. THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

- 12.1. The Pastor or Pastors, together with Ministers of mercy (also known as deacons) and Overseers (also known as elders) shall constitute the Leadership Team.
- 12.2. The Leadership Team shall act as generally or specifically directed by the church in General Meetings and shall be accountable to the Church for all tasks delegated to it, and for the proper administration of all Church funds.
- 12.3. The Leadership Team shall meet one month before and after Annual General meetings and whenever needed.
- 12.4. 50% of the Leadership Team shall constitute a Quorum.
- 12.5. At its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting the Leadership Team shall appoint from it its own members a Secretary and Treasurer.

## **13. OVERSEERS**

- 13.1. The Church may, from its membership, from time to time, see fit to appoint to the office of Overseer such person/s recognised as gifted by the Holy Spirit for this office, and who satisfy the requirements as detailed in the Epistles of Timothy and Titus.
- 13.2. Nomination for the office of Overseer shall be submitted in writing to the Church Secretary duly signed by the nominee, proposer and seconder not later than eight days prior to the date of the meeting when the election shall take place. After having considered any suggestions from Church members the Leadership Team shall recommend to the General Meeting such person/s from its membership of maturity, as it considers suitable for appointment to this office. The names of all nominees shall be made know on the Sunday prior to the date of the meeting at which the election shall take place.]
- 13.3. The appointments of each candidate shall be on the favourable ballot vote of two thirds of the members present.
- 13.4. Each Overseer shall hold office for two consecutive years, and continuance in office for further periods of two years shall be on the favourable vote of the members present at a General Meeting.
- 13.5. Overseers shall be members of the Leadership Team.
- 13.6. The Overseers and Pastors shall be responsible for the teaching ministry and spiritual oversight of the Church.
- 13.7. Overseers' meetings will be held weekly.
- 13.8. The duties of Overseers can be summarised as follows: The foundation for the ministry of Overseers can be seen in Acts 6:4: "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word"; the word 'devote' in this verse implies a steadfast and single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action. Overseers must insist on a schedule that affirms the spiritual priorities of prayer and the ministry of God's Word.

## **14. MINISTERS OF MERCY**

- 14.1. The Church may from its membership elect Ministers of mercy who, at the time of election, will be
  - 14.1.1. Over 21 years of age
  - 14.1.2. In membership not less than six months.
  - 14.1.3. Gifted by the Holy Spirit for this office, and who satisfy the requirements as detailed in the Epistles of Timothy and Titus.
- 14.2. A Minister of mercy shall hold office for two consecutive years but shall be eligible for nomination for re-election.
- 14.3. Nomination for the office of Ministers of mercy shall be submitted in writing to the Church Secretary duly signed by the nominee, proposer and seconder not later than eight days prior to the date of the meeting when the election shall take place.
- 14.4. The names of all nominees shall be made know on the Sunday prior to the date of the meeting at which the election shall take place.
- 14.5. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Minister of Mercy such vacancy may be filled in the aforesaid manner at a General Meeting, but only for the unexpired period of the previous incumbent's term of office.

- 14.6. The appointments of each candidate shall be on the favourable ballot vote of two thirds of the members present.
- 14.7. Ministers of mercy meetings will be held monthly, and the quorum shall be 50%.
- 14.8. The duties of Ministers of Mercy can be summarised as follows: From Acts 6 onwards, Ministers of Mercy effectively organise and centralise the church's charitable activities; they collect funds, distribute relief and show mercy; they help the homeless, the shut-in, the refugee and the disabled; they visit people and comfort, protect, encourage, counsel and guide them; they maintain a close ministry relationship with the Overseers.

