

Tweed Coast Community Baptist Church

Membership

*'Applicants shall be visited by the Eldership
to discuss their testimony to faith
in Jesus Christ,
membership responsibilities,
the Church Constitution and
its various ministries.'*

BAPTIST ORIGINS

Several theories of Baptist origins have been put forward at various times. They may be summarized as follows :

1. *Baptists began in Biblical times.*

This claim links Baptists with John, who baptised people in the Jordan River, but it has no historical basis.

2. *Baptists began as Anabaptists.*

Anabaptist is a term used to describe a variety of groups on the fringe of the 16th century *Protestant Reformation*. One thing they all had in common was the practice of believers' baptism, which means they re-baptised adult believers who had previously been baptised as infants. Although there was some limited contact between the Anabaptists and the Baptists, the two groups are historically quite independent.

3. *Baptists began in English Separatism.*

The *English Reformation* of the 16th century did not go far enough for many Protestants. Some tried to purify the *Church of England* from within (*Puritans*), while others separated from the state church, setting up independent congregations, and worshipping in a style based on their understanding of the Bible. One group was identified with **John Smyth** (c.1565-612).

A member of the *Church of England* and an ordained priest, *Smyth* first attended a Separatist meeting at *Gainsborough* in 1606. Before long they were all forced to flee the country. *Thomas Helwys* (c.1550-c.1616) financed their trip to *Amsterdam*, with *Smyth* as their Pastor. Believing that only those who make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ can be members of the church, and that this faith is best symbolised in believers' baptism, *Smyth* baptised himself and about thirty others, including *Helwys*.

Smyth changed his theological views several times, and this left him open to criticism. *Helwys* and about ten others returned to *England*, where, in 1611, he established the first Baptist Church on English soil at *Spitalfields*, just outside *London*. It's from this congregation, and others which developed soon afterwards, that today's Baptists can validly trace their historical lineage.

BAPTIST GROWTH

By 1644, there were 54 Baptist congregations in England. Even in the face of severe persecution (*Charles I*), they maintained an evangelistic fervour and a commitment to religious liberty. They also actively sought fellowship between the various congregations. By 1655, the term *Association* was well recognised among Baptists, and in 1660, a *General Assembly* was held with 115 churches represented. This can be seen as the beginning of a denominational consciousness.

During the latter part of the 18th century, the *English Revival*, led by *George Whitefield* and the *Wesleys*, was having an impact on much of English church life, including Baptists. Many converted Methodists joined them, bringing a new breath of evangelical life. The most notable of these was *Dan Taylor*, who formed a *New Connexion of Baptists* in 1770. By the time of his death in 1816, this new group had some seventy churches in it.

Other outstanding Baptists of this period were *Andrew Fuller* (1754-1815) and *William Carey* (1761-1834). These men focussed on the Christian's obligation to take the *Gospel* to those overseas who hadn't yet heard. In 1792, Carey founded the *Baptist Missionary Society*, laying the foundation for the great missionary advances of the 19th century. It also resulted in denominational consolidation, and the *Baptist Union of Great Britain & Ireland* was formed in 1891.

Baptist churches in *Australia* were not organised until almost 50 years after the first settlement in NSW, making them one of the last of the major denominations to be established. The first officially appointed Baptist pastor, the *Rev John Saunders* (1806-1859) arrived in Sydney on 1 Dec 1834, and the first Baptist church was constituted at Bathurst Street on 15 Dec 1836.

Unlike their counterparts in the *United States* where Baptists played a vital role in the growth of Christianity, Baptists in *Australia* have not become large in number or influential in the public arena. However, their churches provide a spiritual home for hundreds of thousands of Christians, and they continue to make their contribution to the pattern of faith in our nation. Apart from the *USA*, countries with a strong Baptist presence (1+ million) include *Brazil*, *Cameroon*, *Democratic Congo Republic*, *India*, *Myanmar* and *Nigeria*.

BAPTIST AFFILIATIONS

Early Baptists believed very strongly in the responsibility of each local church to appoint its own officers. It is spiritually competent to do this because the fullness of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is present in each congregation. At the same time, Baptists recognized that each church needs the fellowship of other churches.

