

VAN DER BIJLPARK
BAPTIST
CHURCH

CONSTITUTION

ACCEPTED
26 AUGUST 2000

TRUST DEED AND CONSTITUTION OF THE
VAN DER BIJLPARK BAPTIST CHURCH

1. **NAME:**

The name and designation of the Church shall be the –

VAN DER BIJLPARK BAPTIST CHURCH

2. **MEMBERSHIP OF BAPTIST UNION:**

The Vanderbijlpark Baptist Church (hereinafter styled “the church”), shall make application for membership in the Baptist Union of South Africa.

3. **CHURCH GOVERNMENT:**

The Church acknowledges JESUS CHRIST AS THE Supreme Head of the Church, undertakes to manage all its affairs according to the New Testament teaching and recognizes the sole authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of faith and conduct.

4. **DECLARATION OF BELIEF:**

- a. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament in their original writing as fully inspired of God and accept them as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.

- b. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- c. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.
- d. We believe that God created man in His own image: that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt.
- e. We believe that God has sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman, therefore we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement for membership with the Vanderbijlpark Baptist Church.
- f. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, according to The Scriptures, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.
- g. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His ascension into heaven, and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate.
- h. We believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- i. We believe that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit of God and thereby become children of God.

- j. We believe in the resurrection both of the just and unjust, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected the offer of salvation.
- k. We believe that the one true Church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local Church on earth should take its character from this conception of the Church spiritual, and thereafter – that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of Church membership.
- l. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper – to be observed as acts of obedience and as perpetual witness to the cardinal facts of the Christian faith; that Baptism is the immersion of the believer in water as confession of identification with Christ in burial and resurrection, and that the Lord's Supper is the partaking of bread and wine as symbolical of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood, in remembrance of His sacrificial death until He comes.

4. **STATEMENT OF BAPTIST PRINCIPLES:**

PREAMBLE: We as Baptists share many areas of our faith with other members of the professing Christian Church. These include a belief in one God : Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ as Head of the Church; and in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

There are, however, areas of principle and practice where we as Baptists make distinctive emphasis arising out of our understanding of the Scriptures. It is to clarify these that the following statement is made:

We, as Baptists believe in:

1. The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God. The local Church, being a manifestation of the universal Church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous, except insofar as it binds itself through voluntary association.
2. BELIEVER'S BAPTISM: AS AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE TO OUR Lord Jesus Christ, and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. The principle of CONGREGATION CHURCH GOVERNMENT: namely, that a constituted Church meeting, is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local Church; and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the Church, including the appointment of its leaders.
4. The PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, by which we understand each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession,

worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

5. The principle of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, namely that no individual should be coerced either by the State or any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matter of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scripture responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.
6. The principle of SEPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State, nor is it in its faith of practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.

ENTRENCHED PROVISION:

The foregoing statements are an entrenched provision and may not be removed, or amended, save on a 90% majority vote of members as a meeting of which at least three months notice has been given.

CHANGE WITHIN CHURCH STRUCTURE:

Any change within the Church structure, or organization which is in conflict directly, or indirectly with one or more of the stated Baptist Principles will be invalid, unless

approved by at least 90% of the members as a duly constituted Special Church Meeting.

5. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH:**

The Church shall be constituted of and shall include among its members:

- a. those persons who have prior to the adoption of the Constitution united themselves together with a view to the establishment of the Church, and
- b. such persons as may hereinafter be received into its fellowship in accordance with the provisions of the next succeeding article.

6. **ADMISSION OF MEMBERS:**

Persons who have declared their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have confessed the same in Baptism (immersion), shall be admitted to the membership of the Church by:

- a. Vote of Church, and where necessary
- b. Transfer from other Baptist Churches.

Persons desirous of joining the Church under sub-section (a) shall make application to the Pastor, or one of the Leaders of the Church. Printed application forms are to be provided for completion by applicants. Two members appointed by the Ministry Leader's Meeting of the Church shall interview such applicants and

shall report to the Ministry Leader's Meeting, who will, if satisfied with the report, submit the application to a Church Meeting for approval.

Members of other Baptist Churches seeking fellowship with the Church under subsection (b), shall produce Letters of Transfer from the Church in which their membership stands. Such letters shall be submitted to the Ministry Leader's Meeting, which will discuss the application and report to the next Church Meeting the names of the members desiring such transfer.

