

Tweed Coast Community Church



The
Constitution
of the
Tweed Coast Community
Baptist Church
Adopted
31st
May 2009

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1. NAME

The name of the church shall be the Tweed Coast Community Baptist Church.

2. BASIS

Membership shall consist of persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and have been baptized by immersion as believers in 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 held by the Baptist Union of NSW as approved by the 1979 Assembly :

1. 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. At TCCBC, we also believe God is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe.

2. The Deity and Humanity of Christ.

Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Godhead is essentially 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, so that two whole and perfect natures, the nature of God and the nature of man, were united in one Person; truly God and truly man.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.



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6. 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.

7. 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 sinful-ness, 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 produces graces for holy living.

8. 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 principles. All believers are called to a priestly ministry in the offering of spiritual sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. God calls individuals to positions of oversight and leadership or to special ministries. The Church recognises such by ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing elders, deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

9. The Baptism of Believers 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 symbolizes the believers' identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection of himself to God to live and walk in newness of life.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. The Resurrection of the Dead.

At the end of the age, there is to be a resurrection both of 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 judgment.

13. Rewards and Punishment 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



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3. GOVERNMENT

- A. The Church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW, 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.
- 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 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 the 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 disciplining 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 the 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 evangelism together with social care and social action are mutually our response to the Gospel.

5. MEMBERSHIP

A) Eligibility of Membership

Members shall be persons who give evidence of a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who agree to hold to the doctrines set forth in this Constitution except possibly for the doctrine of the baptism of believers only by immersion. Should a member not believe in the doctrine of the baptism of believers only by immersion then they must agree to this Church holding and teaching this doctrine without hindrance. Further, a member who does not personally believe in the doctrine of the "baptism of believers only, and by immersion" shall be restricted in the following three respects:-

- i. *Voting in relation to the call or removal of a Pastor of this Church;*
- 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.*



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B) Admission

Applications for membership shall apply to the Pastor(s) or Eldership. Often the initiative will be taken by the Eldership. 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. A recommendation shall be presented by the Eldership to the Church following the visitation. Applicants may be admitted to membership upon a majority vote at a properly constituted Church meeting. Letters of transfer and/or commendation shall be sought and may be taken into account by the Eldership and the Church meeting. Where the person has not been baptized by immersion as a believer the elders should be satisfied that the person has seriously wrestled with the issue and demonstrated Christian service. The Pastor or an approved delegate shall baptize believers at his own discretion when convinced of their genuine repentance and faith in the Christian Gospel. Adequate teaching should be supplied so that the applicant is encouraged to consider baptism and Church membership together as a single step. When requested, the Church should take steps where practically possible to receive the baptized person into membership in the one service. New Christians should be provided with adequate nurture and every opportunity to go on to maturity in Christ.

C) Responsibilities of Members

- i) To endeavor at all times, by God's grace, to remain true to their commitment to Christ as expressed in their baptism.
- ii) To join regularly in the worship of the Church.
- iii) To lead a life worthy of Christ in love, humility and peace, endeavouring to build each other up through encouragement, counsel and comfort.
- iv) To study the Scriptures in private and in groups as the Lord gives opportunity.
- v) 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 Union of Churches.
- vi) To seek opportunity to use their gifts in the ministry of the Church.
- vii) To pray regularly in private and where possible in fellowship for the people and ministries of the Church and the family of Churches.

To maintain the integrity of our Christian witness in the world and to make the most of every opportunity to share the love of God both in declaring the Gospel truths and through practical care, with our neighbours.

D) Membership Roll

The Eldership will prayerfully review the membership roll annually. An absentee or non-residential roll may be kept in addition to the active membership roll. 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 the roll, or, if appropriate, transferred to an absent members' roll.

A member whose name is on the absent members' roll will not be:-

- i) *Entitled to vote at the Annual Church Meetings.*
- ii) *Counted for the purpose of calculating quorums;*
- iii) *Counted for the purpose of paying affiliation fees to the Baptist Union of NSW or the Northern Rivers Baptist Association.*

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.



