



Constitution

Hills Bible Church Incorporated

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Preamble

Hills Bible Church was established in 2009 to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in our local communities and to the end of the earth. Hills Bible Church stands within the Reformed Baptist tradition and is located in the Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. The church is robustly evangelical in theology, upholding the centrality of the gospel with a strong Bible teaching emphasis.

1 Name

The name of the association is Hills Bible Church Incorporated (the Church).

2 Purpose and powers

- (a) The Church is a not-for-profit incorporated association which is established to be, and to continue as, a Charity.
- (b) The Purpose for which the Church is established is to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ – to glorify God, equip believers and evangelise the world. In particular the Church will teach Christians to know God’s Word (2 Tim 2:15), to live by God’s Word (1 Pet 1:22–2:3), to commit to God’s work (Rom 12:1–2), and to impact God’s world (Matt 28:18–20) for the furtherance of God’s kingdom on the earth.
- (c) The Church pursues its Purpose by:
 - (i) conducting Christian worship services, fellowship groups, Bible studies, Sunday school classes, prayer meetings, pastoral care, evangelism, counselling, and theological education and training programs;
 - (ii) supporting other like-minded organisations and individuals to teach God’s Word, plant churches, to do the work of evangelism and further God’s kingdom;
 - (iii) assisting Christian workers in Australia and across the world through prayer, finances and pastoral care;
 - (iv) providing care, welfare services and assistance to the poor, the sick, the suffering and those experiencing misfortune; and
 - (v) pursuing other activities in furtherance of its Purpose.
- (d) Solely to carry out the Purpose, the Church may exercise all of the powers of an individual and an association under the Act.

3 Not-for-profit

- (a) The income and property of the Church must be applied solely towards the Purpose.
- (b) No part of the income or property of the Church may be paid or transferred directly or indirectly to members by way of dividend, bonus or other profit distribution in their capacity as members.
- (c) Elders may not be paid a fee for work they do in their capacity as an elder.

- (d) Clause 3(b)-(c) does not stop the Church from making a payment:
 - (i) to a member for goods or services provided or expenses properly incurred at fair and reasonable rates or rates more favourable to the Church;
 - (ii) to a member in carrying out the Church's Purpose;
 - (iii) of premiums for insurance indemnifying elders to the extent allowed for by law and this Constitution; or
 - (iv) with the prior approval of the elders, to an elder:
 - (A) for work they do for the Church, other than as an elder, if the amount is no more than a reasonable fee for the work done; or
 - (B) as reimbursement for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses properly incurred in performing a duty as elder.

4 Membership

4.1 General

The Church must have at least five members.

4.2 Eligibility

To be eligible for membership, a person must:

- (a) be committed to the Purpose of the Church;
- (b) profess faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (Rom 10:9);
- (c) have received believer's baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (those who have been baptised as infants and hold to a paedobaptism view may also become members but may not act as elders or deacons);
- (d) have committed themselves to live in obedience to Scripture with evidence of new life in Christ;
- (e) agree to comply with the Constitution;
- (f) affirm the Statement of Faith in Schedule A;
- (g) commit to the Church Covenant in Schedule B;
- (h) have regularly attended in person worship services at the Church for a minimum of six months;
- (i) have been approved for membership by the elders; and
- (j) be at least 18 years old.

4.3 Responsibilities and expectations of members

- (a) Each member shall maintain an active Christian witness and as far as practicable, do everything possible to:

- (i) support the mission and ministry of the church under the leadership of the elders;
 - (ii) encourage, pray for and biblically hold to account the leadership of the church;
 - (iii) faithfully serve and participate in church life and ministry, attend the general church meetings, maintaining and contributing to the unity of the church;
 - (iv) support the church, its ministries and missionaries prayerfully and practically; and
 - (v) live a holy and honourable Christian life and be a good witness of the Lord Jesus.
- (b) Each member of the Church is responsible for maintaining the mission, ethos and spiritual health of the Church by keeping the Church leadership accountable to God. Each member can fulfil their individual responsibility by voting on the decisions described in clause 6.3.
- (c) All members (including elders) are expected to adopt the following posture at all Church meetings:
- (i) active listening posture, weighing all opinions in the light of the gospel and seeking for an un-coerced consensus;
 - (ii) respectful posture, including that when a member desires to speak to a motion or decision, the member must rise in their place, but may not speak until they are called on to speak by the chairman. A member speaking in the church meeting must address the chairman only.

4.4 Non-member Church attendees

- (a) Non-member Church attendees are not members of the Church.
- (b) Non-member Church attendees are encouraged to embrace the Church's Covenant in Schedule B and formally apply to become a Church member when they are ready to do so.
- (c) Non-member Church attendees are welcome to attend the Church's worship services and other church activities.
- (d) Non-member Church attendees who regularly attend the ministries of the Church are expected to abide by the Church Covenant in Schedule B and come under the oversight of the elders.

4.5 Application

An application for membership must be made in writing in the form and manner (if any) approved by the elders.

4.6 Admission

- (a) The elders must consider and resolve whether to accept or reject each application for membership within a reasonable time.

- (b) The elders do not have to give reasons for accepting or rejecting any application.
- (c) If the elders accept an application, the secretary must, as soon as possible:
 - (i) enter the applicant's details into the Register; and
 - (ii) notify the applicant in writing of the date their membership commenced.
- (d) If the elders reject an application, the secretary must notify the applicant in writing of the rejection as soon as possible.
- (e) A person becomes a member when their name is entered into the Register.

4.7 Register of members

- (a) The secretary must maintain the Register.
- (b) The Register must contain:
 - (i) for each current member – the member's name, address, email address (if available) and date of admission to membership; and
 - (ii) for each person who ceased to be a member – the person's name and the date on which the person ceased to be a member.
- (c) The secretary must remove all information about a person who is a former member within 14 days of the person ceasing to be a member (other than the information specified in clause 4.7(b)(ii)).
- (d) Notices may be served on a member at their address in the Register.
- (e) The Church must give members access to the Register in accordance with the Act.
- (f) Information that is accessed from the Register must only be used in accordance with the Act and must not be used for improper purposes.

