

South Yarra Community Baptist Church
CONSTITUTION
(As adopted 11 September 2016)

1. Name

South Yarra Community Baptist Church (“the church”)

2. Basis of Church Fellowship

- 2.1. The church is a body of Christian people who have responded to the proclamation of the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit and have been united to Jesus Christ and to his people in their baptism and in their own confession of faith.
- 2.2. The church baptises professing believers as a sign of their salvation and their initiation into the membership of the body of Christ. Wherever practicable, baptism is practised by immersion into water as the form of baptism normative in the New Testament because it portrays “going down” into death with Christ and “coming up” into resurrection with Christ.
- 2.3. Affirming Baptist understandings of the Gospel, the church is a member church of The Baptist Union of Victoria and accepts as expressions of the Christian faith the *Doctrinal Basis* and the *Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith* contained in the Constitution of that Union.
- 2.4. In common with the whole Church, this church accepts its commission to participate in Christ’s ministry to all creation, to proclaim and live out the gospel message of reconciliation to God and to one another. All members have been gifted by the Holy Spirit for their part in this ministry and are called to fulfil the meaning of their baptism by exercising their gifts together in nurturing the growth of Christian faith, peace and love.
- 2.5. The church’s present understanding of its specific call and mission is expressed in a covenant.
 - 2.5.1. The current Church Covenant is included as Appendix 1 to this constitution.
 - 2.5.2. The Covenant should be reviewed and either readopted or replaced at a Church meeting during the Easter Season each year. All members of the church are then invited to pledge to live by the Church Covenant for the next year. The pledge is made together during a worship service, which will normally be held on the Sunday nearest the Church Anniversary (June 18th) each year.
 - 2.5.3. The adoption of a new Church Covenant is governed by section 7 - *Policies*.

3. Membership

3.1. Eligibility for Membership

Membership of the church is open to any person who has a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who is committed to the mission of the church and who is willing to commit to the covenant of the church for the current year.

3.2. Confirmation of Membership

A person is received into the membership of the church by baptism or by the church's recognition of their prior baptism. Their reception into membership requires the prior approval of a church meeting. It must be clear to the church meeting that the person:

3.2.1. has made their own free decision to commit themselves to Christ and to the church;

3.2.2. has participated in appropriate membership preparation;

and

3.2.3. has been, or is about to be, baptised as a testimony of their own faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour;

or,

3.2.4. has been baptised according to the rites of another Christian church and is about to make public profession of their faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, as an affirmation of their baptismal vows.

3.3. If a person seeks to become a member of the church, having been a member of another church, a letter of commendation will usually be sought from that other church.

3.4. Membership Roll

3.4.1. A roll will be kept of the names of the members of the church ("the membership roll").

3.4.2. The membership roll will be revised at each Annual Church Meeting on the basis of a report prepared by a person authorised to do so.

3.4.3. A reserve roll will be kept containing the names of those members who the church meeting wishes to continue to recognise as members despite their inability to continue fulfilling the requirements of membership. Those on the reserve roll do not have formal voting rights at church meetings. Members on the reserve roll may be reinstated to the full roll upon renewing their participation and commitment to the covenant. A meeting of the church must ratify reinstatement before the member is permitted to vote at any church meeting.

3.5. A name may be removed from the membership roll at any time if the member:

3.5.1. requests a transfer of membership to another church;

3.5.2. requests removal from the membership roll;

- 3.5.3. dies;
 - 3.5.4. has their membership removed by a decision of a church meeting for disciplinary reasons. (Two weeks notice of the date and purpose of that church meeting must have been given to the member concerned).
 - 3.5.5. has not attended the church in the past year unless the church meeting notes that special circumstances apply, in which case the name will be moved to the reserve roll.
- or
- 3.5.6. the member is unable or unwilling to commit to the covenant for the current year. Such members will have their names placed on the reserve roll.

4. Leadership and Decision Making

- 4.1. The church's members, seeking to discern the will of God in an open church meeting, have final authority in determining the shape and the direction of the church's life. The church meeting can delegate authority for special projects or for the day-to-day management of various organisational and administrative tasks to suitably able individuals or task groups.
- 4.2. The number of covenanting members of the church required to form a quorum for a church meeting is one third of the covenanting members or seven covenanting members, whichever is the greater.
- 4.3. The following principles will guide the decision making processes of all meetings of the congregation or task groups operating on behalf of and/or as part of the congregation:
 - 4.3.1. The emphasis is always on discerning the mind of Christ, not determining the mind of the majority.
 - 4.3.2. Discerning the mind of Christ happens most reliably when a group gathers to prayerfully listen to one another, and therefore absentees may send an opinion, but not exercise a vote.
 - 4.3.3. Decisions will normally be made on a consensus basis, including all those who are present at the meeting, and without unnecessary recourse to the formalities of voting and allowing the participation of all who are present at the meeting. However the chairperson of any meeting is empowered to invoke the formal conventions of meeting process.
 - 4.3.4. Where consensus has not been achieved:
 - 4.3.4.1. A proposal that is being considered for the first time and has more than 50%, but less than 80% support from the church members present and voting will be deferred for further consideration at a subsequent meeting.

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4.3.4.2. Where a decision needs to be finalised by a formal vote, the meeting must first seek to understand the spread of opinion and its implications. Before voting, all present at the meeting must have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, followed by a time for prayerful silent reflection on the implications. The decision must receive two-thirds support from the church members present and voting in order for the vote to be concluded in the affirmative. If however a choice must be made because status quo is not an option, a decision may be made by a simple majority of church members present and voting.