## **15. THE PASTORATE**

- 15.1. The Choice and appointment of a Pastor(s) who has/have been baptised is vested in the membership of the Church.
- 15.2. When the appointment becomes necessary the procedure shall be as follows:
  - 15.2.1. A General Meeting shall appoint not less than four members to serve with the Leadership Team as a Call Committee.
  - 15.2.2. The Committee shall recommend only one name to any Special General Meeting.
  - 15.2.3. The invitation shall be contingent upon the following
    - 15.2.3.1. At least 2/3rds of members present shall vote in favour by ballot.
    - 15.2.3.2. The prospective pastor shall have confessed the Lord Jesus in believer's Baptism.
    - 15.2.3.3. The Pastor shall become a member of the Church upon assuming the pastorate.
    - 15.2.3.4. Any engagement between the Church and the Pastor shall be terminable by three months' notice on either side, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon.
    - 15.2.3.5. The prospective Pastor's name shall be on one of the ministerial lists of the Baptist Union of S.A.

## **16. CHURCH SECRETARY AND TREASURER**

- 16.1. The Church Secretary shall:
  - 16.1.1. hold office for two consecutive years but shall be eligible for nomination for re-election
  - 16.1.2. keep records of all general meetings
  - 16.1.3. be responsible for all formal correspondence on behalf of the church
  - 16.1.4. maintain and update the membership list
  - 16.1.5. keep other records as required
  - 16.1.6. prepare and present an annual report for the Annual General Meeting
- 16.2. The Church Treasurer shall:
  - 16.2.1. hold office for two consecutive years but shall be eligible for nomination for re-election
  - 16.2.2. keep records of all money received and disbursed
  - 16.2.3. see to the payment of current church accounts
  - 16.2.4. make other payments approved by the church
  - 16.2.5. prepare financial statements for leadership and general meetings as and when required
  - 16.2.6. maintain financial records suitable for auditing and regulatory purposes
  - 16.2.7. prepare and present an annual report for the Annual General Meeting

## **17. DEPARTMENTS**

- 17.1. The appropriate leaders of all departments shall be church members who have been in membership for not less than six months.
- 17.2. The leaders appointed by each department shall be approved by the Leadership Team.
- 17.3. Each department shall appoint its own committee.

## **18. FINANCE**

- 18.1. The Church shall be supported by voluntary giving.
- 18.2. The methods of voluntary giving shall be decided upon by the Ministers of Mercy.
- 18.3. Proper books of account shall be maintained.
- 18.4. The members shall appoint annually an auditor who shall examine the Church securities, audit the accounts and financial records of the Church and furnish a report thereon to the members in writing, not less than 14 days prior to the Annual General Meeting (see 11.1.1). Such report shall refer to the existence of the securities and the adequacy of the records maintained and shall express an opinion on the accuracy of the accounts presented.

## **19. FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS**

The Church shall have power to buy, sell, donate, let or hire, exchange, transfer, receive by way of donation or otherwise, movable and immovable property, and to invest its funds in Government or Municipal stock, mortgage bonds, or on fixed deposit or otherwise, in Banks, Post Offices, or approved organisations and shall further have power to borrow money with or without security in such manner as the Church shall think fit, negotiate loans from Bankers or others by overdraft or other.

## **20. IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

- 20.1. All immovable property acquired by the Church in any manner shall be registered in the name of the Trustees of the Church.
- 20.2. The Trustees for the time being of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa shall be the trustees for the time being of the Church. They shall act as required by resolution of a General Meeting.
- 20.3. Any proposal to acquire, sell, donate, exchange, mortgage, hypothecate, or otherwise alienate or encumber any immovable property shall have the prior approval of a Special General Meeting by a 2/3rds majority vote of the members present.

## **21. SALE OF PROPERTY**

The proceeds derived from the sale or other disposal of any property of the Church shall be used in such manner as the Church may deem best fitted to secure the furtherance of its objects.

## **22. INDEMNITY**

The Trustees and all Officers of the church shall be fully indemnified against all actions, costs, charges, losses, damages and expenses which they or any of them shall or may incur in the execution of their duties, except such as they shall incur by their own wrongful action done intentionally or with gross negligence.