4.8 Ceasing to be a member

- (a) A person ceases to be a member on:
 - (i) death;
 - (ii) resignation;
 - (iii) expulsion in accordance with clause 7.1; or
 - (iv) the elders deeming, in their sole discretion, the member to be an untraceable member because the person has not responded to correspondence within 90 days.
- (b) There will be no liability for any loss or injury suffered by a member as a result of any decision made in good faith to remove a member from the Register under this clause.
- (c) Any person who for any reason ceases to be a member must not represent themselves in any manner as being a member.

4.9 Liability of members

Members are not liable to contribute to the:

- (a) debts and liabilities of the Church; and
- (b) costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the Church.

5 General meetings

5.1 Convening general meetings

- (a) The elders may call a general meeting.
- (b) At least 20% of the Members may request that the elders convene a general meeting, provided the subject matter of the meeting relates to one of the member decisions listed in clause 6.3(c) (referred to as a “Request” for the purpose of this clause 5).
- (c) The Request must:
 - (i) be in writing;
 - (ii) be delivered to the Church; and
 - (iii) include any resolution to be proposed at the meeting.
- (d) Unless the Request includes a proposed resolution that:
 - (i) does not related to one of the member decisions listed in clause 6.3(c);
 - (ii) would be in conflict with this Constitution, the Act or any applicable law;
 - (iii) is beyond the legal powers of the Church or of the members; or
 - (iv) is inconsistent with the Purpose;the elders must give all members notice of a general meeting within 21 days of the Request and hold the general meeting within two months of the Request.
- (e) If the elders are required by clause 5.1(d) to call a meeting and do not do so within 21 days of a Request, 50% or more of the members who made the Request may call a general meeting.
- (f) To call and hold a meeting under clause 5.1(d), the members must:
 - (i) as far as possible, follow the general meeting procedures in this Constitution; and
 - (ii) hold the general meeting within three months after making the Request.
- (g) Any meeting that is held following a Request:
 - (i) must only consider the resolution proposed within the Request; and
 - (ii) may not consider any other business.

5.2 Changes to general meeting arrangements

- (a) The elders may change the venue for, postpone or cancel a general meeting called under clause 5.1.
- (b) If a change is made under clause 5.2(a):
 - (i) notice of the change must be given to all persons entitled to receive notices of a general meeting under this Constitution;
 - (ii) a notice of postponement must specify the date, time and place to which the general meeting has been postponed; and
 - (iii) clause 5.5 does not apply to the notice.
- (c) The only business that may be transacted at a general meeting which is postponed is the business specified in the original notice convening the meeting.

5.3 Entitlement to receive notices

Notice of a general meeting:

- (a) must be given to every member and elder; and
- (b) may be given to any auditor appointed for the Church and in office at the time.

5.4 Notice of general meetings

A notice of general meeting must:

- (a) be in writing;
- (b) state the place, day and time of the meeting;
- (c) provide details of any technology that will be used to facilitate the meeting (if any);
- (d) state the general nature of the business to be transacted at the meeting;
- (e) state the wording of any special resolution to be considered (and state that it is proposed as a special resolution); and
- (f) state that proxy voting is not permitted.

5.5 Timing of notices

All members must be provided with:

- (a) at least 21 days' notice of a general meeting if a special resolution (including a special resolution to amend this Constitution, change the name of the Church or wind up the Church) is to be proposed at the meeting; or
- (b) at least 14 days' notice of a general meeting in any other case.

5.6 Annual general meeting

- (a) Subject to clause 5.6(b), the elders must hold an annual general meeting at least once in every calendar year, within 5 months of the end of the financial year.
- (b) The Church may hold its first annual general meeting at any time within 18 months after its incorporation.
- (c) The annual general meeting must be announced on the Church's public platform at least 14 days before the meeting.
- (d) The business of an annual general meeting may include any of the following (even if not stated in the notice of meeting):
 - (i) confirmation of the minutes of the previous annual general meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;
 - (ii) the annual budget;
 - (iii) the annual financial statements and any auditor's report;
 - (iv) the appointment of elders and pastors (on an as-required basis);
 - (v) a report from the elders that reviews the progress and direction of the Church; and
 - (vi) the appointment and remuneration of any auditor.

5.7 Chairman of general meetings

- (a) The president will preside as chairman at every general meeting.
- (b) If there is no president, the president is not present within 15 minutes of the commencement time or the president is unable to act as chairman for all or part of the meeting, the following may preside as chairman (in order of precedence):
 - (i) the vice-president (if any);
 - (ii) an elder chosen by a majority of the elders present; or
 - (iii) the only elder present.

5.8 Quorum for general meetings

- (a) No business may be transacted at a general meeting (other than electing a chairman or adjourning the meeting) unless a quorum is present at the time the business is dealt with.
- (b) A quorum for a general meeting is 40% of the members present for the whole meeting.
- (c) If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the commencement time, then:
 - (i) if the meeting was called by or at the request of members, the meeting will dissolve;
 - (ii) otherwise:

- (A) the meeting stands adjourned to the day, time and place determined by the elders (or if no determination is made by the elders, to the same day, time and place in the following week); and
 - (B) if at the resumption of the meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the commencement time, the meeting will dissolve.
- (d) A suspended member is not counted for the purposes of determining a quorum.

5.9 Adjournment of general meetings

- (a) The chairman may (and must if directed by a majority of the members present and entitled to vote) adjourn the meeting or any business, motion or discussion being considered or remaining to be considered.
- (b) A meeting adjourned under this clause 5.9 is adjourned to the day, time and place determined by the elders (or if no determination is made by the elders, to the same day, time and place in the following week).
- (c) It is not necessary to give any notice of an adjournment, or of the business to be transacted at any adjourned meeting, unless a meeting is adjourned for one month or more.
- (d) Only unfinished business may be transacted at a general meeting resumed after an adjournment.