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E) Dismissal of Members

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

F) Offence and Dispute

- i) 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 a three-fourths majority of members present and voting at a properly constituted Church meeting and upon the recommendation of the Eldership.
- ii) 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 Department of
- iii) Home Ministries or the General Superintendent be referred for decision to the Panel of Arbitration elected by the Assembly, if agreed to by all parties of the dispute.
- iv) Matters of offence or dispute between members shall not be brought before the Church unless the parties have first complied with the direction of Matt. 18:15-17.

6. CHURCH OFFICERS

Pastor(s), Elders, Deacons and Ministry Team may be appointed as officers of the Church. Such officers shall attend to the affairs of the Church, within the framework of the Church's determined policy.

A. PASTOR(S)

The Pastor(s) shall be person(s) whose credentials are acceptable to the Baptist Union of NSW, has been baptized by immersion upon a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and holds the doctrines set forth in this 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 of all organisations, although this responsibility may be delegated to another member of the team nor another Elder. Pastors will be appointed upon a three-fourths majority or removed upon a simple majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting of

which notice has been given on two Sundays preceding such meeting and the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum for such meeting shall be 45% of the membership eligible to vote. Voting shall be by secret ballot.

When Calling a Pastor

- i) *Negotiations for the calling and appointment of a Pastor shall be entrusted to the Pastoral Selection Committee comprising any continuing Pastors, the Elders and representatives from the Deacons, Ministry Team and the wider Church. If required, help may be sought from the Baptist Union of NSW who may provide guidance and if desirable a moderator to act as chairperson of the Pastoral Selection Committee.*
- ii) *The Pastoral Selection Committee shall make recommendations to the Church. Members of the congregation may make suggestions of names to the Pastoral Selection Committee together with reasons supporting the recommendation in writing.*
- iii) *Should more than one name come before the Pastoral Selection Committee, discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.*
- iv) *The Pastoral Selection Committee shall communicate privately with this nominee, and/or with the appropriate Union officer, to ascertain his willingness to allow his name to be placed before the Church.*
- v) *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.*
- vi) *In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.*



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Terms and Termination

The terms of the call will generally be as recommended by the Baptist Union of NSW 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 made in writing to the Church indicating acceptance of terms of call. After 2 years all church ministries (including the pastorate but not the pastorate in isolation) shall be thoroughly reviewed by the Elders and the Church. At this time a further time for another full church review shall be set. The tenure of office of a Pastor may be terminated by two months' notice in writing by either the Church or the Pastor.

B. ELDERS

The Church may appoint Elders from the membership of the Church, who shall share with the Pastor(s) in the spiritual oversight of the Church. Elders shall be responsible to the Church through the Pastor(s) and shall:-

1. *Assist in shepherding those who are part of or associated with the Church, willing and ably encouraging and building up such persons, and*
2. *Being an example to the Church in Christ-like living;*
3. *Visit such persons mentioned in i);*
4. *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);*
5. *Promote and protect the spiritual vitality of the congregation with clear statements on ministry direction and emphases, and where appropriate, considered responses on major issues of concern.*

The Biblical material, especially 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Timothy 2:12) of known maturity, spirituality and gifts appropriate to the office shall be appointed upon a three-fourths majority vote at a duly notified Church Meeting and upon the unanimous nomination in writing of the Pastor(s) and existing Elder(s). Such nominees shall be over the age of twenty-one years and have been in the Church for at least six months. They must be persons who have been baptized by immersion as believers. The term of office shall be two years with eligibility for re-appointment.

Elders, while meeting separately, may from time to time meet with the Diaconate for mutual benefit. In the instance where there are no Elders other than the Pastor, or where there is no Pastor and just one Elder, this person shall be assisted in the Eldership responsibilities temporarily by the appointed Deacons. Further guidance and assistance may also be sought from the Department of Home Ministries of the Baptist Churches of NSW or its delegates.

