

# ***CONSTITUTION FOR LOCAL CHURCHES***

Definition: A local church shall consist of members of The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia in any locality duly organised according to the constitution for local churches as adopted by the General Council. The work of the church shall be in the care of the Board of Elders under the leadership of the pastor.

Unless otherwise stated, the word "Pastor" shall be taken to refer to the Senior Pastor in churches where there are more than one pastor. (Council 1994)

## **1. NAME**

This church shall be known as "Hope Community Church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia."

## **2. MEMBERSHIP AND DOCTRINE**

Qualifications for membership shall consist of:

- 1) Satisfactory evidence of regeneration
- 2) Belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures as originally given; in the vicarious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the eternal salvation of all who believe in Him and the eternal punishment of all who reject Him
- 3) Acceptance of the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King
- 4) Full sympathy with the Society's principles and objectives and co-operation by contributing to its work
- 5) Any other requirement that may be stated in the By-Laws

## **3. ORDINANCES**

Baptism by immersion is recognised as a Scriptural ordinance. Applicants for membership who have been baptised by another mode may be received on the above conditions of membership. The Lord's Supper shall be administered regularly.

## **4. BOARD OF ELDERS**

The spiritual work and leadership of the church shall be in the care of a Board of Elders. The Pastor shall be the chairman of the Board. The size of the Board shall be set out in the by-laws of the church. The Board is responsible for the provision of pastoral care including visitation, counselling, anointing and prayer for the sick. It shall also watch over the church's programs to ensure their harmony and contribution to the purposes of the church. When the church has no pastor the Board shall elect one of its members to the position of interim chairman pending the calling of another pastor. (Council 1992)

The Board shall conduct at least monthly meetings for prayer and business. It shall receive reports to aid it in fulfilling its role and shall itself report to the church on matters affecting the congregation each month or as directed by the membership. It shall appoint its own secretary who shall, where appropriate, record the minutes of the Board of Elders and conduct correspondence as directed by the Board.

Pulpit supply shall be the responsibility of the pastor who shall act in consultation with the Board. The Board is responsible for examining candidates for membership, disciplining

members and keeping the membership roll up-to-date. It shall be responsible for filling the unexpired term of positions becoming vacant between Annual Meetings and appointing people to non-elected positions. If an elder is considered by his fellow Elders to be living contrary to the scriptural standards of eldership and the Board of Elders consists of at least three it may by a two-thirds majority vote call for the resignation of that elder. Where there are only two Elders any call by the Board of Elders for resignation shall be in consultation with the National Board.

In all matters involving large expenditures of money the Board shall act in consultation with the Board of Deacons.

Where the church requires the Treasurer to sit on the on Board of Elders, one elder will be designated the Treasurer with the following responsibilities:

- Oversee all the financial matters of the church;
- Supervise the framing of the annual budget and financial report to the annual general meeting (in consultation with the Financial Administrator where such exists);
- Present monthly financial statements to the Board of Elders (as prepared by the Financial Administrator where such exists);
- Be one of the signatories to all church accounts; and
- Be an ex-officio member of the Board of Deacons.

Where the Treasurer sits on the Board of Elders, the church may elect to the Board of Deacons a Financial Administrator to work under the authority of the Treasurer. (Council 2006)

## **5. BOARD OF DEACONS**

This Committee shall under the authority of the Board of Elders be responsible for the financial and property matters of the church and the provision of those ministries designed to meet the physical and material needs of people. In all these matters it shall see itself as working in harmony with the Board of Elders to provide a ministry to the needs of the whole person. Where appropriate it may conduct offerings for specific purposes consistent with its responsibilities. The Board of Deacons will also be responsible for those matters which the Board of Elders may delegate to it.

