Constitution

Example Church of Christ

Version 4.4 as at 24/06/2022

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# Definitions

* 1. **Governing Group** The elected leaders of the church who take ultimate responsibility for the spiritual leadership, relational health and governance requirements of the church. The Governance Group Members shall have the qualities of Elders and Deacons as defined by: 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9, and Acts 6:3-7.
  2. **Pastor** The person elected to lead the ministry work of the church (or termed the Senior Pastor in larger staff teams) and who oversees the church staff (paid and unpaid).

# Church Identity

* 1. The name of the church is Example Church of Christ ("the church").
  2. This church shall be an affiliated member of Churches of Christ in Queensland, an incorporated body under Letters Patent, or its successors and will fulfil affiliation requirements set down by Churches of Christ in Queensland.
  3. The church is an Unincorporated Association.
  4. The church is established to be, and continue as a charity.

# Purpose

* 1. The church exists for charitable purposes including, but not limited to, the advancement of religion. Specific activities of the church are to serve this purpose.
  2. This church exists to fulfil the purposes for which Jesus established the Church:   
     *(insert your purpose or mission statement here, following is an example)*
* Introducing – facilitating people’s coming to faith in Christ (Mark 16:15)
* Maturing – supporting and encouraging believers in their discipleship (Colossians 1:28)
* Caring – expressing Christ’s care and compassion to those in need (1 John 3:18)
* Worshipping – glorifying God through our lives and corporate worship expression (John 4:24)
  1. *All of section 3.3 is optional:*

The church seeks to fulfil its purpose within the following framework of belief and practice.

The church generally supports the beliefs and practices as expressed by Churches of Christ in Australia.

**AND/OR**

The church has a Statement of Faith document which is adopted by the church

members and can be altered by two thirds majority vote of the church members.

**OR**

The church holds to the following affirmations:

(i) the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments

(ii) the revelation of one God in three persons: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit

(iii) the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ

(iv) Jesus’ life and teaching as a perfect example of divine character

(v) the death of Jesus as a perfect sin offering for redemption and forgiveness

(vi) the bodily resurrection of Jesus

(vii) Jesus’ supreme authority as Lord over all

(viii) the person and work of the Holy Spirit

(ix) the need of salvation and the forgiveness of sins

(x) the invitation and requirement of faith and repentance for salvation

(xi) the practices of baptism and communion

(xii) the acceptance that the Church is a divine institution

# Membership

* 1. Membership shall be comprised of those who align with and who are committed to the life and ministry of this church. They shall be persons who repent and confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their personal saviour, and who seek to be obedient to Him. (Rom 10:9-10)
  2. Church members agree to:
     + Be an active participant in church life and use their gifts to serve others.
     + Support the vision and direction of the church, and the church leadership.
     + Build healthy and respectful relationships throughout the church family.
     + Prayerfully bring before the Lord their financial contribution to the Church.
     + Pray about church direction and participate in Church Members’ meetings where possible. (Rom 12:4-5, Eph 4:25, Col 3:15, 1Pet 4:10)
  3. All applicants for membership will complete a membership application form and submit to the Governing Group for consideration. The approval of the Governing Group will represent the approval of the church.
  4. Members must be [x] years of age, and have attended the church regularly for [x] months.
  5. The Governing Group will ensure a register will be kept with the names of the members of the church. A person becomes a member when their name is entered onto the register. A person must be removed from the register as soon as possible after they cease to be a member.
  6. A member may be placed under discipline by the Governing Group and lose membership privileges for a period of time. This will follow principles of natural justice and follow processes set out in the Church Conflict Resolution document. (Matthew 18:15-16)
  7. Staff and Governing Group members must be members of the church.
  8. The Governing Group may review the membership roll and remove members who have: joined another church, requested removal from the membership roll, become inactive or died.

# Leadership Structures

## The Governing Group

* 1. The purpose of the Governing Group is to:

1. Oversee the spiritual and administrative affairs of the church on behalf of the Church Members, taking responsibility for the governance requirements of the church.
2. Discern the specific direction of the church and provide leadership to the church with the Senior Pastor who leads the Church Staff.
3. Provide accountability and support to the Pastor and through the Pastor to the broader pastoral team.