## **23. DISSOLUTION**

- 23.1. The dissolution of the Church may be effected by a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority vote of members present at a Special General Meeting.
- 23.2. In the event of 23.1, such meeting shall thereupon authorise the Leadership Team to take the necessary steps to wind up the affairs of the Church, and to transfer the immovable property in due and proper form to the Baptist Union (see 23.4)
- 23.3. In the event of the Church at any time ceasing to exist, all acquired property or rights to property at such time shall ipso facto vest in and become the property of the Baptist Union which shall hold, administer or deal with it in such manner as the said Union through its Executive Committee may deem best fitted to secure the objects in Clause 3. The Church shall not give away or sell at reduced value any of its assets in order to prevent them becoming the property of the Baptist Union on dissolution.
- 23.4. The Church shall be deemed to have ceased to exist –
  - 23.4.1. When dissolution shall have been resolved in accordance with 23.1.

23.4.2. When public worship shall have been discontinued for a consecutive period of six calendar months.

#### **24. MODIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

- 24.1. Any proposal to change this Constitution may be submitted by the way of Notice of motion to any General Meeting.
- 24.2. Such notice of Motion shall be circulated to all members for consideration at a Special General Meeting convened not less than three months after the General Meeting referred to in 24.1
- 24.3. Proposed changes shall require the approval of 2/3rds of the members present at the meeting with the reservation that the number so present shall be not less than ten, regardless of the number of members of the membership roll.
- 24.4. The approval of this Constitution by the Executive of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa is a pre-requisite to membership of such Union. Any amendment of this Constitution or any other replacement thereof, shall likewise be subject to the approval of such Executive as a condition of continuing membership.
- 24.5. It shall be understood that Clauses 3, 4.1, 4.2, 8.1 and 23 are entrenched, and may not be revoked, amended, or amplified.

#### **25. RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES / AREA OF CONCERN.**

- 25.1. In the unhappy event of serious disputation or anxious concern
  - 25.1.1. as between a group/s of members and the remaining membership, or
  - 25.1.2. as between the Pastor and whole membership or a group within that membership, or
  - 25.1.3. as between a Pastor and his Leadership Team, or
  - 25.1.4. as between the Leadership Team and the membership, or
  - 25.1.5. as between Pastor and Pastor,

which in the opinion of any of the disputants mentioned above is impinging on the effective ministry of the Church or is seriously threatening its unity, it shall be the right and privilege of any such Pastor or of any four members of the Leadership Team to call a meeting with a view to resolving the differences. At such a meeting, three persons who are not members of the Church shall be present, namely the Area Co-ordinator of the Association with which the Church is in membership, the Confidential consultant of the Association and one other person nominated by the local Territorial Association acting through its Executive. If the Area Co-ordinator is also the Confidential Consultant of the Association or if there be no Area Co-ordinator or no Confidential Consultant, the Executive of the Territorial Association shall nominate a substitute, in order to ensure that there are three representatives in attendance who are not members of the Church. The Area Co-ordinator, if available, shall serve as the Chairman of the meeting with power to delegate this office to either of his two colleagues.

- 25.2. It shall be the obligation of the disputants and of the Church membership to afford the Church Leadership Team and three Association representatives when invoked, every reasonable opportunity to assist in bringing about a God-honouring solution. The Association representatives may, if they so elect, submit a written report with appropriate recommendations.
- 25.3. In the unlikely event of these deliberations still not resulting in any satisfactory resolution of the differences or the areas of concern the assistance of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa shall be sought. It shall likewise be the obligation of the disputants and the church membership to afford the Baptist Union (including its Executive and/or its Officers) when so invoked, the same opportunity as is envisaged in 25.2 above. The Baptist Union representatives, like those of the Association, may also if they so elect submit a written report with appropriate recommendations.

- 25.4. Should the local Territorial Association acting through its Executive or alternatively should the Baptist Union acting either through its Executive or through its Officers seek of its own volition and on its own initiative to assist in the circumstances of disputation envisaged in 25.1 above, but in the absence of formal request, the Church shall give due and proper consideration to such an approach.

This constitution was approved at a Special General Meeting held on 30 June 2019 and supersedes all previous constitutions.

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Church Secretary  
Andrew Potts

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Pastor  
Pieter Labuschagne