It shall consist of at least four members, including the Treasurer (or Financial Administrator) and Missionary Treasurer with the maximum number of members established by the By-Laws of the local church. The offices of Treasurer (or Financial Administrator) and Missionary Treasurer may be filled by the one person. (Council 2006)

At its first meeting after the Annual Meeting it shall elect a chairman and a secretary who shall record the minutes of the Board of Deacons and conduct correspondence as directed by the Board.

It shall report at least monthly on its work to the Board of Elders.

### **5.1 CHURCH FINANCES**

- \* All offerings including Faith Promise monies are to be counted and recorded by two church members. These should preferably be Deacons.
- \* All monies received are to be deposited as soon as possible in accounts approved by the Board of Deacons.
- \* All disbursements from church accounts are to be made by a method that transfers funds directly into the account of another financial institution or company. This must result in an auditable record maintained by the bank or financial institution holding the church's account. Examples of such methods include cheque, direct debit, Internet

banking and Bpay. Cash withdrawals are prohibited. All transactions are to be authorised by the Board of Deacons.

The Board of Deacons shall determine the number of signatories for each church account, who those signatories shall be and how many of them are to be required by the bank or financial institution for it to permit operations on the church's accounts.

The Board of Deacons shall receive a monthly report giving details for every transaction that occurred during the month in accordance with normal accounting practice. (Council 2004)

\* All financial records are to be retained for a minimum period of seven years or longer where State or Federal laws require (Council 2002).

\* An auditor with suitable accounting qualifications and external to the Board of Deacons shall be selected by the Board of Deacons. (Council 1990)

\* Subject to any resolution passed by a General Meeting, the funds of the Church shall be used in pursuance of its objects. (Council 2005)

\* No funds shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Church except for charitable gifts or as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the church. (Council 2005)

## **6. OFFICERS**

The officers shall consist of: the Pastor, Associate Pastor and Assistant Pastor where such may be called; Elders; Deacons, including the Treasurer and Missionary Treasurer, and where required Financial Administrator and Trustees; and such other officers as the membership may elect. (Council 2006)

With the exception of pastors, all of them shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the church. (Council 1994)

## **7. PASTOR**

In the appointment of pastors, only men licensed by the National Board of The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia will be eligible to serve.

Where a church has more than one pastor one shall be called, or designated by the Board of Elders, as the Senior Pastor. The Pastor, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, as the case may require, shall be called by the Board of Elders who shall make a recommendation to the church membership and the National Board regarding the person to be called. The Board of Elders shall not negotiate with any candidate without the approval of the National Board. (Council 1994)

A Pastor, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or Assistant Pastor may resign from the church by giving due notice of his intention to the National Board and the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may, in conjunction with the National Board, ask for the resignation of the Pastor, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or Assistant Pastor. (Council 1994)

The pastor shall be called for an initial term of 2-5 years. The ministry relationship will then be reviewed by the pastor and the Board of Elders who shall make a recommendation to the church membership and National Board concerning reappointment. (Council 1993)

## **8. NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall consist of the pastor, two Elders and two selected by the congregation, and shall be appointed at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting. It shall place in nomination one name for each office to be filled in the Annual Meeting and post its report two Sundays prior to the Annual

Meeting. Nominations in addition to those of the Nominating Committee may be made by church members. Such nominations must be given to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee in such time as to allow him to make known to the congregation the additional nominations on the Sunday prior to the Annual Meeting. Such nominations shall be in writing, duly seconded and contain the consent of the nominee. No nominations to church offices shall be received after the Sunday prior to the Annual Meeting. Where there are insufficient elders, the Board of Elders will select a person to serve on the Nominating Committee. (Amended Council 1985)

## **9. DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

The calling to leadership in the church is a sacred calling and it is expected that all officers of the church shall live lives that conform with scriptural standards. They shall be filled with and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

### **9.1 PASTOR**

#### ***(1) Pastor***

The Pastor shall in conjunction with the Board of Elders exercise a general oversight of the work of the church. He shall be chairman of the Board of Elders and may be chairman of the Board of Deacons. He, or his nominee, shall preside at all regular or special meetings of the church. He is a member ex-officio of all church committees. When the church has no pastor the Board of Elders shall have the oversight of the work in conjunction with the National Board. (Council 1994)

#### ***(2) Associate Pastor***

The Associate Pastor is to be responsible for an area of ministry designated by the Board of Elders and may have a title that reflects that ministry such as Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_. He will be directly accountable to the Senior Pastor. He is a voting member of the Board of Elders.