4.4. The Pastors

- 4.4.1. The pastors of the church will be persons whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the Church to fulfil a ministry of spiritual leadership in word, sacrament and pastoral care.
- 4.4.2. To become a pastor of the church, a person must be eligible for membership of the church and be willing to be a covenanting member.
- 4.4.3. The following decisions about a pastor of the church each require a two-thirds majority of the members who are present and who vote at a 'Schedule B' (refer Section 5:11 & 5:11) Church Meeting:
 - 4.4.3.1. The calling of a pastor.
 - 4.4.3.2. The approval of any extension of term if a pastor has been called for a specific term.
 - 4.4.3.3. The removal of a pastor.

(The whole of clause 5.4.3 exists because of and summarises some of the requirements of Schedule B of The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930. A plain English summary of Schedule B, prepared by The Baptist Union of Victoria, is reproduced as Appendix IV to this Constitution)

4.5. The Leadership Group

- 4.5.1. A leadership group may be established at any time, by a majority vote at a church meeting, to exercise oversight of those areas of the church's life and ministry delegated to it by the church meeting.
- 4.5.2. Any meeting that votes to establish a leadership group must also vote to establish a policy (see section 7 - *Policies*) to govern the appointment and workings of the leadership group.

5. Church Meetings

- 5.1. Church meetings to consider the life and ministry of the church must be held at least twice each year. The quorum for such meetings is as defined in Section 4.2.
- 5.2. Church meetings will be called if requested by the pastor, the Leadership Group, one quarter of the membership of the church, or by any church meeting.
- 5.3. Whenever a church meeting is set, notice of the time, place and any special business of the meeting must be given to members on at least two Sundays prior to the meeting date.
- 5.4. Every church meeting must have an agenda prepared by or for the Leadership group or by those who called the meeting.
- 5.5. Records of the decisions of all church meetings must be kept.
- 5.6. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.
- 5.7. Financial statements (for the preceding church year) must be presented to a church meeting in every year. If the Treasurer or other person preparing the statements is a signatory to the church bank accounts, then the annual financial statements should be externally audited. A Church Meeting or the Leadership Group may decide at any time to require that the financial statements be audited.
- 5.8. An Annual Church Meeting must be held each year. Its agenda must include:
 - 5.8.1. a report/presentation by the pastors with opportunity for questions;
 - 5.8.2. a review of the membership roll;
 - and
 - 5.8.3. a statement of the financial situation of the church; and
 - 5.8.4. a budget for the next church year, which requires approval.
- 5.9. The agenda of any church meeting may include:
 - 5.9.1. report/presentation by any church group;
 - 5.9.2. report/presentation by any external group working in co-operation with the church;
 - 5.9.3. other appointments the church meeting decides to make.
- 5.10. Special Business Meetings will be called as and when required.
 - 5.10.1. Examples of the kinds of business requiring such meetings are:
 - 5.10.1.1. The annual approval of the membership of the Leadership Group.
 - 5.10.1.2. The affirmation or removal of someone from or into the Leadership Group.

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5.10.1.3. Changes to the Church Constitution.

5.10.1.4. Disputed and unresolved matters referred from a meeting of a group or council within the church.

5.10.2. Special Business Meetings may not deal with any business other than that for which the meeting was called.

5.10.3. When appropriate, Special Business Meetings may be convened at a time that allows opportunity for a full discussion and a process of discernment and decision within the one meeting.

5.10.4. The rules governing Special Church Meetings are the same as those governing Church Meetings. Refer 4.2, 4.3, 5.2 - 5.6 of the Constitution.

5.11. "Schedule B" Church Meetings are needed to consider any decision regarding

5.11.1. the calling, extension of term or removal of a pastor
or

5.11.2. any transaction affecting any land or buildings of the church.

5.12. Schedule B Church Meetings are governed under different rules set out in *Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930*.

6. Church property

6.1. Acknowledging the rate free status of church land/buildings, they are not to be leased by the church except in special circumstances approved by a Special Church Meeting.

6.2. Subject to the direction of a church meeting, the activities of any church group or external group who are using the church's name, property, buildings or equipment, are subject to the supervision of the Church Meeting.

6.3. If a church group ceases to function, the church becomes the owner of any property purchased or owned by that group and any money in their possession.

7. Policies

The church may adopt new policies or alter existing policies about any matter at any time. The adoption of a policy requires the approval of two-thirds of the members of the church who are present and who vote at a church meeting. Copies of the proposed policy must be made available to all church members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. All existing policies are included as Appendix 2 to this constitution.

8. Alteration to this Constitution

- 8.1. No proposed alteration to this Constitution can be brought to a church meeting unless notice of the wording of the proposed alteration has been given to members at least four weeks prior to the meeting date.
- 8.2. Any alteration to this Constitution requires the approval of two-thirds of the members of the church who are present and who vote at a church meeting. If the church is in debt to The Baptist Union of Victoria, any proposed alteration does not take effect until approved by the Executive Council of The Baptist Union of Victoria.
- 8.3. The ongoing operation of this Constitution must be reviewed by a church meeting no more than five (5) years after adoption, at which time it should be amended and readopted or replaced.

