

Ettalong Baptist Church – Constitution:

August 2016; Last amended August 2020

1) Name:

The name of the church shall be Ettalong Baptist Church (referred to as “the church” in this document).

2) What We Believe:

a) We are a Baptist Church and hold the following evangelical beliefs:

About God:

God is the loving creator and ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14

About Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead on the third day to demonstrate his power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven’s glory and is preparing an eternal home with his Father for all those who follow him. He will return again in all his glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and take all his followers to be with himself.

Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5, 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-14, Acts 2:29-32, Ephesians 4:8-10, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13

About The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Spirit gives every believer gifts for the building up of the church. The Christian seeks to live in his will daily.

2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:1

About People:

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like him in character. We are the supreme object of God’s creation. Although people are created in God’s image, we are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates us from God.

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2

About Eternity:

People were created to exist forever. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee that we will be resurrected. When Christ returns, those who believe in him will be raised in a new and glorified body to eternal life with God. Those who have rejected Christ will be raised to judgement for their sins and will be separate from God in eternity.

Revelation 20 & 21; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; John 3:16; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:11-13; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:15; Matthew 25:31-46

About Salvation:

Salvation is a gift from God. People can never make up for their sin by self-improvement or good works – only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God’s offer of forgiveness can people be saved from sin’s penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into their life by faith and submits to his lordship.

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1

About Eternal Security:

Because God gives a person eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian.

John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:3-5

About The Bible:

The Bible is God's word to all people. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is truth without any mixture of error.

2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 12:6, 119:105, 160; Proverbs 30:5

About Believers Baptism:

Baptism by immersion is an ordinance given by Jesus Christ that symbolises his death, burial, and resurrection. It is a public declaration that the believer has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Baptism does not save, but shows the world that the believer has already been saved. While baptism is not required for salvation, it is a biblical command and demonstrates the believers love and obedience to Christ.

Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:41; Ephesians 2: 8-9; Matthew 28:19-20

About Communion:

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is an ordinance given to all believers by Jesus Christ to remember his sacrifice for us and to symbolise the new covenant. The elements of bread and wine are symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood. Communion is not a means of salvation. Rather, it is a testament of a believer's faith in the atoning work of the cross.

Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

- b)** The church shall also hold to and affirms the statement of evangelical beliefs as adopted by the 1979 Baptist Union of NSW Assembly and amended by the 2003 Assembly.

3) Church Purpose, Values, and Vision:

The Lead Pastor and church Leadership will prayerfully and wisely continue to develop, in conjunction with the whole church, a statement of Purpose, a set of Values, and a statement of Vision for the church. These will be reviewed and amended as necessary so that they are kept current and inspire the church in a direction that is relevant.

4) Church Organisation:

- a)** The church shall be affiliated with the Baptist Union of New South Wales, known as the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT.
- b)** Our leadership structure is in line with the fundamental Baptist principles of the autonomy of the local fellowship and the priesthood of all believers, and shall have full power to manage its own activity as directed by Christ. Christ is the head and cornerstone of the church.
- c)** We recognise the need to be affiliated with other Baptist Churches through the NSW Baptist Association and will seek to be actively involved in the Association, and cooperate with other Baptist Churches.
- d)** We seek to be a Safe Church and as such we adopt policies, practices and procedures as required.

5) What We Do:

The church adopts for its aims and functions the following, which it believes to be in harmony with the purpose of Christ's Church as declared in the New Testament:

- a)** To encourage its members to assemble regularly for the public worship of God.
- b)** To inspire and maintain an active spiritual growth, and use of Spiritual Gifts, among its members.
- c)** To proclaim the truths of the Bible by which people experience salvation, and lead those who believe to be fully committed Ministry Partners of the church.
- d)** To promote Christian love to all people.
- e)** To proclaim the gospel and Lordship of Jesus Christ to all.
- f)** To assist people who are in need.

6) Members and Ministry Partners:

a) Who Are Church Members?

- Every person who is a part of Ettalong Baptist Church is a member of the church.
- To be a member persons must trust in Jesus, accepting him as their forgiver, leader and Lord.

Acts 16:31, John 14:6, Ephesians 2:19-22, Revelation 21

b) Who Are Ministry Partners?