7. **CHURCH DISCIPLINE:**

If any member is absent from the services of the Church for a prolonged period, without good reason known to the Pastor and/or Executive, the Executive shall make inquiry into the matter.

In the event of such inquiry producing no satisfactory result, the name of the member concerned shall be reported to a Church Meeting for such action as the members present may decide, after due consideration.

In the event of any allegation of unworthy conduct being brought against a member, the Executive shall make inquiry into the matter. After they have given the matter prayerful consideration, their recommendation shall be conveyed to a Church Meeting.

In purely personal matters, members shall be expected to act in the spirit of the Lord's injunction in Matthew 18:15-17.

8. **TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS:**

The Church shall function through the medium of its Executive Committee as hereinafter defined, who shall act as generally or specifically directed by the Church, in a general meeting assembled, or in accordance with regulations formed by the Church in general meetings, and who shall be accountable to the Church for the proper carrying out of all acts, the performance of which may have been delegated to them, and for the proper administration of all Church funds.

9. **MEETINGS:**

The Church year shall end on 30 June, and the Annual General Meeting of the Church shall be held as soon as possible after that date. At such an Annual General Meeting, the Executive Committee shall submit reports on the general activities of the Church during the **proceeding (shouldn't it b preceeding)** year, on the financial position of the Church and on matters affecting its spiritual and social welfare.

Ordinary General Meeting of the Church May be held quarterly, or as often as the business of the Church requires. At any of the aforesaid meetings the Executive

Committee may require, and the meeting may give directions for the guidance of such Executive Committee.

At such meeting any duly admitted members of the Church, who are (16) years or older shall be entitled to vote, and any resolution passed by the majority of voting members at such meetings shall be binding upon the Church and its Executive Committee unless, and until such resolutions shall have been rescinded at a Special General Meeting called for the purpose in accordance with the provisions of the next succeeding article.

Ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church shall be deemed to constitute a quorum, except in the case of Special General Meetings, when twenty percent (20%) shall constitute a quorum.

10. **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS:**

Special General Meetings of the Church shall be held only after public notice has been given thereof, which notice shall state the whole business to be transacted thereat. For the purpose of this article, a public notice shall mean a notice which is intimated at Divine Service both in the morning and in the evening on the two successive Sundays, immediately preceding the day appointed for the meeting and which is published by means of a printed, or written notice affixed to the entrance door or the Notice Board of the Church building, or porch during the whole of the two such Sundays aforesaid.

At any Special General Meeting only such members of the Church, who are sixteen (16) years or older, and who have been members for a period of at least six months, shall be entitled to vote.

Special General Meetings may be convened any time by the Executive Committee, and shall be so convened upon request in writing signed by at least six members qualified to vote at such a meeting, setting forth the reason for convening the meeting.

Resolutions at any Special General Meeting shall be decided by the majority of the votes cast and the votes shall be taken by ballot if demanded, by not less than five members. This voting procedure shall not apply when dealing with the calling of a Pastor, the election of Deacons or the modification of this Trust Deed and Constitution.

11. **THE MINISTRY:**

a. The Pastor/Elder

The choice and appointment of a Pastor is vested in the membership of the Church, and if and when it is necessary to appoint a Pastor the procedure shall be as follows:

A special General Meeting called for the purpose shall appoint not less than four members (other than members of the Church Executive Committee – vide Article 15), to act with the Executive Committee as a Special Committee whose duty shall be to consult with the Ministerial Settlements Committee of the Baptist Union of S.A. to make the necessary enquiries, and to make a recommendation to the Church as soon as possible. The Committee shall put before the Church only one name at a time. The Committee's recommendation shall be considered at a Special General Meeting called for the purpose and no invitation shall be sent forward unless at least 75% of the members voting, when the matter is considered vote in favour.

Any invitations shall be contingent upon the prospective Pastor being a Pastor, or student Pastor of the Baptist Denomination, or one approved by the Executive of the Baptist Union, before the prospective Pastor is approached by the Church, and accepting in writing the provisions of this Trust Deed and Constitution, copy of which shall be supplied for his perusal.

Any engagement between the Church and the Pastor shall be terminable by three months notice in writing by either side, unless otherwise mutually agreed.