6 Voting at general meetings

6.1 Voting rights

- (a) Each member has one vote (provided they are not suspended).
- (b) On a vote conducted at a general meeting on a show of hands or voices, or such other method as the chairman determines, each person present who is a member has one vote.

6.2 Method of voting

- (a) Voting will occur by show of hands or voices or such other method as the chairman determines.
- (b) A member may vote in person or by technology (only if a determination is made by the elders that a meeting will be held using technology).

6.3 Decisions of the members

- (a) The chairman has the authority to decline motions put to the meeting by the members.
- (b) Questions arising for determination (other than a special resolution) will be decided by a majority of votes cast (unless otherwise provided in this Constitution).

- (c) Questions arising for determination in respect of the following Church matters must be decided by the members as follows:
 - (i) confirming the appointment of an elder (75% majority of votes cast is required);
 - (ii) confirming the appointment of pastors (75% majority of votes cast is required);
 - (iii) reviewing and approving the annual budget (two-thirds majority of votes cast is required); and
 - (iv) approving the acquisition or disbursal of real estate (two-thirds majority of votes cast is required).
- (d) The chairman has a deliberative vote only. If the votes cast on a motion are equal, the chairman will not have a casting vote, and the motion will be lost.
- (e) A declaration by the chairman that a resolution has been carried or lost on a show of hands or voices is conclusive evidence of the fact.
- (f) An objection to the right of a person to vote may only be raised at the meeting at which the vote objected to is given or tendered. Any objection must be referred to the chairman, whose decision is final. A vote not disallowed pursuant to such an objection is valid for all purposes.

6.4 Proxies

Proxy voting is not permitted.

6.5 Use of virtual meeting technology in general meetings

- (a) The Church's strong preference is to hold general meetings in person.
- (b) The Church will only hold general meetings using technology in exceptional circumstances and at the sole discretion of the elders. If the elders determine that a general meeting is to be held using technology, the Church may hold a general meeting at any two or more locations using any technology which allows members to communicate clearly and simultaneously with each other participating member.
- (c) A person participating through the use of technology will be deemed to be present at the meeting in person.

7 Discipline and grievances

7.1 Church disciplinary procedure

- (a) The elders may take disciplinary action against a member in accordance with this clause 7.1 if it considers there are sufficient grounds to do so.
- (b) The grounds upon which the elders may take disciplinary action against a member include, without limitation:
 - (i) non-compliance with this Constitution; and
 - (ii) engagement in conduct prejudicial to the Church.

- (c) The first responsibility of church accountability belongs to all members for each other. It is to be pastoral in nature with the primary objective always being redemptive and restorative (Matt 18:15-20).
- (d) The discipline of members shall be entrusted to the elders. If biblical discipline is necessary, the elders have the authority to place members under church discipline which may lead to suspension or termination of membership.
- (e) Members who stir up dissension within the church, contrary to the Constitution, will be disciplined according to the principles set forth in Titus 3:10-11.

7.2 Grievance procedure

- (a) The elders will determine the procedure to be followed to determine any dispute arising between:
 - (i) a member and another member;
 - (ii) a member and the elders; and
 - (iii) a member and the Church.
- (b) In cases of differences between members or matters of alleged wrongdoing, the elders and all parties involved must use their best endeavours to follow the procedure set out in Matthew 18:15-20 and Titus 3:10-11.
- (c) The elders must ensure that:
 - (i) a member may appoint any person to act on behalf of the member in the grievance procedure;
 - (ii) each party to the dispute is given an opportunity to be heard on the matter which is the subject of the dispute; and
 - (iii) the outcome of the dispute must not be determined by a biased decision-maker.

8 Appointment of elders

8.1 General

- (a) According to the teachings of Scripture, under the lordship of Jesus Christ, the elders exercise the highest level of authority in the Church and oversee all the ministries of the Church.
- (b) Under the authority of Scripture, the duty of the elders is to oversee the spiritual life and ministries of the Church, including:
 - (i) maintaining personal devotion to God through regular prayer and personal application of God's Word;
 - (ii) acting in solidarity with respect to the other elders and not make unilateral decisions, keeping sensitive matters confidential and always work towards the unity and wellbeing of the Church;

- (iii) striving to make decisions unanimously;
- (iv) teaching and exhorting the congregation as well as refuting those who contradict the truth;
- (v) overseeing all matters concerning the conduct and gathering of the flock for public worship, their spiritual growth and the mobilisation of the congregation for evangelism and world mission (Matt 28:19-20; Eph 4:11-13);
- (vi) administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- (vii) maintaining church discipline (Matt 18:15-20; Titus 3:10-11); and
- (viii) providing support, encouragement and protection for the pastors, other elders, deacons and employees of the church.

8.2 Number and composition of elders

At all times, the Church must have at least three elders, comprising:

- (a) the pastors; and
- (b) lay elders.

8.3 Eligibility

- (a) Any natural person committed to the Purpose is eligible to be an elder (and referred to as an "Eligible Person" throughout this Constitution) provided the person:
 - (i) is a member;
 - (ii) is male in gender (1 Tim 2:8-15; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9);
 - (iii) meets the qualifications of elders as set out in Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-15; 5:19-25; 2 Tim 2:24-25; Titus 1:5-9);
 - (iv) demonstrates love and spiritual care for the flock (1 Pet 5:1-4);
 - (v) is able to teach sound doctrine and lovingly correct error (Titus 1:9);
 - (vi) is faithful in attending Church activities with their family;
 - (vii) fully adheres to the Church's doctrinal statements, Constitution and leadership codes of conduct;
 - (viii) is like-minded in ministry philosophy with the existing elders; and
 - (ix) has undergone a believer's baptism;
 - (x) has consented in writing to be an elder; and
 - (xi) is not ineligible to be an elder under:
 - (A) the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth); or
 - (B) the ACNC Legislation.
- (b) Clause 8.3(a)(xi) will not apply to disqualify a person if an exemption is obtained from the ACNC Commissioner.