Appendix 1

Church Covenant

for the year to the Church Anniversary, 18th June 2017

Called together by God as the body of Christ and as a sign of his coming kingdom, by the power of the Holy Spirit we commit ourselves to love one another and to follow Jesus in a shared life of faithful commitment to God's call.

We are called into **COMMUNION** with God and with one another:

- to celebrate each week around the Lord's Word and Table;
- to gather regularly to eat, play, work, sing and pray together; and
- to offer to God the worship of us all.

We are called to **OFFER OURSELVES** to God and one another:

- to welcome and honour all who would journey with us;
- to seek reconciliation across anything that divides us; and
- to contribute our share of the work and financing of our life, prayer and ministry.

We are called to attend to the **VOICE** of God:

- in scripture reading and prayerful silence;
- in creation and human creativity;
- in the stranger, the outcast, the broken, and the little ones; and
- in one another.

We are called to **EAT AND DRINK** as a sign of the hospitality of God's reign:

- to eat together at our Sunday gatherings;
- to share with others over drinks or meals; and
- to consume responsibly and give generously.

We are called to **NON-CONFORMITY** with the ways of the world:

- to resist all greed, selfishness, infidelity, violence, and exploitation;
- to allow God's ways to shape our ways; and
- to confess that we are entangled in sin, and need help to break free.

We are called to be **AMBASSADORS** for Christ, sent into the world he loves:

- to live like Jesus, loving our enemies, healing the broken, feeding the hungry, standing up for the oppressed, welcoming the outcast, and proclaiming the new culture of God;
- to represent and promote Jesus's values of life, love, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and sustainable stewardship in the places where we live, work and play; and
- to allow God to call and send us into new areas of mission and ministry.

We are called to **NURTURE** faith and growth in ourselves and others:

- to look for and nourish the seeds of love and grace;
- to cultivate the practices of Jesus-centred spirituality and discipleship;
- to feed the voice of hope, yet listen to the voice of despair; and
- to surrender ourselves to God, trusting God to hold us when we cannot hold ourselves.

We are called to live **THANKFULLY**:

- to cultivate a heart of gratitude, looking for the blessings in all things; and
- to take every opportunity to be or bring a blessing to others.

Thus called, we enter this covenant, gratefully acknowledging that it is only by the grace of God that we can do anything.

Appendix 2

Policies

POLICY ON ISSUES OF PERSONAL MORALITY.

(adopted by the South Yarra Community Baptist Church on 11th June 1995)

The South Yarra Community Baptist Church affirms that those who live in response to the love of God in Christ are expected to progressively shape their personal behaviour and relationships by the Christian values of love, justice, reconciliation and forgiveness, and so to more fully reflect the image of God. We also recognise that no-one is ever able to completely fulfil this calling, and that the ability of a person to respond to this call will be enhanced or inhibited by their previous life experience in ways they are not able to fully control.

We acknowledge the authority of the Bible in witnessing to the character and concerns of Christ and in calling us to be conformed to that image. We recognise that the Bible provides moral instruction in many areas and that we need to hear and understand that instruction. However we also believe that many of those instructions were historically and culturally specific and that the call to reflect God's love, justice and mercy will often lead us beyond those instructions. The purpose of any moral teaching is not to define perfection, but to inspire and assist people to move towards it. We believe that the church needs to continually evaluate its moral teaching to ensure that it is actually encouraging those who most need it to respond to God's love and open themselves to God's transforming influence.

We strongly affirm the belief that God's love is all-inclusive and that God's offer of mercy and acceptance is not withheld from anyone regardless of the way their life is lived. We also believe that it is in an atmosphere of acceptance and love that a person is most likely to find healing and the strength and inspiration to make significant changes in their lives.

Therefore we wish to reflect God's love in accepting all those who would join us in our journey of faith, regardless of the extent to which their lives are shaped by Christian values. The only situations we can perceive in which we would act to restrict a person's involvement in our church community are where their behaviour poses a threat to the physical, emotional or spiritual safety and development of other people, or where their behaviour seriously undermines the purposes and mission of the church.

We accept that this policy leaves us vulnerable from two directions. Some people may take advantage of our open acceptance without genuinely committing themselves to struggling with the demands of the journey of faith. Others may misunderstand by hearing only our call to growth and change and feel unable to respond to our welcome and acceptance. It is our hope that all will feel welcome and able to join us in seeking and cooperating with God's liberating and fulfilling influence in our own lives, in our community and in the world.

POLICY ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY.

(adopted by the South Yarra Community Baptist Church on 11th June 1995)

The South Yarra Community Baptist Church regrets that the Christian Church has often become divisive and hostile in its attempts to express the implications of the good news in the areas of relationships and sexuality. In order to offer some protection to those who have been hurt, and in the hope of reducing future disputes, we have sought to add to our policy on issues of personal morality some specific stands on these matters.

We believe that God's intent for humanity was that the expression of physical sexuality, and the procreation and nurture of children, belong within secure relationships characterised by exclusivity, equality and the growth of mutual love, respect and intimacy. Such relationships are the most significant environment in which most people learn love, trust, faithfulness and forgiveness. We also acknowledge that the Bible and Christian tradition have often held singleness and celibacy in high esteem, and we respect and support those who follow this path, whether by choice or by limited opportunity.

For those who seek relationships in which sexual intimacy may be expressed, we affirm that the Bible and Church tradition have usually advocated the religious and legal formalising of this relationship in Christian marriage. We believe that this is the path most likely to express and protect the value of such a relationship, and so we too encourage it and support its practice.