12. **ELDERS:**

(i) Elders:

- a. The spiritual oversight of the Church rests with the Elder/s. The ideal is a plurality and equality of Elders.
- b. For the purpose of this Constitution, Elders called to either full-time or part-time ministry in the Church, may be paid a salary.

(ii) Appointment of Elders:

Elders shall comply with the conditions pertaining to that Office as contained in Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Elders are eligible for appointment, provided they have been members of a Baptist Church for a period of at least one year. An elder may be called from outside the Church, and shall enjoy the privileges and responsibilities of Members and Elders. His appointment must be confirmed by the Church and ordination must take place within 3 months. Any member may at any time make a recommendation in writing to the Executive, whereupon the Executive, having made the necessary enquiries and having obtained the consent of the proposed Elder, may take the recommendation to the General Meeting, which meeting shall consider the recommendation of the Executive, provided that no person shall be called an Elder unless at least 75% of the Members voting when the recommendation was considered, voted in favour. Voting shall be by ballot. Names of proposed Elder/s shall be posted on the Church Notice Board at least 14 days before the General Meeting at which the voting shall take place, and must be announced from

the pulpit on the two Lord's days preceding the Meeting, the Members being urged to be much in prayer regarding these proposals.

(iii) Ordination of Elders:

An Elder shall be ordained by the laying on of hands by an Elder or Elders, within the Church, and/or person/s appointed by the Executive Committee.

(iv) Duties of Elders:

It is the duty of the Elders to teach, administer the ordinances and discipline, lead the flock according to the Scriptures, and ensure that pure doctrine, according to the Scriptures, and as set out in the Declaration of Belief, etc., (Article 4) is taught in the Church. Elders shall teach and preach regularly in the Church, according to their ministries, and counsel when and where required.

(v) Termination of Office:

Every Elder, except the Pastor, shall normally remain in office for a period of 3 years, and shall be eligible for reappointment by the Church Meeting. His appointment may be terminated in one of the following ways:

- (i) if an accusation brought against an Elder, which would result in him being censured, is upheld by the Church Meeting, after investigation by the Elders. Such accusation might include such things as failure

to fulfill the duties of office; using privileges of office for personal gain, or selfish prestige (1 Peter 5:2-3); instigating a party spirit;

(ii) by resignation of the Elder, subject to 3 months notice.

(iv) Eldership

For the purpose of this Constitution, it shall be deemed to mean the actual Elders, or if there are less than 3 Elders, a body consisting of actual Elders together with such members of Deacons appointed by the actual Elders, or if there are no Elders, by the other Deacons to make up a total of three.

13. **DEACONS/MINISTRY LEADERS:**

From its baptized membership of the age of 21 years and over, the Church shall elect at its Annual General Meeting, those who are to serve as Deacon/Ministry Leaders (that is, Chairpersons/Leaders/Diacons/Co-ordinators), or by whatever designation the Leader of a Ministry is known by.

The office of Deacons/Ministry Leaders shall be tenable by any person so elected for a period of one year, but such person shall be eligible for re-election from time to time.

The election of Deacons/Ministry Leaders shall be by ballot.

Election shall be after nomination and nominations shall be submitted in writing to the secretary of the Church at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting, or General Meeting called for the purpose of electing a Deacon/Ministry Leader, or Deacons/Ministry Leaders, and such nominations such nominations shall be posted on the Church Notice Board not later than the Sunday preceding the election.

The nomination paper shall be signed by five members of the Church and the nominee.

In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Deacon/Ministry Leader during the year, such vacancy shall be filled in the manner, aforesaid, at the next General Meeting of the Church convened for the purpose, the person so elected holding office until the Annual General Meeting when that person shall require, but be eligible for re-election.

14. **SECRETARY OF THE CHURCH:**

The Secretary of the Church is recognized as a Deacon/Ministry Leader. The Secretary shall be elected by the members of the Church, following the same procedure as for the election of Deacon/Ministry Leaders. (For the procedure, see 12 above).

15. **TREASURER OF THE CHURCH:**

The Treasurer of the Church is recognized as a Deacon/Ministry Leader. The Treasurer shall be elected by the members of the Church, following the same procedure as for the election of Deacon/Ministry Leaders. (For the procedure see 12 above).

16. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

The Pastor together with the Elders and Deacon/Ministry Leaders shall constitute the Executive Committee of the Church, which shall transact the business of the Church, administer its funds and carry out its directions, as provided in Articles 7 and 8.

The Pastor shall preside at all meetings, except when any question affecting his own position is under discussion, or when he shall elect to vacate the Chair, in which case one of the other Elders shall act as Chairperson. Should there be no other Elders, then one of the Deacon/Ministry Leaders, appointed by the Executive Committee shall act as Chairperson at that particular meeting of the Church of Executive Committee.

The Chairperson, at any meeting, shall have a casting vote but not a deliberative vote.

17. **ORGANISATIONS:**

All appointments made by the organizations, or departments connected with the Church shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for confirmation.

18. **REGULATIONS:**

The Church may at any meeting frame and enact such regulations as it may deem necessary for the management of the affairs of the Church.

19. **CHURCH PROPERTY:**

All property which the Church may acquire, whether movable, or immovable shall be held and administered solely for the furtherance of its objects and the propagation of its principles. In the event of the Church at any time ceasing to exist, all property, or rights to property owned by it shall ipso facto vest in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, which shall hold and administer the same as the said Union and the propagation of the principles of the Church, as hereinbefore mentioned.

The Church shall be deemed to have ceased to exist when the dissolution of the Church shall have been resolved upon the **accordance of with** Article 21; or when the members of the Church shall have become totally dispersed, or when the public worship of God shall have been discontinued (in connection with the Church) for a period of three calendar months.

20. **REGISTRATION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY AND CHURCH TRUSTEES:**

All immovable property acquired, or hereinafter acquired, by the Church shall be the separate property of the Church, but as such property must be registered in the name of the Trustees, it is hereby declared that the Trustees of the Church shall be the same as the Trustees for the time being of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, and they shall hold the property on behalf of the said Church and deal therewith subject to the provisions of Clause 18, as the said Church may direct in terms of Clause 20 hereunder. The said Trustees shall therefore be designated in the Title Deeds of any Church property as follows:

“The Trustees for the time being is the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, as such the Trustees of the said Vanderbijlpark Baptist Church.”

21. **TRANSFER OR MORTGAGE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:**

- a. “The Church shall have the power to buy, sell, let or hire, exchange, transfer, receive by way of donation, or otherwise, movable and immovable property, and to invest funds in Government, or Municipal stock, mortgage bonds, or on Fixed Deposits, or otherwise, in Banks; Post Offices; Building Societies, or like organization and shall further have power to borrow money with or without security, in such manner as the Church shall think fit, negotiate loans from Bankers, or others by overdraft, or otherwise and by passing mortgage and notarial bonds for registration with the proper authorities, and open and operate upon banking accounts, and to make, draw, accept, discount, execute and issue Promissory Notes, Bills of Exchange and other negotiable and transferable investments.”

- b. “To guarantee the performance of contracts by any person, or duly constituted Church having objects wholly, or partly similar of this Church (or Association), and to enter into guarantees, or surety ships of every description.”

22. **APPLICATION OF PROCEEDS OF SALE OF PROPERTY:**

The proceeds derived from the sale, or other disposal of any property of the Church, shall be applied and devoted in such manner as the Church, or in the event of the Church having ceased to exist, the Baptist Union of Southern Africa may deem best fitted to secure the furtherance of the objects of the Church, and the propagation of its principles/

23. **DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH:**

The Church may at any time be dissolved by resolution of a majority of two thirds of the members voting, and entitled to vote at a Special General Meeting of the Church. In the event of such a resolution being passed, the Executive Committee, or in the event of there being no such Committee, other persons appointed by the Church shall take the necessary steps to wind-up the affairs of the Church, and in particular to transfer the property of the Church in due and proper form to the Baptist Union of South Africa.

24. **MODIFICATION OF CONSTITUTION:**

No proposal to modify, or alter, this Deed and Constitution shall be considered until after the expiration of one year from the date on which such note of such proposal has been given at an Ordinary General Meeting of the Church, duly convened for the purpose of considering such proposal, it being resolved by a majority of two thirds of the members voting thereat and duly qualified to vote, to accept such proposal, and to amend the Deed of Constitution in accordance therewith.