8.4 Election of lay elders

- (a) The elders may call for the nomination of lay elders at any time during the year.
- (b) Elections for lay elder positions can be held at an annual general meeting or at a general meeting convened by the elders in accordance with clauses 8.4(c)-(h) below.
- (c) Nominations for lay elder positions must:
 - (i) be made in writing;
 - (ii) be signed by the nominee and at least one member; and
 - (iii) contain any information prescribed by the elders.
- (d) Nominations must be submitted to the elders at least 30 days before the date of the relevant general meeting. Members may submit any questions that they may have about the nominees during this time.
- (e) If at least 75% of the elders determine that a nominee meets the eligibility criteria in clause 8.3 and the nomination requirements in clauses 8.4(c)-(d), the nominee will become an approved candidate.
- (f) The candidates will be elected if 75% of votes cast by members present at the relevant general meeting are in favour of their appointment; and
- (g) A secret ballot for elections held under this clause 8.4 will be conducted at the relevant general meeting in such usual and proper manner as the elders may direct.
- (h) The results of an election held at a general meeting under this clause 8.4 must be announced at the general meeting.

8.5 Term of office of lay elders

- (a) The term of office of a lay elder elected by members under clause 8.4:
 - (i) is three years;
 - (ii) commences at the end of the general meeting at which they are elected; and
 - (iii) expires at the end of the third annual general meeting following the election.
- (b) After each three year term, if the lay elder (and the other elders) believe that the lay elder is able to continue fulfilling their role as lay elder, the lay elder may be re-elected to serve for a further three year term.
- (c) In recognition of the burden of eldership, with the mutual agreement of the elders, a lay elder may take a 12-month sabbatical after a three-year term and be re-elected to serve for a further three year term.

8.6 Ceasing to be an elder

- (a) A person stops being an elder if he:

- (i) resigns by three months written notice to the Church (unless otherwise mutually agreed);
 - (ii) ceases to be a member;
 - (iii) is absent without leave of the elders from:
 - (A) three consecutive elders' meetings; or
 - (B) four elders' meetings over 12 months;
 - (iv) dies, or becomes subject to a Court order to receive treatment or have their finances managed by another person due to being of unsound mind or having a mental illness; or
 - (v) becomes ineligible to be an elder under:
 - (A) the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth); or
 - (B) the ACNC Legislation;
 - (vi) in the case of the pastors, ceases to be a pastor; or
 - (vii) in the sole determination of the elders, disqualifies himself by breaching the biblical requirements for elders listed in clause 8.3.
- (b) A person who has ceased to be an elder must return copies of any relevant documentation to the elders.

8.7 Insufficient elders

- (a) If the number of elders is less than three, the remaining elders may, except in an emergency, act only to:
 - (i) increase the number of elders to three; or
 - (ii) convene a general meeting of the Church.
- (b) If an elder appointment is made pursuant to clause 8.7(a)(i), the appointment must be confirmed at a general meeting, which must be held within 90 days of the appointment.

8.8 Defects in appointment of elders

An act done by, or with the participation of, a person acting as an elder or member of a committee is valid even if it is later discovered that:

- (a) there was a defect in the appointment of the person; or
- (b) the person was disqualified from continuing in office, voting or taking the relevant step.

9 Elders' decision making

9.1 Convening elders' meetings

- (a) An elder may convene or ask the secretary to convene an elders' meeting if a majority of the elders agree to convene an elders meeting.

- (b) The elders may meet as often as the elders deem it necessary to carry out their role to oversee the ministries of the Church and, in any event, normally once a month.

9.2 Notice of elders' meetings

- (a) Written notice of elders' meetings must be given to every elder at least seven days prior to the meeting (unless the elders unanimously waive this requirement).
- (b) A notice of an elders' meeting:
 - (i) must specify the place, day and time of the meeting;
 - (ii) must provide details of any technology that will be used to facilitate the meeting; and
 - (iii) does not need to specify the nature of the business to be transacted at the meeting.

9.3 Quorum for elders' meetings

- (a) No business may be transacted at any elders' meeting unless a quorum is present.
- (b) Subject to clause 9.3(c), a quorum of elders for elders' meetings is three or a majority of the total number of elders, whichever is higher.
- (c) A quorum of elders for an elders' meeting relating to the nomination or dismissal of a pastor is three or a two-thirds majority, whichever is higher.

9.4 Use of virtual meeting technology in elders' meetings

- (a) The elders may hold their meetings using any technology that is agreed to by the elders.
- (b) The elders' agreement may be a standing one.
- (c) An elder who attends by technology is deemed to be present in person at the meeting.

9.5 Chairman of elders' meetings

- (a) The president will preside as chairman at elders' meetings.
- (b) If there is no president, the president is not present within 15 minutes after the commencement time or the president is unwilling to act as chairman for all or part of the meeting then:
 - (i) if there is a vice-president, the vice-president will be the chairman; and
 - (ii) if the vice-president is not present or is not willing and able to be the chairman during all or part of the meeting, the elders present may elect an elder to be chairman of the meeting or part of it.

9.6 Decisions of the elders

- (a) A question arising at an elders' meeting is to be decided by a majority of votes of elders present and entitled to vote.
- (b) The chairman has a deliberative vote only. If the votes cast on a motion are equal, the chairman will not have a casting vote, and the motion will be lost.

9.7 Resolutions without meetings

- (a) An elders' resolution may be passed without a meeting if all of the elders entitled to vote on the resolution sign a notice stating that they are in favour of the resolution.
- (b) The resolution is passed at the time when the last elder necessary to constitute unanimous consent in favour of the resolution signs.
- (c) For the purpose of this clause:
 - (i) the notice must include the wording of the resolution;
 - (ii) the notice may be distributed by any means;
 - (iii) separate copies of the notice may be signed; and
 - (iv) the resolution fails if it has not achieved unanimous consent within seven days after the notice was given.
- (d) Resolutions without meetings must be recorded in the minutes of the next elders meeting.