However we acknowledge with regret that the Christian church has often endorsed the unjust denial of this opportunity to some couples, and pushed it upon others who were inadequately suited and prepared. This has caused great pain in alienating the former from the church and in precipitating inevitable tension and breakdown for the latter.

We also recognise that some couples will choose not to marry for a number of reasons including legal impediment, past marital trauma, or an as yet insufficiently developed relationship. We recognise that sexual intimacy is frequently expressed in such relationships in ways that express and promote love and growth. We also recognise that for some people, marriage has been an environment of abuse and destruction. On the basis of this experience and in recognition of the fact that the understandings and practice of marriage have continued to evolve over the years, we do not believe that marital status is a sufficient criteria on which to determine the appropriateness of sexual intimacy.

We believe that, regardless of marital status, the more a relationship is characterised by mutual love, respect, equality, faithfulness, commitment and security, the more it is an appropriate environment for the expression of sexual intimacy.

We are unequivocal in our opposition to any sexual relationships that are characterised by unfaithfulness, fear, violence, coercion, lack of respect, inequality of power, or anything that devalues the gift of sexuality or the persons concerned.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the difficulty the church has faced in reconciling the demands of love and justice with some of the biblical statements about homosexuality and divorce. While we recognise that we are stepping beyond the positions reflected in the Bible, we wish to affirm the right of homosexually oriented people and divorced people to seek sexual intimacy within the same type of relational context affirmed above.

LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION POLICY
(Adopted 25 September 2011, amended 11 September 2016)

1. PREAMBLE

2. This policy operates under the provisions of “Section 4 - Leadership and Decision Making” of the Constitution of the South Yarra Community Baptist Church.

2. THE HOST GROUP

- 2.1. This model seeks to empower the people who are ready to assume the host role to identify themselves, and take on the responsibilities of hosting this church with the affirmation and confidence of the congregation
- 2.2. As long as this policy remains in place, references to the “Leadership Group” in the church’s Constitution are to be understood as applying to the “Host Group”.

2.3. IDENTIFYING THE HOST GROUP

- 2.3.1. The Host Group consists of those within the congregation who, after prayerful discernment using a Personal Discernment Questionnaire, are willing to covenant with one another to be the Hosts, and work together in the leading of the congregation. They will either:
 - 2.3.1.1. be members of the church who identify themselves as belonging to the Host Group,
or
 - 2.3.1.2. be recognised as belonging to the Host Group despite being unable to meet the normal pre-requisites and expectation of Host Group membership. These positive exceptions must be approved by 80% of the Host Group after being recommended for inclusion by the pastor or any member of the congregation.
- 2.3.2. New members may be accepted into the Host Group at any time if they meet one of the above descriptions given in 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 and are prepared to commit themselves to the current Host Group covenant
- 2.3.3. The Personal Discernment Questionnaire will be made available during Lent each year, with a request that all congregational members prayerfully use it to consider their role in the congregation.
- 2.3.4. Although the Hosts are self-nominated, they hold a position of trust within the congregation. Those who have discerned a call to the host group will have their names published to the congregation at least 4 weeks prior to the Church Anniversary service (held on the Sunday closest to the date of the foundation of the church; viz. June 18th 1854). A brief special Meeting will be held at least two weeks before the Church Anniversary service at which the congregation will be asked to affirm, by secret ballot, their support of the hosts and their covenant. Should any person not receive such the affirmation of at least 80% of the members present and voting, their continued membership of Host Group shall be reviewed by the rest of the Host Group.

2.4. THE HOST GROUP COVENANT

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- 2.4.1. The Host Group is to annually review and adopt a Covenant covering how they will work together, support one another, and hold one another accountable. The content of the covenant is to be affirmed by the congregation in the same secret ballot mentioned above (2.6). The current Covenant is included as Appendix 5 to this constitution.
- 2.4.2. A commissioning rite will be held during the annual covenanting rite in the church anniversary service in which the Host Group stand and pledge themselves to one another under their covenant. The congregation will then be asked to stand and pledge themselves to supporting the Host Group and contributing, as they are able, to the life, prayer and ministry of the church.
- 2.4.3. It should be understood and made explicit in the covenant that acceptance of grace-filled accountability to one another is a basic expectation and a requirement for the Host Group to be able to function constructively. Members of the Host Group need to be able to rely on one another, and so they should expect to be graciously called to account if they repeatedly fail to meet their agreed commitments in the hosting of the church.
- 2.4.4. If it becomes clear that a person is not able to function as a reliable contributor to the Host Group, but that person is unable to acknowledge and address the problem, the person can be removed from the Host Group by a two thirds majority vote of the other members of the Host Group.

2.5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.5.1. The Host Group have responsibility for:
 - 2.5.1.1. leading by example in committed active participation in the life, prayer and ministry of the congregation;
 - 2.5.1.2. developing and implementing the congregation's vision and mission;
 - 2.5.1.3. overseeing and managing the church's life and work, including both spiritual direction and the organisational and administrative tasks required by and for the church's existence and activities on a day to day basis;
 - 2.5.1.4. determining the nature, purpose and time of the church's regular gatherings;
- 2.5.2. The Host Group and the church's Pastors are expected to work cooperatively with one other in order that each may support and empower the other. The pastor is not a host, but is expected to be present and participate in the decision making of the group, but does not have a vote.