- We believe every Christian is a member of Christ's Church, but we also believe it is not enough to simply say that we belong to a church. Ministry Partners are active in the implementation and fulfilment of the church's vision, purpose and values, and provide a place of accountability and support in ministry oversight.
- Within the Scriptures there are many metaphors used to describe the church. Images such as: 'the body'; 'living stones'; and 'royal priesthood'. Ministry Partners recognise that ministry is to be engaged in by all believers, not just 'the paid professionals'.
- The redemptive potential of Ettalong Baptist Church will only reach fulfilment when we all capture vision, carry out the purpose and are committed to the church's values.

c) Ministry Partners shall engage in:

- Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Ministry Partners are saved by, and live in the grace of Jesus. This grace is not a license to sin, but rather the empowering presence of God to live a holy, God-honouring life.
- Growth (2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Peter 3:18). Ministry Partners engage in spiritual disciplines/ practices which feed their soul. Ministry Partners desire to see on-going evidence of their life transforming to reflect Christ.
- Group (Acts 2:46). Ministry Partners participate in Christ's Church and connect with others in significant relationships. Ministry Partners are strongly encouraged to make our weekly worship services and participation in a connect group a high priority.
- Gifts (John 13:12-15, Romans 12:6-8). Ministry Partners serve in the area of their giftedness and passion. With Jesus, they take up the servant's towel and seek to serve more than be served. This will see each Ministry Partner actively seeking to discover, develop and deploy their spiritual SHAPE¹.
- Giving (Proverb 3:9-10, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Ministry Partners seek to honour God with their material resources (including time) and support the church using the biblical precedent of the tithe as a goal to reach or exceed.
- Governance (Acts 13:1-3, Hebrews 13:17). Ministry Partners provide a place of accountability and support for the Elders. They set apart Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Group Leaders to their respective roles and seek to make their ministry a joy and not a burden. They affirm and support Church Ministry leaders. They affirm and support the annual budget. They make decisions regarding the purchase or sale of property.

d) What Should Be The SHAPE¹ Of Ministry Partners?

- Character (John 15:5). Our connection with Christ is the source of everything we have. As Jesus Christ said "Apart from me you can do nothing". Ministry Partners recognise a yielded heart is a powerful tool in God's hands. They therefore seek to attend to their own personal purity and spiritual growth to increasingly reflect Christ Jesus.
- Competency (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Like those who lead them, Ministry Partners are to use their God-given gifts and abilities with a spirit of excellence which honours God and inspires people.
- Chemistry (John 13:34-35). The defining characteristic of God's people is to be their love for one another. Ministry Partners seek to reflect this reality in their relational world.
- Commitment (1 Timothy 1:12). All roles in the church come with an appropriate level of responsibility. It is important therefore, that those who fulfil these roles come to them with a level of commitment that matches those responsibilities.

e) How Do I Become A Ministry Partner?

- Application to be a Ministry Partner should be made to the Church Secretary. Applicants names can be referred to the Secretary by current Ministry Partners, a member of the Welcome Committee or by the Pastors. The Secretary will arrange for all applicants to receive a copy of this Constitution, the Leadership Structure document, and to be interviewed. A report by those who interview the applicant will be given to the Lead Pastor and Elders for their consideration. Letters of transfer and / or commendation from other Baptist churches will also be taken into account.

¹ SHAPE is an acronym for Spiritual Gifts, Heart (or passion), Abilities, Personality, Experience.

- Applicants who give evidence that they trust Jesus Christ as their forgiver, leader and Lord, who show evidence of a life transformed by Christ, who have publicly been baptised as a believer, by immersion or other meaningful and appropriate method, and who accept the faith and practice of the church may be received as a Ministry Partner after recommendation by the Lead Pastor and Elders and by a vote of affirmation by the Congregational Church Meeting.

f) Transfer Of Ministry Partners:

If a Ministry Partner wishes to join another Christian church, such a church, upon request, may be granted a letter commending them to its fellowship.

g) Exclusion Of Members And Ministry Partners:

Should a church member or Ministry Partner be guilty of bringing offence to the church, immoral failing, or un-Christian conduct, the church shall follow our conflict resolution policy titled, "When We Have Differences."

h) Matters Of Dispute or Differences:

When matters of dispute or offence between members or Ministry Partners arise, the church shall follow the procedures laid out in our conflict resolution policy titled, "When We Have Differences."

i) Discipline:

After following the procedures laid out in the document "When We Have Differences," the Elders should inquire into cases appearing to require the exercise of discipline by the church and, at their discretion, report to the church.

j) Reconciliation:

In the event of a dispute arising, either between members or Ministry Partners, the Pastor and the church, or the church and the Baptist Association, after following the procedures laid out in the document "When We Have Differences," such a dispute may be referred for decision to suitable persons recommended by the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT.

k) List Of Ministry Partners:

The Secretary shall prepare, each year, a list of those Ministry Partners who have, for a period of six months, failed to participate in the service of worship without valid excuse. If, after every endeavour has been made to restore them to the fellowship then the Secretary shall present to the church, a recommendation that the names of these Ministry Partners be removed from the list of Ministry Partners.