#### ***(3) Assistant Pastor***

The Assistant Pastor is under the direction of the Senior Pastor to assist him in the ministry of the church. He is accountable to the Senior Pastor. (Council 1994)

### **9.2 ELDERS**

The oversight of the church shall be vested in the Board of Elders with the Pastor as chairman. Elders shall conform to scriptural standards. They may attend any other meeting of the church but not vote, unless otherwise entitled. Each elder shall serve a term of three years and be eligible for re-election at the end of that term.

The Secretary to the Board of Elders shall be the Secretary of the Annual General Meeting and other special meetings of the Church, and keep the minutes of such meetings. He may appoint a minute secretary.

### **9.3 DEACONS**

#### ***(1) Treasurer (or Financial Administrator)***

The Treasurer (or Financial Administrator) shall keep the financial records of the church. The Treasurer (or Financial Administrator) shall present a current financial statement and the original bank statement to the regular meetings of the Board of Deacons and shall present an audited financial statement of the church's receipts and payments for the financial year just ended to the Annual Meeting. (Council 1990, 2006)

### ***(2) Missionary Treasurer***

The Missionary Treasurer shall maintain a record of all Faith Promise monies, forwarding these monies monthly by cheque to the National Treasurer and file the receipts for those payments. Where separate bank accounts exist for Faith Promise monies, original bank statements shall be presented to the regular meetings of the Board of Deacons. The Missionary Treasurer shall present regular statements of the church's Faith Promise giving to the Board of Deacons and to the congregation. (Council 1990)

## **9.4 TRUSTEES**

Where trustees are required they shall be elected according to the laws of the State or Territory in which the church is located. They shall be custodians of all properties both real and personal. Their work shall be under the direction of the membership and the Board of Deacons.

## **9.5 RECORDS**

The official records of all officers of the church and all of its departments are the property of the church. All financial records shall be audited annually or at any time on order of the church Board of Deacons. In the event of the death or resignation of the incumbent or upon the election of his successor, the current records necessary for fulfilling the obligations of the office shall be passed on to the newly-elected officers. All records other than current shall be kept in a safe repository selected by the church Board of Deacons.

## **10. RELATIONSHIP**

This church is connected with and subordinate to The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia, the parent religious Society.

## **11. GOVERNMENT**

There shall be an Annual Meeting held, at a time to be fixed by the By-Laws, at which time it shall receive reports of all departments, including audited reports of the Treasurer and elect church officers. The Board of Elders shall oversee the affairs of the church between Annual Meetings and is amenable to the membership and the National Board. On general church matters in which no legal questions are involved, it is understood that all members in good and regular standing are entitled to vote who have reached the age of sixteen (16) years, but in matters involving titles to property or legal procedure, the laws of the State or Territory determine the age at which members are eligible to vote. (Council 1992)

## **12. MISSIONARY CONVENTION**

A Missionary Convention shall be held annually. At the conclusion of the missionary convention a Faith Promise for the Great Commission Fund for the next faith promise year shall be received.

## **13. PROPERTY**

The church may acquire, own, dispose of, improve, encumber and convey property, real and personal, for church purposes, in conformity with the laws of the States or Territories where the property is situated and, where Trustees are required, they are to be elected by the membership according to law. Such property may be sold, conveyed, exchanged, or encumbered only by order of the membership through the church Board of Deacons. In States or Territories where Trustees are required, the order of the membership shall proceed through them.