2.6. DECISION MAKING

- 2.6.1. The Host Group will normally meet at least once a month to discern the leading of God. Host Group meetings will normally be open to the attendance of anyone who regularly participates in the congregation's life.
- 2.6.2. The Host Group may choose to delegate the decision making in some areas of management to individuals or task groups. Those to whom such

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things are delegated remain accountable to the Host Group and to the Church Meeting.

- 2.6.3. The Host Group's decision making processes will be guided by the principles set out in section 4.3 of the church constitution.
- 2.6.4. Whenever the Host Group is working on a matter that is of wide interest to the congregation and would benefit from the wider involvement in the discernment, they are encouraged to distribute information about it and then nominate a gathering (eg. over drinks after the Sunday worship service) at which the matter will be opened up for comment and discussion. A "straw poll" indication of support may be taken at such a gathering as an aid to the subsequent discernment and decision of the Host Group.

2.7. ACCOUNTABILITY

- 2.7.1. The Host Group accept their ministry from Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, and from the congregation. In their provision of leadership, oversight, management, and care, the Host Group remains accountable to the Congregational Meeting.
- 2.7.2. All meetings of the Host Group will normally be open to the attendance of anyone who regularly participates in the congregation's life, and held at times publicised to the congregation. If it is believed that there is a reason for the group to hold a closed meeting (e.g. a matter requiring strict confidentiality has arisen), an approval of the reason must first be obtained from either the Pastor or the BUV Regional Minister.
- 2.7.3. The Host Group must keep records of its meetings and the decisions made.
- 2.7.4. Decisions made at Host Group meetings can be challenged by any member of the church and taken to congregational meeting for reconsideration before being implemented.

To enable this to happen:

- 2.7.4.1. The record of decisions made at a Host Group meeting is to be made available to the congregation (by email and in hard copy available for collection or mail-out on request) as soon as possible after the meeting. The record should include the name of a nominated contact person for questions or challenges. Where possible, action on the decisions will not be commenced until at least seven days after the notification.

Within that seven days:

- 2.7.4.2. Within the above seven days, any church member may request that a decision be referred back to the next meeting for reconsideration. If the member still wishes to challenge the decision after the next meeting, the decision must be referred to a special congregational meeting.
 - 2.7.4.2.1. A member requesting such a reopening of a decision will be expected, prior to the subsequent meeting, to provide in writing to the Host Group:

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- 2.7.4.2.1.1. an account of the new information or overlooked factors that would warrant an overturning of the decision;
- 2.7.4.2.1.2. an explanation as to why such information or factors were not made known until after the decision had been made.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

- 3.1. The Host Group may approach other members of the congregation or, with approval from the congregation, outside sources, to undertake tasks to which the member's or outsider's skills may be best suited, either on a regular or ad-hoc basis. It is understood that:
 - 3.1.1. some will involve a person who volunteers to do the work themselves, while others will involve a person who volunteers to co-ordinate others in getting the work done;
 - 3.1.2. some will be semi-permanent, while others will exist only for the life of a particular project;
 - 3.1.3. some may require a regular report to the congregational meetings, while others may not;
 - 3.1.4. all are ultimately accountable to the congregational meeting, but in the day-to-day performance of their duties will usually report Host Group.
- 3.2. Although the appointment of a person to such an administrative role may not require an election, if others have concerns about the person's suitability, competence or performance, a challenge may be brought at any time. This should firstly be done through the Host Group, without public criticism or complaint, with a view to either enabling the person to improve or finding a replacement. However, if a satisfactory resolution cannot be negotiated, the concerns may be brought to a church meeting as a motion of no confidence or as a request to put the position to a vote.
- 3.3. The position of Treasurer must always be filled. This can only be done at a duly convened meeting of the congregation; by the expressed confidence of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting; and is filled for a two year term. The incumbent may seek re-election.
- 3.4. The responsibilities of the Treasurer are:
 - 3.4.1. ensuring that the congregation's income and expenditure are responsibly handled and accounted for;
 - 3.4.2. ensuring that the congregation's financial obligations, including taxes, salaries, allowances and superannuation, are met;
 - 3.4.3. preparing financial reports and drafting annual budgets and presenting them to church meetings.
 - 3.4.4. Ensuring that the accounts of the church are audited on a regular basis.
- 3.5. At each Annual General Meeting of the Congregation, a list of all the current administrative tasks and the people appointed to perform them will be tabled, and a motion brought to thank them for their service.