Admission and Exclusion of Ministry Partners shall only be upon the vote of 75% of the Ministry Partners present and voting at a Church Congregational Meeting.

l) Non Active Ministry Partners:

The Secretary will contact those Ministry Partners who have moved away from the vicinity of the church or who are no longer able to conveniently, regularly attend services, and will give them the opportunity to be placed on a list of non-active Ministry Partners. Non-active Ministry Partners shall be regarded as being excluded from the list of Ministry Partners when determining a quorum.

7) Leadership Structure:

The church leadership shall consist of Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Group Leaders. The church's leadership shall be termed collectively as the Church Council. The Church Council shall meet at least twice annually and shall agree to and sign a Leadership Conduct Covenant which shall be referred to at every Church Council meeting, and modified when necessary.

The church's leadership structure shall be described in detail in a document attached to this Constitution.

The document describing the church Leadership Structure may only be modified, altered or changed as outlined in Section 13 of this Constitution titled "Alteration Of Constitution, By-Laws, Official Policies and Attachments."

8) The Pastor(s):

The Pastor(s) shall be a person whose credentials are acceptable to the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT and who holds the beliefs as set out in Section 2 of this Constitution.

Where more than one Pastor is appointed the Pastors shall comprise the Pastoral Team in which one shall be the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor shall normally be ex officio president of all organisations within the church, although this responsibility, at the discretion of the Lead Pastor, may be delegated to another member of the Pastoral team, Elders, or Deacons as appropriate.

a) Calling or Removing A Pastor(s):

The Pastor(s) shall be elected or removed upon a 75% majority vote of Ministry Partners present and voting at a meeting of which written notice shall be given on at least two Sundays preceding at all services, the purpose of such meeting being carefully explained. The quorum at a Church Congregational meeting for the purpose of calling or removing a Pastor is to be 50% of Ministry Partners eligible to vote.

b) Procedure When Calling A Pastor:

1. Using the method described in the current Church Leadership Document, the church shall call and affirm a Pastoral Search Committee.
2. The Pastoral Search Committee shall call for nominations for the role. Members and Ministry Partners of the church may make recommendations for discussion within the committee by submitting a name, together with reasons supporting the recommendation in writing to the Pastoral Search Committee.
3. The committee may advise the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT of the vacancy and seek advice and assistance from the appropriate officer of the Association. The committee may also publicise the vacancy in any other way that is appropriate.
4. Should more than one name come before the committee, prayer and discussion will continue until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person.
5. The committee shall communicate privately with this nominee and/or with the appropriate officer from the Baptist Association, to ascertain their willingness to allow the name to be placed before the church.
6. Should this nominee be willing, the name shall be submitted to the church after notifying the Elders. Only one name shall be before the church at any one time.
7. In the event of an adverse vote, or a call or approach not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.

All terms and conditions of a 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.

All Pastors of the church shall have an employment contract that is mutually agreed to by the church and the Pastor, outlining the terms of the call and employment.

9) Church Meetings:

a) Church Congregational Meetings:

The church shall meet at least four times a year to seek the mind of Christ through a Church Congregational meeting. This meeting should be conducted in the manner described in the church Leadership document.

b) Annual General Meeting and Annual Reports:

One of these Church Congregational Meetings shall be an Annual General Meeting, when the church shall vote to affirm various positions of the Church Council as described in the leadership document. Each ministry of the church shall present a written report for this meeting, the Treasurer shall present a financial statement for approval by the meeting, as described in the Church Leadership document.

c) Special Church Meetings:

Special Church Meetings may be convened as necessary. These may be convened by a majority of the Elders or Deacons, or a requisition signed by one tenth of the Ministry Partners.

b) Other Leadership Meetings:

Elders Meetings, Deacons Meetings, Church Council Meetings and Special Committee meetings shall be held and conducted in the manner described in the Church Leadership document.

c) Notice Of Meetings:

Notice of ordinary Church Congregational Meetings shall be given at all services on the preceding Sunday. A written notice should also be placed in the church Bulletin for the preceding Sunday.