10 Elders' powers and duties

10.1 Powers of the elders

- (a) The elders are responsible for the governance of the Church and furthering the Purpose.
- (b) The elders may exercise all the powers of the Church that are not, by the Act or by this Constitution, required to be exercised by the members.
- (c) The elders cannot remove an auditor.
- (d) The elders may delegate any of its powers to one or more elders, the pastors, the deacons, a committee, an employee or any other person.
- (e) The elders may specify terms of the delegation (including the power to further delegate) and revoke a delegation.

10.2 Duties of elders

Elders must comply with any duties imposed on them by the Act and with the duties described in Governance standard 5 of the ACNC Legislation.

10.3 Establishment of Committees

- (a) The elders may establish Committees.

- (b) A Committee may include, or be comprised of, non-elders.
- (c) The meetings and proceedings of Committees are:
 - (i) subject to any terms of reference and/or delegation; and
 - (ii) otherwise governed as far as possible by the provisions of this Constitution which regulate the proceedings of the elders.

10.4 By-laws

- (a) The elders may make regulations or by-laws not inconsistent with this Constitution for the general conduct and management of the Church and the business of the elders.
- (b) The elders may revoke and alter by-laws or regulations as they see fit.

11 Elders' interests

- (a) An elder who has a material personal interest in a matter being considered at an elders meeting must disclose the nature and extent of that interest and the relation of the interest to the activities of the Church:
 - (i) to the elders – as soon as the elder becomes aware of the interest; and
 - (ii) to the members – at the next general meeting.
- (b) The elder:
 - (i) must not be present while the matter is being considered at the elders meeting; and
 - (ii) must not vote on the matter.
- (c) Clauses 11(a)-(b) do not apply to a material personal interest:
 - (i) that exists only because the elder is an employee of the Church or belongs to a class of persons for whose benefit the Church is established; or
 - (ii) that the elder has in common with all, or a substantial proportion of, the members.

12 Deacons

12.1 General

- (a) Deacons shall operate under the direction and authority of the elders and will be subject to terms of reference which must address the matters set out in this clause 12 and any other matters deemed appropriate by the elders.
- (b) Deacons may be male or female.
- (c) Deacons shall be members of the Church who are in good standing, have undergone a believer's baptism, demonstrate the godly characteristics set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and possess the gifts for particular ministries.
- (d) Deacons shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority but shall assist the elders in all matters pertaining to the practical welfare of the church, so

that the elders may devote themselves to prayer, pastoral duties and the ministry of the Word.

- (e) Working under the oversight of the elders, deacons may provide practical service and assistance in areas such as:
 - (i) general and financial administration;
 - (ii) management of facilities;
 - (iii) social and benevolent functions;
 - (iv) management and overseeing welcoming and ushering ministries;
 - (v) assisting with general pastoral care;
 - (vi) assisting in the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
 - (vii) delivering hospitality ministries;
 - (viii) monitoring matters regarding Health and Safety;
 - (ix) assisting in the care of the sick and needy; and
 - (x) encouraging the unity of the body and safe-guarding the harmony of the church.

12.2 Nomination and appointment of the deacons

- (a) The number of deacons appointed will be based on the needs of the Church.
- (b) Members may nominate candidates for consideration to serve as deacons.
- (c) The elders may seek input from members for deacon nominations to specific ministry appointments.
- (d) The elders will review any nominations and confirm the suitability of the candidates nominated to serve as a deacon based on the requirements of the particular ministry.
- (e) Suitable candidates may be appointed to the position of deacon as deemed necessary by the elders at any time during the year.
- (f) A deacon will normally serve for a term of three years from the date of their appointment. The elders may re-appoint a deacon for consecutive terms.
- (g) The elders will inform the Church of the names of those individuals appointed to be deacons within one month of their appointment.

12.3 Ceasing to be a Deacon

- (a) The elders have the authority to terminate the appointment of a deacon at any time at the sole discretion of the elders.
- (b) A deacon may resign following the provision of three months' notice to the elders. The elders will inform the members of resignations or retirements at the annual general meeting.

13.1 Appointment of office bearers

- (a) From time to time as required, the elders must appoint a president, a treasurer, a secretary and may appoint any other office bearers (for example, a vice-president) they deem fit from among the elders.
- (b) Office bearers of the Church hold office until the end of the Board meeting held after the first annual general meeting following their appointment.
- (c) An office bearer may be appointed for more than one successive term.
- (d) The elders may remove or suspend a person from holding any office bearer position by resolution passed at an elders meeting provided the resolution is passed by not less than two-thirds of the elders present.

13.2 Secretary

- (a) An elder may not be appointed as secretary unless the person:
 - (i) consents in writing to being appointed as secretary;
 - (ii) is at least 18 years of age; and
 - (iii) is resident in Australia.
- (b) The elders may suspend or remove a secretary.
- (c) The secretary must give the Registrar notice of his appointment within 14 days of the appointment.
- (d) The elders must fill any vacancy in the office of secretary within 14 days of the vacancy arising.

13.3 Treasurer

- (a) The treasurer shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Church, “taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration... for we have regard for what is honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor 8:20-21). He may select, with the approval of the elders, “men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3) to implement and accomplish this responsibility.
- (b) The treasurer must:
 - (i) arrange for the collection and receipt of all moneys due to the Church and arrange for all payments authorised by the Church to be made;
 - (ii) ensure that the financial records of the Church are kept in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the ACNC Legislation; and
 - (iii) coordinate the preparation of the financial statements of the Church and their certification by the elders prior to their submission to the annual general meeting of the Church.