4. PASTORS

- 4.1. The Pastors of the South Yarra Community Baptist Church will be a person or persons whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the Church to fulfil a ministry of spiritual leadership in word, sacrament and pastoral care within the church. This ministry is exercised in consultation and cooperation with the Host Group and with other designated pastors.
- 4.2. Pastors are called and expected to make a substantial contribution to:
 - 4.2.1. the preaching, teaching, and outreach ministries of the congregation;
 - 4.2.2. the ordering of the congregation's worship and prayer; and
 - 4.2.3. the provision of pastoral care and counsel to people who are regular participants in the life of the congregation or who contact the church in search of care and counsel.
- 4.3. The Pastors accept their ministry from Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, and while they are "servants of the Church", the congregation is not their master. They lead rather than rule, for they have only that authority which is affirmed in practice by the congregation, in recognition of the call of God and the integrity of their life, prayer and ministry. In their provision of leadership, oversight and care, the Pastors remain accountable:
 - 4.3.1.0. to the Lord of the Church;
 - 4.3.1.1. to the Congregation (whose formal authority resides in decisions of the members, gathered in duly convened open meetings to discern the mind of Christ);
 - 4.3.1.2. and to the congregation's Visiting Pastoral Overseers.
- 4.4. Except in special circumstances approved by a church meeting, pastors are expected to refrain from taking a hands-on role in any organisational and administrative tasks of the congregation which are not directly related to their core roles of preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. They are, however, expected to participate in the spiritual and theological oversight of the organisational and administrative functioning of the congregation, its members, and its Host Group.
- 4.5. The Pastors are those whose call to pastoral ministry in the congregation has been recognised and endorsed by a duly convened "Schedule B" Meeting of the church (see 5.11 & 5:12). The appointment of a pastor may come about by either:
 - 4.5.1. the congregation, having recognised that one of its members is exercising a pastoral ministry which shows evidence of the call and gifting of God, calling a Special Church Meeting to demonstrate the congregation's confidence in that ministry and formalise the appointment; or
 - 4.5.2. the congregation, identifying a need for a new pastor, forming a selection committee to seek a suitable candidate and bring a recommendation to a duly convened Special Church Meeting.

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- 4.6. It is understood that the Pastors, and especially those who have been ordained by the wider Church, represent the local congregation to the wider Church, and vice versa, and therefore will periodically have responsibilities that require them to give a portion of their working hours to denominational or ecumenical endeavours.
- 4.7. A “Statement of Understanding” between each pastor and the congregation shall be negotiated and ratified, with the approval of both parties. Each “Statement of Understanding” will:
 - 4.7.1. be framed in accordance with the Baptist Union of Victoria’s “Guidelines for Churches and Pastors”;
 - 4.7.2. outline the basic framework by which the relationship between the pastor and the congregation is understood;
 - 4.7.3. identify the essential duties and responsibilities of the pastor;
 - 4.7.4. identify the time fraction for which the pastor is engaged and remunerated, on the understanding that:
 - 4.7.4.1. a 1.0 EFT appointment means an average of thirty eight hours per week given to pastoral duties;
 - 4.7.4.2. a 0.0 EFT appointment means that the appointment is on a voluntary basis and that there is no requirement for any time to be committed to pastoral duties beyond what occurs within the course of those activities which are expected of all Members;
 - 4.7.5. detail the terms and conditions of employment if the pastor is engaged and remunerated for a time fraction greater than 0.0 EFT.

5. VISITING PASTORAL OVERSEERS

- 5.1. The South Yarra Community Baptist Church recognises that while the Pastors and the Host Group are entrusted with the primary responsibility for the spiritual leadership and pastoral oversight of the congregation and its shared activities, there are many situations in which the wisdom and experience of people from outside the congregation may prove invaluable.
- 5.2. The church will seek the voluntary service of other people, recognised for their pastoral wisdom and experience, to serve among us as Visiting Pastoral Overseers. This role has two parts. Firstly: to provide a point of contact for the congregation with regard to matters they feel uncomfortable raising with either the Pastor or a member of the Host Group. Secondly: to provide a point of reference, advice and guidance for the Pastor should the need arise.
- 5.3. The church will ask of its Visiting Pastoral Overseers that:
 - 5.3.1. they visit us at least twice a year to worship with us and share refreshments with us;
 - 5.3.2. they have their photographs on our display board and website and their contact details available to all regular congregational participants;
 - 5.3.3. they be willing to talk with any congregational participant about issues or concerns to do with the life and direction of the church;

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- 5.3.4. they agree to be notified of the issues and informed of important questions to be discussed at church meetings and invited to offer critique, advice, comments or suggestions as they see fit.
- 5.3.5. they be willing to offer assistance in finding appropriate paths to reconciliation if there are conflicts within the congregation in which the Pastors or Leadership Group are not able to function as a neutral mediator.
- 5.3.6. they be invited to be members of our congregational email discussion list so as to be informed of discussion taking place in that forum.
- 5.4. The congregation will invite two or more people (preferably one female and one male) to become Visiting Pastoral Overseers.
 - 5.4.1. The congregation's BUV appointed Regional Minister shall be regarded ex-officio as a Visiting Pastoral Overseer whether or not they are able to meet the normal expectations outlined in 5.3 above.
- 5.5. New Visiting Pastoral Overseers may be appointed at any time, by the expressed confidence of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting in a duly convened meeting of the congregation.
- 5.6. Visiting Pastoral Overseers are appointed for open ended terms, but the congregation's confidence in them must be tested by a vote in a Special meeting at least once every three years. Such a vote requires four weeks notice to the congregation, and may be brought on by:
 - 5.6.1. the passing of three years from the date of the last time the congregation voted to affirm their confidence in the Visiting Pastoral Overseer;
 - 5.6.2. the request of any two members of the congregation;
 - 5.6.3. the request of the Visiting Pastoral Overseer themselves.

Policy on the Accountability of Pastors

(Adopted 16 May 2010, amended 11 September 2016)

1. PREAMBLE

2. Pastors of the South Yarra Community Baptist Church are people whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the Church to share in a ministry of spiritual leadership in word, sacrament and pastoral care. This ministry is exercised in consultation and cooperation with other designated pastoral leaders. Our pastors are accountable:

- 2.1. to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ;
- 2.2. to the Meeting of the Church Members, gathered to discern the mind of Christ;
- 2.3. and to the congregation's Visiting Pastoral Overseers.

3. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are duty-bound to understand:

- 3.1. the responsibilities in being a pastoral leader as outlined in the Baptist Union of Victoria Duty of Care policy, and to work within the policy guidelines expressed therein.
- 3.2. the Baptist Union of Victoria Code of Ethics, and to sign and lodge with the BUV a pledge to abide by the standards of ethical behaviour described in the Code.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Baptist Union provides a professional development process for pastors. Participation in it is a compulsory requirement for those who wish their pastoral ministry to be recognised and accredited by the BUV, but since churches are free to employ people who are not recognised or accredited by the BUV, it is up to each church to decide whether or not to require it of their pastors.

- 4.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are required to maintain their accreditation as pastors with the Baptist Union of Victoria.

5. SUPERVISION

Professional supervision is a movement that developed in the counselling professions and has been adapted for pastoral ministry over the last few decades. It consists of the pastor meeting regularly with another experienced pastor, normally trained in the skills of supervision, to discuss casework and other professional issues in a structured way. The purpose is to assist pastors to reflect on and learn from their experience and so continue to develop greater competence in their care of the people to whom they minister. In this context, "supervision" does not imply a hierarchical chain of command or responsibility. Rather, it involves a relationship of voluntary accountability that is more like the relationship a person has with a mentor or a counsellor. The supervisor does not have a relationship with the congregation, and there is usually an understanding that the discussions are confidential.

- 5.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are expected to maintain a relationship of professional supervision

and voluntary accountability with an appropriate pastoral supervisor outside the congregation.

- 5.2. Our pastors are expected to meet with their supervisors at least eight times per year.
- 5.3. Our pastors are expected to ask their supervisors to provide a brief “audit” statement to the congregation on an annual basis, indicating how many times they have met during the preceding year and indicating:
 - that there are no issues which are causing the supervisor to doubt that the pastor can be trusted to operate safely and ethically in their ministry;

OR

- the number of issues of concern that have emerged and the dates on which the pastor was advised to make these concerns known to the congregation or its leadership group.
- 5.4. The church will pay any fees charged for the required supervision

6. MINISTRY REVIEWS

- 6.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that an annual review of the pastor’s ministry should be conducted assessing the pastoral profile, the relationship between the pastor and church, and the relationships between the pastors.
- 6.2. The Leadership Group (or current equivalent) should initiate the annual review of each pastor’s ministry, either conducting it themselves, or delegating it to a task group.
- 6.3. Most annual reviews can employ brief prepared questionnaires seeking feedback from any members of the congregation who wish to contribute, and from the pastor, and then prepare a report in consultation with one of our Visiting Pastoral Overseers.
- 6.4. The group conducting the review is encouraged to seek and adapt any available annual review materials from the BUV or other suitable sources.
- 6.5. When completed, the review report and its implications are to be discussed between the pastor and the review group and/or the Visiting Pastoral Overseer before being published to the congregation with any recommendations.
- 6.6. Once every five to six years, a more comprehensive review should be conducted, usually in conjunction with a wider review of the church and its ministries.

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Schedule B to The Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1930 **... a plain English summary ...**

This summary has been prepared by the Union office as a guide to the operation of Schedule B. It is a guide only. We recommend that Schedule B in its original form be read when specific questions arise. If you are in doubt about the meaning of a particular provision, please contact the Union office.

The Baptist Union of Victoria ("Union") holds property **on trust** for its member churches for the following purposes and subject to the following conditions:

1. To allow the member church concerned ("Church" to build/alter a sanctuary, manse or other buildings/structures as desired by the Church. These buildings are to be used as directed by the Church.
2. Based firmly on the principles of congregational government, the Church has complete discretion to manage its affairs, subject to clause 10 below.
3. The Church is entitled to direct the use of money received by it.
4. A pastor called (including for a new term) to the Church:
 - 4.1 must be Baptist;
 - 4.2 must be called (including for a new term) by a Special Church Meeting complying with clause 10 below;
 - 4.3 must subscribe to the Doctrinal Basis *[reproduced as Appendix I]*.And
A pastor removed from the Church must be dismissed by a Special Church Meeting complying with clause 10 below.
5. The Church is entitled to use its property as security to borrow money. The decision to mortgage or otherwise charge the Church property must be made at a special Church meeting complying with clause 10 below.
6. The Church is entitled to:
 - 6.1 create easements over;
 - 6.2 construct roads over;
 - 6.3 sell;its property.
Without the consent of the Executive Council of the Union ("Executive Council"), the Church may not sell its property at substantially less than current market value.
7. Money received by the Church:
 - 7.1 raised by way of mortgage of Church property;
 - 7.2 derived by sale of Church property;
 - 7.3 received as an insurance payout in relation to Church property;must be used for further property purchase or building improvements. Moneys so derived are deposited with the Union in the normal course until the Church directs the use of the money.
8. The Church is entitled to rent Church property on terms decided by a special Church meeting complying with clause 10 below.
9. Where the Union receives money on behalf of the Church, the payee has no further responsibility to follow up the payment.
10. The special Church meetings referred to above:
 - 10.1 may generally be called at any time;
 - 10.2 may be called by the Church leadership;
 - 10.3 must be called upon the written request of at least one-sixth of the members of the Church;

