

# CONSTITUTION

## 1. NAME

The name of the Church shall be **Hurstville Chinese 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 as approved by the 1979 Assembly:

### (a) **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.

### (b) **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, 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.

### (c) **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.

### (d) **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.

### (e) **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.

**(f) 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.

**(g) 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 convicts 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 produces graces for holy living.

**(h) 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 deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

**(i) 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.

**(j) 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.

**(k) 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.

**(l) 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.

**(m) 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 for ever 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 Baptist Union of New South Wales, accepting its responsibility to support and share the ministries undertaken by the Denomination.
- b. Recognizing 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 compose its membership.
- c. Notwithstanding this principle of autonomy, the Church recognises and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation 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 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 discipline 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 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.

##### **(a) Admission**

- i. All applications for membership shall be made through a Pastor, the Secretary, or a Deacon of the Church.
- ii. Applicants for membership shall be interviewed by two members appointed by the Church or the Diaconate.

Applicants who give evidence of a change of heart and a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who have received believers' baptism by immersion, pouring or sprinkling and who accept the faith and practice of this Church may be received into the membership on the recommendation of the interviewers and the vote of the Church.

- iii. Commendation by other churches that practice baptism by immersion, pouring or sprinkling will be taken into account by the interviewers making the recommendation to the Church.
- iv. Persons under the age of 18 years may be accepted as members but will not be eligible to vote on matters of Church business.
- v. A copy of this Constitution should be given to every prospective member, a condition of their acceptance as members being that they express agreement with its provisions.

**(b) Responsibilities of Members**

- i. To endeavour 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 ministry of the Church and the family of Churches.
- viii. To attend Church Meetings whenever possible.

**(c) Membership Roll**

A roll of members shall be kept by the Church Secretary. The Diaconate, Eldership or other appropriate body 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. (Matthew 18:12-14). Where these efforts fail, a recommendation by

Diaconate may be brought to the Church that such members names be transferred to an inactive members roll.

No members 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.

**(d) Transfer of Members**

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

**(e) Offence and Dispute**

- i. Where a member becomes an unbeliever, or practices a faith that deviates from the orthodox evangelical doctrines as mentioned in the Scriptures, the Church will make every effort to change his or her heart and lead him or her back to fellowship. Where such efforts fail the Pastoral Team, Elders and the Diaconate may jointly decide to terminate his or her membership. The Diaconate shall inform the members at next Church meeting of the decision taken.

Where a member becomes an offence to the Church by reason of immoral or un-Christian 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 his or her membership. Termination or suspension of membership shall be on the decision of three-fourths majority of members present and voting at a properly constituted Church meeting.

- 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 services of the Department of Home Ministries or the General Superintendent, be referred for decision to the Panel of Arbitrators elected by the Assembly, if agreed to by all parties of the dispute.
- iii. Matters of offence or dispute between members shall not be brought before the Church unless the parties have first complied with the direction of Matthew 18:15-17.

**6. CHURCH OFFICERS**

Pastors, Secretary, Treasurer, Elders and/or Deacons, and/or Management Committee members may be appointed as officers of the Church. Such officers shall comprise the

Diaconate of the Church which 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, 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-official President of all organisations, although this responsibility may be delegated to another member of the team or member of the Diaconate.

Pastors will be appointed or removed upon a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting of which notice has been given on the two Sundays preceding such meeting, the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum for such meeting shall be 40% of the membership eligible to vote.

*When Calling a Pastor*

- i. A Pastorate Committee appointed by the Church shall call for nominations. Members of the congregation may make recommendations for discussion within the Committee by submitting a name, together with reasons supporting the recommendation, in writing to the Committee.
- ii. The Committee may advise the Department of Home Ministries of the vacancy and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate officer, including the Director or Regional Superintendent.
- iii. Should more than one name come before the Committee, discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.
- iv. The 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 presented to 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.

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(s) 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.

Termination

The tenure of office of a Pastor may be terminated by two month's notice in writing by either the Church or the Pastor. Upon attaining the age of sixty-five years the Pastor shall retire from the Pastorate except, however, he may remain in office after that age by annual vote of the Church.

**(b) Secretary**

A Church Secretary should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Church Secretary will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for Deacons will apply in relation to the Secretary.

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 annual reports, 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.

Unsuccessful nominees for Secretary may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for Deacons.

**(c) Treasurer**

A church Treasurer should be elected by the Church at the Annual Church Meeting. The Treasurer will be a member of the Diaconate by virtue of office. Eligibility requirements and mode of election as for Deacons will apply in relation to the Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall receive all monies for the Church and make such payments as may be directed. He shall keep a record of all financial transactions, keeping the Church informed through regular reporting. A statement shall be presented to the Annual Church Meeting covering the income and expenditure for the past year. Such statement shall be audited.