Notice of the Annual Church Meeting, or Special Church Meetings, shall be given at all services on the two preceding Sundays. A written notice should also be placed in the church Bulletin.

d) Voting:

Only active Ministry Partners shall be entitled to vote.

In matters connected with the acquisition, mortgaging or disposal of real property the voting age shall be 18 years and over as prescribed by the Baptist Union Incorporation Act.

Voting shall be taken ordinarily on the voices or by show of hands. Voting relative to the election of church officers shall be by show of hands, or by ballot on occasions that the church shall consider advisable.

No Casting Votes: In cases where voting is close, rather than making a casting vote, the church shall pray and deliberate together seeking the Lord's will on the matter. A new meeting shall be called not less than a week later for a new vote to be taken.

e) Quorums:

The quorum for the ensuing 12 months shall be determined at the Annual Church Meeting, but in any event shall not be less than 20 per cent of Ministry Partners recorded on the roll of active Ministry Partners.

If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the appointed time for a Church Congregational meeting, then the meeting shall stand adjourned to a suitable time of not less than one week from the original date. Notice of such an adjourned meeting should be given at all services preceding the meeting. Such a meeting will be competent to deal with the matters in the agenda of the adjourned meeting. At the new meeting, the Ministry Partners present will form a quorum. Such arrangements are only for a General Church Congregational Meeting and special quorums will still apply to adjourned special meetings.

The quorum for special meetings, including those relating to the constitution, will be 30% unless the meeting is for the calling or removal of a Pastor, or for the disposal of real property, which requires 50% as described above.

f) Questions Affecting The Management And General Interests Of The Church:

These shall be submitted first to the appropriate leaders (Elders, Deacons or Group Leaders) before presentation to the church.

10) Baptism And The Lord's Supper:

The Lead Pastor may baptise any believer upon application, at the Lead Pastors discretion. Alternatively another member of the pastoral team, Ministry Partner, or other appropriate person may baptise any believer upon approval of the Lead Pastor.

The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least monthly in all public worship services. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be invited to partake of the supper.

11) General:**a) Trustees:**

All church property shall be held in trust for the church by the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust.

b) Dissolution:

If for whatever reason, Ettalong Baptist Church is unable to continue and is dissolved, then all church assets, which include but are not limited to cash and real property, will revert to our trustees.

c) Property:

Church buildings and property shall not be used or occupied by persons or organisations for any purpose except where previous consent has been obtained from the Deacons and Lead Pastor according to the policy and guidelines set by the Diaconate.

d) Insurance:

Appropriate insurance for all risks associated with church buildings, church property and the ministries of the church, both on and off the church property, shall be organised and maintained by the Diaconate.

12) Finance:**a) General:**

The Ministry shall be supported and any ordinary expenses met by voluntary contributions. Members and Ministry Partners should prayerfully consider how much the Lord would have them give, and be consistent in their giving. Cheques and bank transfers shall be signed on behalf of the church by any two of the elected deacons, one of whom shall be the Secretary, Treasurer or Administrator.

The financial year of the church shall close on the last day of June.

b) Auditors:

Auditors shall be appointed at the Annual Church Meeting, whose duty it shall be to audit the financial books of the church at least once a year.

13) Alteration of Constitution, By-Laws, Official Policies and Attachments

No alteration shall be made to the Constitution, Rules and Order of Procedure except by a three-fourths majority vote of the Ministry Partners present and eligible to vote at a meeting convened for the purpose. The quorum on this occasion is to be thirty percent of the active Ministry Partners eligible to vote.

Any proposed alteration or addition shall be given in writing as a Notice of Motion to the Elders and Deacons and shall be distributed by the Secretary or Administrator to all members not less than one month before the date of such meeting.

This Constitution and any future additions or alterations or deletions must maintain the sovereignty of the Church Meeting.

A copy of this Constitution shall be kept on the Church website, and in a file in the Church office, with the Church Leadership Document and any other policies and documents, such as the Leadership Structure, When We Have Differences (conflict resolution policy), use of premises policy, etc.