The **purposes** of affiliation can be summarised as follows :

1. *Mutual inspiration/encouragement* - Conventions, etc.
2. *Christian Education* - Bible Colleges, Schools, etc.
3. *Social Responsibility* - Aged Care, Refuges, etc.
4. *Wider Baptist Witness* - World Aid, Mission, etc.
5. *Financial Administration* - Investments, Loans, etc.
6. *Pastoral Settlements* - Pastors, Youth Workers, etc.
7. *Church Growth* - Training, Outreach/Evangelism, etc.
8. *Church Conflict* - Reconciliation, Closure, etc.

You may be able to think of other areas of co-operation.

TCCBC works together with other Baptists at various levels:

- *The Northern Rivers Baptist Association*
- *The Baptist Union of NSW*
- *The Baptist Union of Australia*
- *The Baptist World Alliance*

Why not just be an independent church?

There is no Baptist denominational hierarchy. The Baptist Union only exists because we choose to put it there. Each church is self-governed, determining its own affairs. For example, every Baptist Church calls its own Pastor, owns its own buildings and assets, and determines its own programmes. Co-operation with other Baptists or even other denominations is for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

TCCBC ~ OUR STORY

In 1993, *Rev Don Moore* recommended to *BUNSW* that a *Church* be planted on the **Tweed Coast** because of 30,000 people projected to move into the area. *Rev Graham Eggins* started in 1994, and by August 1996, *TCCBC* was formally recognised by *BUNSW* with 22 foundation members.

The highlight of *Graham Eggins'* ministry was the setting up of a Bible-based, Gospel-centered **Community Church**, to serve in both practical and spiritual ways. A cornerstone of this work was the establishment of the *Second Chance Opportunity Shop* and the *Kids Club* program, both of which have broad appeal in the local community.

The *Baptist Union* supported the church plant, subsidising *Graham's* stipend for 6 years. We were also blessed by *Mr Charles Freriechs* who provided rent-free accommodation for the Church while it met in *Ace Plaza*. The present facilities were built using funds from the sale of the *Mullumbimby Church* and many other donations from across NSW.

Marcus Wright, our first *Youth Pastor*, was appointed in 2000 being responsible for *Scripture, Kids Club* and *Youth Groups*. His humility and servant attitude built strong personal relationships so the Youth work thrived. Before *Marcus* left in 2003, many young people come to know *Jesus Christ*. Some of these still attend our *Church*.

TCCBC decided to step out in faith in 2004 and set up a fellowship at Pottsville. *Rev Peter Knight* was called to head up the plant but it was postponed for a year while he served as *Interim Pastor* at Murwillumbah. Meanwhile, *Josh Bovis* replaced *Marcus* as *Youth Pastor* at Cabarita.

When *Graham Eggins* left the following year, *Peter Knight* took on the relieving *Senior Pastor* role at the Church. *Steve Williams*, a Baptist minister from Qld living in Pottsville, was appointed to continue the work there part-time. At the end of 2006, the *TCCBC Leadership* recommended that *Peter* not be offered the permanent position of *Senior Pastor*, and that the Pottsville church plant be closed.

Josh Bovis was only Youth Pastor for 6 months, but he was enthusiastic and his ministry Bible-based. He re-organised *Kids Church* forming *KUGRs* (Kids Under God's Rule). *Peter Knight* was an ideas person, always looking at ways to reach out into the community. The highly successful *Tumble Town* children's ministry at Murwillumbah was largely his initiative.

Wendy Davis (UK) was called as full-time *Youth Worker* to replace *Josh Bovis*. She began mid-2006 and has worked hard in all aspects of the Youth programs. The weekly *Girls' Bible Study* in particular has been a real blessing. In January 2009, *Wendy* was appointed to the *SRE* position at *Kingscliff High School* 2 days/week. Her involvement at *TCCBC* continues on the other 3+ days, and her call has been extended to 2010. She is supported by a team of faithful helpers.

Youth ministry was facilitated for many years by generous gifts from a donor who remains anonymous. *Wendy's* work is still dependent on money given sacrificially by several people in the congregation. An interest free loan from an anonymous donor also greatly helped the *Church* pay for the building, and this will soon be paid off. The Op Shop makes a significant contribution to *TCCBC* finances as well.