Unsuccessful nominees for Treasurer may, if they consent, be included in the ballot for Deacons.

**(d) Elders**

The Church may appoint Elders from the membership of the Church, who shall share with the Pastor(s) in the Pastoral ministry of the Church.

Elders shall be responsible to the Church through the Pastor(s) and shall:

- i. Assist in shepherding those who are part of or associated with the Church, willing and ably encouraging and building up such persons, and being an example to the Church in Christlike living;
- ii. Visit such persons mentioned in (i);
- iii. Participate in the preaching and teaching ministry of the Church where they are recognized as having these gifts and are invited to do so by the Pastor(s).

The Biblical material, especially 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:7-9 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 a three-fourths majority vote at the Annual Church Meeting and upon the unanimous nomination in writing of the Pastor(s) and existing Elder(s) or the Diaconate. Such nominees shall be over the age thirty years and have been in membership in the Church for at least one year.

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.

**(e) Deacons**

Members of the Church, who are over the age of twenty-one years and have been in membership for at least one year may be appointed to the office of Deacon by the church at the Annual Church Meeting.

The number of Deacons, including the Church Secretary and Treasurer, to be appointed may be up to ten. Nominees shall give evidence of spiritual maturity and fulfill the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The Diaconate shall meet at least quarterly and at other times as required. The Senior Pastor may be the chairman or a chairman maybe 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 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.

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, shall maintain discipline in the Church, and shall be empowered to transact the routine business of the Church.

Each year, half the number of Deacons decided upon by the Church shall be elected for a term of two years. Those retiring from the office shall be eligible for re-election.

**(f) Management Committee**

The Annual Church Meeting may elect a Management Committee including the Church Secretary and Treasurer to assist in the ministry and routine business of the Church.

**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 Diaconate.

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 thirtieth June each year.

When there is no (senior) Pastor, or in his absence, an Elder or one of the Diaconate or a member of the Pastoral team 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 N.S.W.

Non Church members may be invited to be present at and to take part in the whole part or any part of the Church Meeting, without right to vote.

Except in the case of calling a Pastor(s), and altering the Constitution the quorum for all Church Meetings shall be 20% of the Church membership recorded on the roll of members (excluding inactive members roll) 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, the meeting shall stand adjourned usually to the same day, time and place in 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.

Members under eighteen years of age may not vote on matters pertaining to the purchase or sale of property.

Eligibility to attend assemblies of the Baptist Union as delegate of the Church and entitlement to vote on any resolution proposed for the purpose of giving the Baptist Churches of N.S.W. Property Trust a direction under Section 42% of the Property Trust Act are limited to members who were baptized by immersion.

**(b) Procedure**

All questions affecting the management and general interests of the Church shall normally be submitted to the Diaconate 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 herein will be by ballot or as determined by the meeting. 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 organizations.

The formation of all Church organisations shall be subjected to the approval of the Diaconate.

The Diaconate may appoint groups for specific functions to assist in the general operation of the Church's ministry.

The leaders and other officers of Church organisations and groups shall be appointed by the Diaconate. The Diaconate shall then submit a report to a church meeting which shall have the right to discuss and confirm appointments.

A Working Committee may be appointed by the Diaconate from Elders, Deacons and leaders and other officers of Church organisations and groups to coordinate all activities of the Church and to provide supports to the Diaconate in the general running of the Church. The Diaconate shall then submit a report to a Church meeting which shall have the right to discuss and confirm appointments. The Working Committee shall meet once a month.

**9. SUNDRY**

**(a) Ordinances**

The Pastor may baptize any believer upon application at his discretion, or alternatively a member of the Pastoral Team, Diaconate or Eldership 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 Table for six consecutive months shall be visited.

**(b) The Trustees**

The trustees of all Church properties shall be the Baptist Church 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 such consent in accordance with the decisions and guidelines laid down by the Church.

**(d) 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 N.S.W. normally with Baptist Insurance Pty Ltd.

**(e) The 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 two of the elected Diaconate, one of whom shall be the Treasurer.

**(f) 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.

**(g) Non-Profit Clause**

The assets and income of the Church shall be applied solely in furtherance of its above-mentioned objectives and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Church except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the Church.

**(h) Dissolution Clause**

In the event of the Church being dissolved, the amount which remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities, shall be paid and applied by the Diaconate in accordance with their powers to any fund, institution or authority which, itself, is exempted from income tax.

**10. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION**

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution except by a three-fourths majority of members presented and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose. The quorum for such a meeting shall be 40% of the membership (excluding inactive members roll).

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.

----THE END----