- (c) The treasurer must ensure that at least one other elder has access to the accounts and financial records of the Church as well as details of bank accounts and passwords.

13.4 Pastors

- (a) The elders have the authority to appoint suitably qualified individuals to the position of a pastor (male only).
- (b) In the event of a pastoral vacancy, the elders must form a pastoral Selection Committee (PSC), which must have a minimum of 5 members comprising elders, deacons and members.
- (c) The PSC will assess the potential pastoral candidates and select a candidate(s) that best fulfils the qualifications and requirements for the pastoral ministry vacancy. The name(s) of the chosen candidate(s) will be submitted to the elders for consideration.
- (d) Candidate(s) nominated by the PSC will be examined by the elders regarding their suitability for the role.
- (e) If a candidate is endorsed by the elders, the candidate will be introduced to the members for consideration for a discernment period of at least 2 weeks.
- (f) If a member believes that a candidate is unqualified, that member should express their concerns to the elders in writing.
- (g) After the 2-week discernment period, the calling of a pastor must be determined at a special general meeting of the Church where at least 75% of the members present and entitled to vote agree to the appointment of the pastor.
- (h) After the pastor has been elected by the members, the elders will determine the specific title, conditions, remuneration and tenure of the appointment.
- (i) Upon the appointment of a pastor, he will become a member and an elder of the Church.
- (j) The pastor is accountable to the elders at all times and the elders must take note of and consider any observation or report regarding false teaching or inappropriate conduct by a pastor.
- (k) The elders shall oversee all matters relative to the life, character, doctrine and professional conduct of the pastors.
- (l) The elders may terminate the employment of the pastor in accordance with the terms of their employment contract and by resolution of 75% of the elders.

13.5 Ministry workers and support staff

- (a) The elders may appoint other ministry workers and support staff to serve the Church in specific areas of need.
- (b) The remuneration and tenure of the ministry workers and support staff will be determined and approved by the elders before the appointment.

- (c) If a support staff member is not already a member, he or she must become a member upon their appointment as a support staff, except in exceptional circumstances.
- (d) The elders must take note of and consider any observation or report regarding false teaching or inappropriate conduct by ministry workers.
- (e) The elders shall oversee all matters relative to the life, character, doctrine and professional conduct of ministry workers and support staff.
- (f) The elders may terminate the employment of ministry workers and support staff in accordance with the terms of their employment contract.

13.6 Chief executive officer

- (a) Unless otherwise determined by the elders, the president will be the chief executive officer.
- (b) The elders may:
 - (i) confer powers, discretions and duties on the chief executive officer as they see fit;
 - (ii) withdraw, suspend or vary any powers, discretions and duties conferred; and
 - (iii) authorise the chief executive officer to delegate all or any of the powers, discretions and duties conferred.

14 Indemnities and insurance

- (a) The Church indemnifies every present and past elder and office holder to the full extent permitted by law against all losses and liabilities incurred as a result of their position as an office holder of the Church.
- (b) This indemnity:
 - (i) is a continuing obligation and is enforceable even if the person has ceased to be an office holder of the Church; and
 - (ii) is not subject to any requirement to first incur an expense or make a payment.
- (c) The Church may, to the extent permitted by law, pay or agree to pay a premium in respect of a contract insuring its office holders.
- (d) Nothing in this clause 14 limits the Church's ability to indemnify or pay for insurance for any person not expressly covered by this clause.

15 Administration

15.1 Minutes

- (a) The elders must ensure that:
 - (i) minutes of all general meetings and elders' meetings; and

- (ii) records of resolutions passed by members and elders without a meeting;

are recorded and kept with the Church's records as soon as practicable (being no later than one month after the meeting or passing of the resolution).

- (b) The Church must ensure that minutes of an elders' or general meeting are signed within a reasonable time by the chairman of the meeting or of the next meeting.

15.2 Inspection of books and records

- (a) Members may not have access to the financial records, books, securities and any other document of the Church, including minutes of elders' meetings, unless otherwise permitted by this Constitution, law, or the elders.
- (b) Members may on request inspect:
 - (i) the Register;
 - (ii) the minutes of general meetings; and
 - (iii) this Constitution.
- (c) The elders may refuse any request to inspect books and records of the Church where:
 - (i) the records relate to confidential, personal, employment, commercial or legal matters; and/or
 - (ii) allowing the request would be prejudicial to the interests of the Church.
- (d) The secretary may refuse to allow a member to inspect any part of the Register in accordance with the Act.
- (e) Members must not:
 - (i) use information obtained about another person from the Register to contact or send materials to the other person; or
 - (ii) disclose information obtained about a person from the Register knowing that the information is likely to be used to contact or send materials to the other person;

unless the purpose for which the information is used or disclosed is otherwise expressly permitted by this Constitution or by law.
- (f) If the Church provides access to this Constitution on the Church's website or the ACNC website, the elders will be deemed to have allowed a member to inspect and copy this Constitution, unless the member informs the Church that they are unable to access the Constitution on either website.

15.3 Common seal

The Church does not have a common seal.

15.4 Execution of documents

The Church may execute documents by the signature of two elders.

16 Audit and finance

16.1 Accounts and other records of the Church

- (a) The elders must:
 - (i) ensure that proper financial records are kept in accordance with all legal and regulatory requirements;
 - (ii) ensure that records of its operations are kept; and
 - (iii) take reasonable steps to ensure that the Church's records are kept safe.
- (b) The Church must retain its records for at least seven years.

16.2 Audit

- (a) If required by law, the Church must appoint and remunerate an auditor.
- (b) Any auditor is entitled to attend any general meeting and to be heard by the members on any business of the meeting that concerns the auditor in their capacity as auditor.
- (c) The Church may give any auditor all communications relating to the general meeting that the members of the Church are entitled to receive.
- (d) The members may remove an auditor by resolution at a general meeting provided:
 - (i) the notice of general meeting is provided at least two months before the general meeting;
 - (ii) the notice is provided to the auditor; and
 - (iii) a copy of the notice is lodged with the Registrar.