C. DEACONS

Members of the Church, who are over the age of eighteen years and have been in membership for at least six months, may be appointed to the office of Deacon by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. Deacons shall be responsible to the church and shall:-

1. *Assist and sustain all meetings connected with the Church;*
2. *Assist in visiting the sick and caring for those in practical need;*
3. *Together with the Elders and Pastor(s) maintain discipline in the Church;*
4. *Be empowered to transact the routine business of the Church.*

The maximum number of Deacons (including the Church Secretary and Treasurer) to be appointed, unless a number is determined at a Members Meeting prior to the Annual Church Meeting shall ordinarily be seven, or one for every ten members, whichever is the larger. Nominees shall give evidence of spiritual maturity and fulfil the qualifications of Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13).



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The Diaconate shall meet monthly and at other times as required. The meeting of the Diaconate shall normally be attended by the elected Deacons, the Senior Pastor & any Associate Pastors. The Senior Pastor may be the Chairman, or his delegate from the Pastoral Team, or a Chairman may be appointed from among the Deacons. The quorum for Diaconate meetings shall be not less than half the number of elected members of the Diaconate.

Nominations for the office of Deacon shall be invited from the members two Sundays prior to the Annual Church Meeting. All such nominations should be in writing, signed by the nominator and nominee, and in the hands of the Church Secretary not later than the Sunday preceding the Annual Meeting. Vacancies during the year may be filled in a similar manner, after two Sundays notice of such election has been given. The names obtaining the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected, providing that no candidate shall be deemed elected who does not secure a majority of those present and entitled to vote. Deacons shall be elected for a term of one year.

Those retiring from office shall be eligible for re-election.

D. SECRETARY

A Church Secretary should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting from those elected as Deacons. If this is not practical, eg, not all the newly elected Deacons are present at the ACM, the Deacons will choose one of their number to act as Secretary. Such an appointment must be affirmed by the Church at a properly constituted meeting. In exceptional circumstances eg, where no one on the Diaconate is able to serve as Secretary, the Leadership (Pastor, Elder/s, Deacon/s) may nominate someone for the position as a Deacon "ex-officio" ie attend Deacons meetings, but has no vote. The Church will decide on the nomination at a properly constituted meeting. The notice period of two weeks for the election of Deacons still applies.

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, 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.

E. TREASURER

A Church Treasurer should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting from those elected as Deacons. If this is not practical, eg, not all the newly elected Deacons are present at the ACM, the Deacons will choose one of their number to act as Treasurer. Such an appointment must be affirmed by the Church at a properly constituted meeting. In exceptional circumstances eg, where no one on the Diaconate is able to serve as Treasurer, the Leadership (Pastor, Elder/s, Deacon/s) may nominate someone for the position as a deacon 'ex-officio', ie attends Deacons' meetings, but has no vote. The Church will decide on the nomination at a properly constituted meeting. The notice period of two weeks for the election of Deacons still applies.

The Treasurer shall receive all monies for the Church and make such payments as may be directed (or for the specific activities referred to in Section 8 shall supervise the financial reporting of an assistant). The Treasurer shall keep a record of all financial transactions, keeping the Church informed through regular reporting. An audited statement shall be presented to the Annual Church Meeting covering the income and expenditure for the past year.



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F. MINISTRY TEAM

The Church may also recognise another body called the Ministry Team. This body shall comprise of leaders of specific focused areas of ministry in the life of the Church, such as Youth, Elderly, Singles, Missions, Prayer, Evangelism, Music, Community Care, etc. This coordinating body is answerable to the Church through the Elders, who are responsible for recognising and nominating members of the Team to the Church for it to consider and appoint as it sees fit. A Pastor, an Elder and a Deacon would ordinarily attend meetings to connect ministries across the Church and to assist the ministries in support and co-ordinated direction and spiritual unity.