## 14. CHURCH CLOSURE

### 14.1 CLOSURE PROCEDURE

There may arise from time to time situations that require the closure of a church. Before that point is reached the Board will pursue possible ways to assist the church pastorally, and where needed, provide mediation. However where these are not successful the following applies:

- 1) In order to dissolve a church a Special General Meeting called for that purpose may, by a three quarters majority of the members present and voting, resolve to dissolve the church. If such resolution is confirmed by a three quarters majority at a subsequent Special General Meeting held not less than twenty one (21) days nor more than thirty five (35) days thereafter, the church shall be deemed dissolved.
- 2) The notice convening such Special General Meetings shall clearly state that the dissolution of the church is to be proposed.
- 3) The National Board may initiate the closure of a local church under one or more of the following circumstances:
  - a. where the church for a continuous period of three (3) calendar months fails to hold any meetings of the kind that, in the opinion of the National Board, are customarily held by the Local Alliance Churches
  - b. ceases to be a member church of the CMA
  - c. ceases to adhere to and observe those doctrines and practices held by the C&MA of Australia
  - d. maintains, propagates doctrines or practices which, in the opinion of the National Board, are inconsistent with the doctrines and practices of the C&MA of Australia.

### 14.2 DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

In the event that the members of a church vote to close the church then the assets of the church shall be dealt with in the following way:

- 1) Where the property, appurtenances and effects are held for the church in trust by the C&MA of Australasia Property Trust, the terms of the trust deed shall be followed.
- 2) Where the property, appurtenances and effects are held by a local church which is an incorporated body, and if upon the dissolution of the church there remains after satisfaction of its debts and liabilities any property whatsoever, the same shall not be *paid to or distributed amongst the members. The surplus assets shall be given to The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Incorporated, the parent religious body, to be used as determined by the National Board; or* if the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Incorporated does not exist the assets must be given to another entity which:
  - a. has objects similar to the church's objects; and
  - b. has rules which prohibit the distribution of the entity's income and assets to its members.

These requirements must be set out clearly in the church's Incorporation documents.

- 3) Where the property, appurtenances and effects are held by a local church which is managed by its own trustees, and if upon the dissolution of the church there remains after satisfaction of its debts and liabilities any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid to or distributed amongst the members. The surplus assets shall be given to The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Incorporated, the parent religious body, to be used as determined by the National Board; or

if the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Incorporated does not exist the assets must be given to another entity which:

- a. has objects similar to the church's objects; and
- b. rules which prohibit the distribution of the entity's income and assets to its members."

## **15. INCORPORATION DOCUMENTS**

Local Alliance churches that incorporate must ensure that their incorporation documents are consistent with this Constitution for Local Churches. Any inconsistencies between this constitution and the church's documents of incorporation must be rectified in favour of this constitution. Failure to do so in a reasonable time may render the church concerned liable to being not recognised as a church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Inc. (Council 2003)

## **16. AMENDMENT CLAUSE**

This Constitution may be amended from time to time by the General Council by a three-quarters majority vote of the members present. (Council 2002)

## **17. BY-LAWS**

Local By-Laws not in conflict with the provisions of the Constitution may be adopted by the Annual Meeting of the church. A copy of such By-Laws shall be filed with the National Board. (Council 1970,1971,1984)

### **17.1 Member Meetings:**

- i Quorum: All meetings of the church membership where a motion will be voted upon require the presence of a quorum. A quorum shall consist of 50% of the church membership.
  
- ii Election of Officer Bearers: The election of all Office Bearers, including all Pastors, Elders and Deacons, will require a three-quarters majority vote of the members present at the meeting where the election occurs.
  
- iii Absentee Voting; A church member who will be absent from a meeting where voting will occur may, prior to the meeting, submit in writing to the Chairperson of the meeting their voting intention. This absentee vote will be included in the final tally of votes, but will not be included in the numbers to determine a quorum.
  
- iv Annual General Meeting (AGM); The AGM will be held within the first four months of each calendar year.