After the work at Pottsville closed, *Steve Williams* was asked to take on a part-time interim pastoral role at *TCCBC*, with an emphasis on bringing the *Church* together. A *Service of Reconciliation* was held early in 2008, and by Easter 2009, *Steve* felt the purpose for which he was called had been achieved, so he resigned. Returning from a trip overseas, *Steve* has stayed on to encourage us as we look for a new Pastor with a mandate for change.

The *Pastoral Selection Committee* has been almost ready to make a recommendation to the *Church* on several occasions but things haven't worked out as yet. With an aging congregation and declining numbers, it's getting harder to keep the *Church* activities going, and several of them have shut down. There's also a desperate need for Scripture teachers in the Schools. The best way to overcome these shortages is to build the numbers again, especially with young adults and families with children.

LIFESTYLE STATEMENT

Beliefs are not worth much unless they are translated into actions. (See: 2. *Basis in Church Constitution*.) Because of what we believe, the following seven practices are considered to be very important:

1. Bible Reading/Study (2 Timothy 3:15).

Since God's Word is the only completely reliable and truthful authority, we accept the Scriptures as our manual for daily living. Our first reaction when faced with a decision should be: *What does the Bible say about this?* We also encourage the memorisation of Scripture texts & passages. There are many Christian publications which facilitate the reading of God's Word every day. Scripture verses put to music can also be helpful.

2. Autonomy of the Local Church (Colossians 1:18).

Christ is the Head of the Church, not any religious organisation. Every local church should be self-governing, yet free to associate with other likeminded believers, eg, Scripture teaching in our local schools (TCCEA). If we plant '*daughter churches*', each new congregation will in time determine its own structure, worship style, ministries and strategies.

3. Priesthood of all Believers (1 Peter 2:9).

Every believer has direct access to God through prayer. They intercede for themselves, for others and for our world. God also speaks to us, especially through His Word. Every Christian should be involved in a ministry of some kind. People should be encouraged to find their own particular area of service, but everyone is on duty as examples of God's goodness & grace, every moment of every day. He gives each of us at least 1 spiritual gift through the Holy Spirit to enable the carrying out of these responsibilities.

4. Total Giving (1 Corinthians 6:20, 16:2).

Everything we own belongs to the Lord. At TCCBC we encourage people to give regularly each Sunday, cheerfully contributing to the Lord's work, in accordance with their individual circumstances. In practice, the more we earn, the more we should give. Some are not able to give much financially, but give in other ways, such as their time and their skills, while others provide transport or cook meals. Selfless acts of kindness are a valuable contribution to God's work.

5. Immersion (Colossians 2:12).

We practice believers' baptism by full immersion under water, as

that is the way *Jesus* was baptised (Matthew 3:16), and it is what he commands us to do in the *Great Commission* (Matt 28:19-20). If anyone finds this practice unacceptable, they must agree to our Church holding and teaching this position without hindrance. In practice, a member who doesn't personally believe in the doctrine of the 'baptism of believers only, and by immersion' shall be restricted in the following three aspects:

- i) *Voting in relation to the call or removal of a Pastor of TCCBC;*
- ii) *Voting in relation to a property transaction by this Church when it directs the NSW Baptist Union Property Trust;*
- iii) *Being a delegate of this Church to an Assembly of the Baptist Union of NSW.*

(TCCBC Constitution Section 5, Part A Eligibility of Membership)

6. Spirit-led Living (John 15:5, Ephesians 5:18, Phil 2:13).

The only way possible to live the Christian life is by God's power working within us through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives in every Christian from the moment they believe, giving them assurance of salvation, providing them with strength for living, helping them to understand spiritual truth, guiding them in doing what is right, and revealing God's plan for their lives. We seek to practice a daily dependence on the Spirit, enabling us to see people as Jesus does, to have the right attitude towards them, and to do what is right.