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- 10.4 must be convened by 14 days' clear notice specifying the time, place and purpose of the meeting
At a special Church meeting:
- 10.5 persons voting must be over 18 years, must have been members of the Church for at least 6 months, and must have been present at Church for communion at least once in the preceding 6 months; and
- 10.6 a two-thirds majority vote is required.
*(the two-thirds rule relates to **two-thirds of all those members present and voting**. ...if the vote is by ballot and invalid votes are cast, the number of invalid votes must still be included in the total number of votes against which the two-thirds requirement is measured.)*
11. A minute signed by the chairperson of a Church meeting is sufficient evidence that the minute is an accurate record of a Church decision.
12. (transitional provision)
13. In special circumstances of the Church owing money that the Union is liable to pay, the Union may, having given 6 months written notice to the Church, mortgage or sell Church property so as to cover the debt.
14. The beneficial ownership and control of Church property by the Church is not affected per se if the Church moves to another locality.
- 14A. In relation to the powers vested in the Church by clauses 4,5,7,8 and 13 above, the Church may, at any time, ask Executive Council to stand in the shoes of the Church and be able to exercise those powers in the Church's stead. Executive Council and the Church may later both determine that those powers will revert back to the Church.
15. If:
- 15.1 the Church is dissolved;
 - 15.2 the Church is dispersed;
 - 15.3 the membership of the Church is reduced below 6; or
 - 15.4 public worship in the Church sanctuary property stops for six months (not being for building alterations)
- the Union automatically assumes full control of the Church property.
[At this stage any proceeds of sale of Church property by the Union would be deposited in the Union's Advancement Fund.]
- 15A. If the resident membership of the Church is reduced to **less than 29 but more than 5**, Executive Council **may** exercise the powers vested in the Church by clauses 4,5,7,8 and 13 above. Executive Council may only exercise this discretion to stand in the shoes of the Church if it has given three months written notice of its intention to the Church and to Assembly. The Executive Council action must also have the endorsement of Assembly. Executive Council and the Church may later agree and both determine that the powers vested in Executive Council will revert back to the Church.
16. If the Church moves to another locality and leases the original Church property, then, until the end of the lease, the clause 15 "trigger" above, relating to the absence of public worship for at least six months, does not apply.

Trudy Skilbeck
Acting Union Secretary

11 October 1997

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Appendix 4

The Concept Behind the Host Group

The model is based on the idea that a congregation consists of three main groups of people and, while people can and do move freely from one group to another, it is of value to both the individuals and the congregation to be able to identify who is who. The three main groups can be understood by comparing them to the three groups at a large feast. There are those who **host** the event, who prepare the menu and the space, who send out the invitations, who put care and effort and responsibility to making it all happen. A feast won't happen without them! Then there are the **helpers**, or the Bring-A-Plate crew, the ones who come as guests but regularly help out with contributing some food or drink or giving a hand with the dishes. They receive a lot from the invitation, and they contribute a lot by their presence, but if it was up to them to make the feast happen, it probably wouldn't! And then there are the **guests** who don't have the same sense of familiarity and ownership, but who are a priority to welcome. Think of all the stories in the gospels of people Jesus said we should invite over to our meals. He was talking about this group; the ones who we may assume have nothing to offer.

And yet, Christ comes to us in the stranger.

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Appendix 5

The Covenant of the Host Group

Called together by God as the body of Christ, and a sign of his coming Kingdom, we commit ourselves to one another, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to love one another and be a church – a community of grace – following Christ in a shared life of radical obedience to the call of God, discerned together in scripture and prayer, and being further called to be HOSTS of the FEAST we also commit ourselves

To HONOUR and respect the skills, strengths and weaknesses of each member of the group

To OFFER ourselves in service to the congregation to administer the daily requirements of the church

To SUSTAIN each other with prayer, love and grace

To TEND to the physical and spiritual church environment

To SUPPORT each other in actively seeking to discern the vision to which we are being called

To provide an atmosphere of FRIENDSHIP for the congregation within which all feel safe to discuss problems and concerns

To ENCOURAGE all in their visions, dreams and in the undertaking of tasks

To be ACCOUNTABLE to each other and to be willing to be graciously called into account if we repeatedly fail to meet our agreed commitments to the group and the church

To SEEK the will of the Lord in all our activities

To TRUST in our Lord and each other

We stand together; graciously acknowledging that there will be times when we will struggle with ourselves and our calling; accepting that there will be opinions other than our own to which we shall willingly listen, and knowing that nothing can be done without the guidance, love and grace of the Lord of our Church.

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Appendix 6

Safe Children Policy

Adopted 16 February 2014

Children are a gift from God to the whole congregation, and they are encouraged to worship with and relate to the whole congregation. Welcoming them, caring for them and ensuring that they are safe is a shared responsibility. Their safety is best ensured by keeping them and their activities and carers easily visible. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all to help ensure that children are never taken to or left in closed rooms or other concealed locations with any adult who is not a parent of those children, or who is not acting on the request of a parent of those children.

WWCC Interim Negative Notices

Our pastors are required to have a current *Working with Children Check* (WWCC), and if, at any time, we run any kind of organised children's program, any volunteers running such a program would similarly be required to obtain a WWCC. If a WWCC is applied for, and is likely to be refused, an "*Interim Negative Notice*" is first issued.

It is the policy of the South Yarra Community Baptist Church that any employee or volunteer of the church who is issued with an *Interim Negative Notice* after applying for a *Working with Children Check* will cease working with children and avoid being left alone with children until the matter is resolved by the Department of Justice.