7. CHURCH MEETINGS / PROCEDURES

A. Meetings

Meetings are important for keeping the members informed through reports of the various ministries, considering reviews and recommendations of overall operations, and obtaining Church decisions on matters of spiritual substance and broad ministry directions of the Church, which the Elders and Deacons have had a reasonable opportunity to present recommendations upon to the Church. Day to day matters and specifics are better handled by the Deacons and Elders.

Extraordinary Meetings may be convened by the Pastor(s), Elder(s) or Diaconate, or upon a requisition signed by 10% of the Church Membership. 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 meetings 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 Pastor, one of the Elders or one of the Diaconate or a Church member shall be elected to preside. Alternatively, for special reasons, in consultation with the Director of Home Ministries or the Regional Superintendent, an outside Chairman may be appointed. Such a Chairman shall be a member in good standing in a Church affiliated with the Baptist Union of NSW. At the discretion of the Chairman, non-Church members may be invited to be present at and to take part in the whole or any part of a Church Meeting, yet without a 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 Church membership, (or as determined by each Annual Church Meeting, but in any event shall not be less than 15% of Church membership), recorded on the roll of members at the end of the last financial year. If a quorum is not present within thirty minutes of the appointed starting time of the meeting, it 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 the 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 substantially affecting the management and general interests of the Church shall normally be submitted to the Diaconate, Eldership or Pastoral Team before presentation to the Church. The vote of the Church shall be taken ordinarily on the voices or by a show of hands, but all voting for the election of officers mentioned here- in will be by secret ballot. The Chairman may only exercise one vote. Where the letter of this Constitution conflicts with the spirit of it, the spirit, as deemed applicable by the Pastor(s) and Elder(s), shall be preferred.



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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 Leader of Church organisations (with the prior approval of the Elder(s)) shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting, upon nomination from the respective organisations, provided that any Church member may submit a nomination. A closing date for nominations 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 the appointments.

To assist the Eldership and Diaconate, a Church Coordinating Council, representative of the various organisations and Committees, may be appointed and shall meet as required. The object of this Council is to ensure that all activities of the Church and its organisations function in harmony and with the maximum efficiency for the life of the Church. The Eldership shall determine the appointment of representatives from each organisation on the Council. The Pastor or his delegate shall be Chairperson.

The Church Meeting may appoint sub-committees and groups for specific functions to assist in the general operation of the Church's ministry. Such groups shall be accountable in the first instance to the Eldership or Diaconate and through them report to the Church. Separate bank accounts and reporting will be necessary yet regular reports must be available to the Church Treasurer and Diaconate for approval and annual auditing along with other Church accounts.

9. SUNDRY

A. Ordinances – The pastor may baptize any believer upon application at his discretion, or alternatively, a member of the Pastoral Team, Eldership, Diaconate or member of the Church may baptize any believer upon approval of the Pastoral Team. 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 Supper for six consecutive months shall be visited.

B. Trustees – The Trustees of all Church properties shall be the Baptist Churches NSW Property Trust.

C. Insurance – Insurance shall be effected on all Church buildings and property and in any other manner recommended by the Department of Administration of the Baptist Union of NSW, normally with Baptist Insurance Pty Ltd.

D. Ministry – The ministry of the church shall be supported and expenses met by voluntary contributions. Cheques shall be signed on behalf of the Church by any two of the elected Deacons or a person authorized by the Diaconate.

E. Auditors – Auditors shall be appointed at the Annual Church Meeting and shall audit the financial records of the Church for presentation at the Annual Church Meeting, including all organisations.

F. 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 remuneration where a member is an employee of the church, fee for services where a member is a contractor to the church and reimbursement of expenses incurred by a member on behalf of the church.

G. 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 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.

10. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

No alterations shall be made to the Constitution except by 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 45% of the membership. Any proposed change to the Constitution shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the Diaconate and shall be distributed by the Secretary to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.

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