16.3 Financial year

The financial year will begin on 1 January and end on 31 December, unless the elders pass a resolution to change the financial year.

16.4 Source of funds

The funds of the Church may be derived from offerings, donations, fundraising activities, grants, interest, endowments, bequests and any other sources approved by the elders.

16.5 Management of funds

- (a) The elders may approve expenditure on behalf of the Church (if the budget has been approved).

- (b) The elders may authorise the expenditure of funds on behalf of the Church without requiring approval from the elders for each item on which the funds are expended.
- (c) All cheques must be signed by two elders or otherwise authorised in accordance with any process determined by the elders.
- (d) The elders must ensure that systems and procedures for the management of the Church's funds are appropriate for its size and circumstances and the complexity of its financial affairs.
- (e) All payments must be authorised in accordance with any process determined by the elders.

17 Amending this Constitution

- (a) The Church may only alter this Constitution by special resolution in accordance with the Act.
- (b) The members must not pass a special resolution that amends this Constitution if passing it causes the Church to no longer be a Charity.

18 Notices

- (a) Notices can be served on members or elders personally or by post, email or other electronic means.
- (b) Notices are taken to be served:
 - (i) in the case of a properly addressed and posted notice – five business days after the date of posting; and
 - (ii) in the case of a notice sent by email or other electronic means – at the time of sending.
- (c) The non-receipt of notice or a failure to give notice does not invalidate any thing done or resolution passed at the meeting if:
 - (i) the non-receipt or failure occurred by accident or error;
 - (ii) the individual waives notice before or after the meeting (including by attending the meeting); or
 - (iii) the individual notifies the Church of their agreement to that thing or resolution before or after the meeting.

19 Winding up

19.1 General

The Church may only be wound up in accordance with the Act.

19.2 Distribution of assets on winding up

- (a) If on the winding up or dissolution of the Church there is a surplus of assets after satisfying all the Church's liabilities and expenses, the surplus:

- (i) must not be paid or distributed to a member in their capacity as a member; and
- (ii) must be given or transferred to a Charity (or Charities) which:
 - (A) has a similar purpose to the Purpose; and
 - (B) prohibits the distribution of income, profit and assets to its members in their capacity as members.
- (b) The members must decide before any winding up or dissolution which Charity (or Charities) will receive a distribution under clause 19.2(a). If the members fail to decide, the matter must be determined by application to the Supreme Court in the State of Victoria.

20 Interpretation

20.1 Definitions

In this Constitution:

ACNC means the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

ACNC Legislation means the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (Cth) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Act 2012* (Cth).

Act means the *Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012* (Vic).

auditor may mean a reviewer, if permitted by the Act or ACNC Legislation.

business day means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday in the State of Victoria.

chairman means the person chairing a meeting.

Charity means a charity registered under the ACNC Legislation.

deacon means the person appointed by the elders under clause 12.

elders means the group of individuals that are responsible for the governance, strategy and management of the Church.

general meeting means a meeting of members (including an annual general meeting).

member means a person whose name is entered in the Register as a member of the Church in accordance with clause 4.7.

ministry worker means the person appointed by the elders under clause 13.

office bearer means president, vice president (if any), treasurer (if any), secretary and any other person appointed under clause 13.

pastor means the person appointed by the elders under clause 13.

person includes a natural person and a corporation within the meaning of section 57A of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

president means the person appointed to the position of president under clause 13.

Purpose means the purpose set out in clause 2(b).

Register means the register of members under the Act.

Registrar means the Registrar of Incorporated Associations in Victoria.

special resolution means a resolution passed at a general meeting:

- (a) of which 21 days' notice specifying the intention to propose the resolution as a special resolution has been given pursuant to this Constitution and the Act; and
- (b) by not less than 75% of the votes cast by members.

20.2 Interpretation

In this Constitution:

- (a) if an expression in the Constitution has a meaning in the Act, the meaning from the Act will apply to the expression (except where a contrary intention appears in this Constitution); and
- (b) a reference to any legislation or to any provision of any legislation includes:
 - (i) any modification or re-enactment of it;
 - (ii) any legislative provision substituted for it; and
 - (iii) all regulations and statutory instruments issued under it.

21 Transitional provisions

The following clauses apply notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Constitution.

21.1 Members

The first members are those named as members in the application for the Church's registration under the Act.

21.2 Elders

The first elders are those named as elders in the application for the Church's registration under the Act.

Elders appointed prior to the adoption of this Constitution may complete their term of office under the previous Constitution.

Schedule A : Statement of Faith

This Statement of Faith is by and large drawn from the revised New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1853) and the Abstract of Principles (1858), which are based on the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.

(a) **The Scriptures**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. They are and shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to men; the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be judged (Ps 19:7; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:19-21; Heb 1:1-2).

(b) **God**

There is but One God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all people owe the highest love, reverence and obedience (Deut 6:4; Ps 145:3; John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:4-6; 1 Tim 1:17).

(c) **The Trinity**

In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, eternally existing, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).

(d) **Providence**

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of people (Isa 46:9-11; Prov 16:33; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; Jas 1:13-15).

(e) **God's Sovereign Grace**

By God's sovereign grace, for the display of His glory, some are chosen to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace. This sovereign election – taking place before the foundation of the world – is solely out of God's free grace and love, without anything in the individual as a condition or cause moving Him to choose them, and is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man (Rom 8:28-30; 9:6-18; 1 Cor 1:27-29; Eph 1:4-5, 11; 1 Thess 1:4-5; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:2).

(f) **The Freeness of Salvation**

The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; and nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his or her own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel (Isa 45:22; 55:1; John 6:47; Acts 17:30; Rev 22:17).

(g) **The Fall of Man**

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable

of moral action, become actual transgressors (Gen 1:26-27; 3:1-7; Rom 5:12-19; Eph 2:1-3).