7. Telling Others About Christ (Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15).

It's the responsibility of every believer to share the *Good News* of forgiveness of sins through Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, and a sure hope of eternal life through his resurrection, with those God brings across their path. We try to practise personal sharing of our faith, ie, the spiritual journey we are on, knowing that other people in the church can be called upon for help/advice if there are questions we can't answer. Other possibilities may include asking friends/neighbours to church services/special events, or helping do a letterbox drop somewhere along the Tweed Coast. Our church presently has a very active Youth Program, with a Kids' Club, Junior & Senior Youth and a Young Adults Group. Scripture is taught in several schools, including Kingscliff High, and Pottsville, Bogangar, Durambah and Burringbar Primary.

STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

These principles will help us function effectively as a church :

A. *Gift-based structure.*

The church is a living organism, not just an organisation. The Bible describes it as the *Bride of Christ*, the *Family of God*, the *Body of Christ*, and a *Flock*. Our church structures therefore need to be *relational*, each one of us looking after the interests of others. *Leadership* is not just a position, but a ministry, and should be determined on the basis of gifting.

B. *Atmosphere of acceptance*

Friendly first impressions are very important. We need to have a *non-judgmental attitude* towards all those who come along, especially non-believers, and to be very careful what we say about others. Loving churches grow, and growing churches love. Remember, actions often speak louder than words. Jesus is the best example for us to follow!

C. *Purposes clearly defined*

- We celebrate God's presence in worship.
- We study God's Word and apply it in our lives.
- We build each other up through encouragement.
- We interact with others in our local community.
- We help needy people (*Op Shop* ministry, etc.)
- We support missionaries to other countries.

D. *Inspirational music and singing*

Because our congregation is made up of people of all ages, we usually use a combination of older hymns, contemporary songs and Scripture choruses. Our players come from a variety of musical backgrounds, so we try to do our best with what God has given us. We trust our worship is joyful and up-lifting, bringing glory to God, and renewing us for life and ministry.

E. *Positive Preaching/Teaching*

We hope our teaching & preaching is encouraging, practical, relevant and challenging. Sometimes the

sermons are topical; sometimes they're expository; sometimes we work our way through an *Old Testament* or a *New Testament Book*. Bibles are available in the pews, but if possible, we'd rather people bring their own copy, so they can make notes as they go. We believe if people come along with an open mind and a teachable heart, they will be blessed by the message from God's Word.

F. Lay ministry

- ❖ We believe every member should be in *ministry*.
- ❖ We believe every ministry is *important*.
- ❖ We believe every member needs to be *equipped*.
- ❖ We believe every Christian has *one or more* gift.
- ❖ We believe every member needs to be *affirmed*.
- ❖ We believe in *lay participation* in our services.
- ❖ We believe in *commitment* to God & each other.

G. Church growth

A church must keep growing both *qualitatively* and *quantitatively*, because this is God's will. (See *Acts 2:47, Colossians 2:18-19, 2 Peter 3:18*) This growth usually won't happen unless it's intentional. ***Visionary leadership is the key.*** Members need to be mobilised for ministry and outreach. *Evangelism strategies* must take into account where unsaved people are at. This will determine our goals & style. Church structures may have to change as the congregation grows.

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Remember...

In the essentials, there should be *unity*.
In the non-essentials, there should be *liberty*.
In all things, there should be *charity*.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

I feel led to join the *Tweed Coast Community Baptist Church*.

In doing so, I commit myself to the following :

1. I will protect the unity of our church...

- ✓ *by acting in love toward other members*
- ✓ *by refusing to gossip about church matters*
- ✓ *by following those in leadership positions*

(Romans 15:5,19; 1Peter 1:22; Eph 4:29; Hebrews 13:17)

2. I will share the responsibility of our church...

- ✓ *by praying regularly for its growth*
- ✓ *by warmly welcoming those who visit*
- ✓ *by encouraging the other members*

(1 Thessalonians 1:2, 5:11; Luke 14:13; Romans 15:7)

3. I will serve the ministry of our church...

- ✓ *by using my talents and discovering my gift/s*
- ✓ *by being equipped to serve by the Pastor/s*
- ✓ *by developing a servant's heart like Jesus*

(1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:11-12; Philippians 2:3-4,7)

4. I will support the testimony of our church

- ✓ *by attending as often as possible*
- ✓ *by contributing regularly to the offerings*
- ✓ *by endeavouring to live a Godly life*

(Hebrews 10:25; Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 16:2)