(h) The Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the Law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried and rose again the third day and ascended to His Father, at Whose right hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe (Isa 53:10-12; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Rom 3:21-26; 8:34; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 3:13; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 1:1-3).

(i) The Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the work of Christ to believers and distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign good pleasure for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Adoption, the Seal of our Salvation and the Guarantor of our inheritance in Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:14; Acts 5:3; Rom 8:14-17; Eph 1:13-14).

(j) Regeneration

Regeneration is a changed heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, Who quickens the dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practise holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone (John 3:1-8; Eph 2:1-6; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3; 1 John 5:1).

(k) Repentance

Repentance is an evangelical grace wherein a person, being by the Holy Spirit made aware of the manifold evil of their sin, humbles themselves for it, with godly sorrow, hatred of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavour to walk before God so as to please Him in all things (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:37-38; 11:18; 2 Cor 7:10-11).

(l) Saving Faith

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness (Rom 3:27-28; 4:1-5, 17-25; 10:14, 17; Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8; Jas 2:14-26).

(m) Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ. Believers trust in Christ alone and rely on His righteousness by faith alone (Acts 13:38-39; Rom 3:21-26; 8:34; 10:3-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).

(n) Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified, by God's Word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all disciples seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in heartfelt obedience to all Christ's commands (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:27-27; John 17:17; Rom 8:1-17; Gal 5:13-24; 2 Pet 1:3-11).

(o) Perseverance of the Saints

Those whom God has accepted in the Beloved, Jesus Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; Rom 8:28-39; 1 Cor 1:8-9; Phil 1:6; 1 John 2:19).

(p) The Church

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular churches; and to each of these churches He has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He has appointed. The regular officers of a Church are elders and deacons (John 10:16; Acts 20:17, 28; Eph 1:22; 5:23; Phil 1:1; Col 1:18; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17-18; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 10:25).

(q) Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he or she is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his or her fellowship with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving themselves up to God, to live and walk in newness of life (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:38-39; Rom 6:3-5; 1 Cor 12:13).

(r) The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches until He comes. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church fellowship (Matt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

(s) The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2; Col 2:16; 3:16; Heb 10:24-25; Rev 1:10).

(t) Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience and therefore the Christian is free from bondage to any doctrines and commandments of men, including those of elders and civil authorities, which are contrary to the Scriptures. Because civil authorities are ordained by God,

subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded to by us in the Lord, not only to avoid possible punishment, but also for conscience's sake (Matt 15:9; Acts 5:29; Rom 13:1-7; 14:4; Col 2:20-23; 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

(u) The Resurrection

The bodies of people after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:12-28; 2 Cor 5:1-10; Phil 1:23).

(v) The Judgment

Following the event in which Christ will descend from Heaven, God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to their deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Matt 25:46; John 5:22, 27-29; Acts 17:31; Rom 2:6-11; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 1:7; 7:13-17; 14:9-11).

(w) Human Sexuality and Gender

God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. God created the human race male and female and all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Gen 1:27; Deut 22:5).

(x) Marriage

Marriage has been established by God as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sin (Gen 2:24-25; Exod 20:14, 17; 22:19; Lev 18:22-23; 20:13, 15-16; Matt 19:4-6, 9; Rom 1:18-31; 1 Cor 6:9-10, 15-20; 1 Tim 1:8-11; Jude 7).

(y) Sanctity of Life

Children are a blessing from the Lord and all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other state or condition from conception through to natural death. Thus, all human life is sacred and worthy of protection, even from the moment of conception (Gen 1:26-27; Ps 139:13-26).

(z) Government Authority

All government institutions have been given authority by God to administer justice, to punish evildoers, for the public good and the glory of God. Christians are called to honour the ruling government by praying for them, paying taxes and submitting to their lawful clauses. As Christians we hold that the word of God is a higher authority than any human authority, therefore when laws contradict God's law, then the church must continue to submit to God's law above all else. Although the church and Government institutions find their source and authority in God, their purposes are distinct. Therefore, the church must not expect nor rely on the government to conduct the church's work nor vice versa (Mark 12:14-17, Rom 13:1-7, 1 Tim 2:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17).

Schedule B : Church Covenant

This covenant expresses the mutual expectations and hopes, which we as individuals freely commit to in becoming members of Hills Bible Church. While we will inevitably fail from time to time, this covenant still sets the ideals and goals to which each member is committed.

(a) In my Personal Life:

I acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, and I will seek to honour Him by my attitudes, speech and actions. I will seek to prioritise and nurture my spiritual growth, particularly through regular prayer, consistent study of God's Word and regular corporate worship (Rom 12:1-2).

(b) Toward my Fellow Believers:

I will work to maintain the unity granted by the Spirit of the risen Christ and treat others with a loving and humble spirit in recognition of our mutual spiritual frailty. I will earnestly seek to resolve conflict between members in accordance with the "Rule of Christ" (Matt 18:15-20), avoiding actions that would increase conflict between members. I will always look to support others in situations of genuine need, crisis and suffering (1 John 3:17-18).

(c) For the Good of the Church:

I will exercise my spiritual gifts and talents contributing to the building up of the whole church family. I will participate in the process of discerning the Spirit's leading through prayerful participation in church members' meetings. I will encourage and support the appointed leaders and pastors of the church as they coordinate and facilitate our ministries in order to fulfil our mission (Heb 13:7, 17).

(d) As a Christian Steward:

I will be faithful in all things entrusted into my care, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, my time and my home. I will express my gratitude to Christ through faithful financial contribution to Hills Bible Church, in accordance with what I have decided in my heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion (2 Cor 9:6-7).

(e) Before the World:

I will, with the enablement of the Holy Spirit, strive to live in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel in all aspects of my life to bear witness to the reign of Jesus Christ. I will, trusting in the sovereignty of God and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, seek to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ as I have opportunity (1 Pet 2:9).