*[Governing Group members are often Elders and the Governing Group is the Eldership, but not in every church. The Term Governing Group can be replaced with Elders or whatever other title your church uses. Whilst you may choose to have Deacon roles within the church, we do not recommend this group has a collective decision-making authority or governance role and therefore Deacons are not referred to in this Constitution.]*

* 1. There will be a minimum of 3 [(preferably 6 but not exceeding 8)] elected members of the Governing Group. Those elected to the Governing Group at the AGM must not hold a Church Staff position. Elected members will be appointed for [two-year] terms.
  2. Elected members may serve a maximum of [three two-year terms] before stepping down for a minimum of [two] years before being nominated for election again.
  3. The Pastor will be a member of the Governing Group while they hold that position.
  4. The Governing Group will appoint its own chairperson and nominate a Treasurer of the church who will take responsibility for the treasury function of the church. The treasurer may or may not be a member of the Governing Group.
  5. As far as possible, consensus will be the basis of decision making by the Governing Group. Where a vote is necessary, each member has one vote. [Optional: If voting to dismiss a person from the Governing Group they may only act by a vote with no more than one dissent (excluding the Governing Group member in question).] Otherwise, in other matters, the Governing Group may only act by a vote with no more than two dissents.
  6. Minutes of Governing Group meetings will be kept.
  7. The elected members of the Governing Group are appointed by a [majority] vote at the AGM. The Governing Group may appoint a person to fill a vacancy until the next AGM.
  8. Nominations for Governing Group can be made to the Governing Group (*or a Nominations Committee which consists of the Chair of the Governing Group, the Pastor and one other person appointed by the Governing Group*). The Nominations Committee will then consider the applications and bring recommendations to the Church Members for appointment. Governing Group members seeking re-appointment will go through the nomination process for each term and require a [two-thirds majority] vote.
  9. The Governing Group will meet as agreed to by the Group. A meeting may be called for any purpose and at any time or place by resolution of [three] Group Members. The Governing Group will meet at least [4] times per year.
  10. The quorum for meetings of the Governing Group will be half the group plus one and meetings will usually be held face-to-face. However, the linking together of members using telephone or other electronic audio-visual communication shall constitute attendance at a meeting. In this instance the member/s must be able to receive the input of the other members taking part in the meeting, and acknowledge their presence for the purpose of the meeting at its commencement.

## Ministry Staff

* 1. The staffing structure for the church (paid and unpaid) shall be determined by the Governing Group and shall be communicated to the church. The Governing Group shall ensure that the roles and responsibilities are documented for each position established.
  2. The Governing Group will identify and recommend to the Members for voting nominees for Pastoral staff.
  3. (optional) The appointment and termination of *all* *other* staff will be managed by the Pastor, in consultation with Governing Group.
  4. Pastoral appointments or re-appointments are made at a Members’ Meeting for a term that will not exceed 5 years and require a two-thirds majority vote. These votes will be by secret ballot.
  5. The termination of a staff member’s contract may occur:

1. if the staff member fails to receive the percentage of votes required for a re-call by the Governing Group or at a Members Meeting,
2. as a result of a performance management process
3. due to a matter of moral offence or misconduct in which case it will be dealt with by the Governing Group.

In any of the above cases, the Governing Group will act in accordance with the CofCQld Minsters Appointment and Employment Guide and Fair Work Queensland.

# Members’ Meetings

* 1. The Governing Group shall arrange at least 1 members’ meeting per year, one of which shall be the Annual General Meeting. All agenda items for members’ meetings are approved by the Governing Group prior to the meeting.
  2. The date, time, place, and proposed motions for all such meetings shall be advised to the church at least 2 weeks before the meeting is held.
  3. *(optional*) If at least 33% of the Members on the membership register give written notice to the Governing Group that they want a matter brought to the notice of the Members, then:
  4. The Governing Group will call a forum to discuss the matter raised and if possible resolve it without having to call a Members’ Meeting; and
  5. If the matter cannot be resolved the Governing Group will call a Members’ Meeting to resolve the matter.
  6. The AGM will be held within six months of the end of the financial year.
  7. (optional: The agenda of the AGM will include the presentation and receipt of the reviewed annual Church accounts and election of Governance Group Members).

## Conduct of Members Meetings

* 1. The Governing Group shall appoint a chair for the members’ meetings.
  2. A quorum will be [1/3] of the members [either in person or votes having been received]. If the quorum is not achieved at a meeting, a subsequent meeting with the same agenda can be arranged within two weeks of the original meeting, with the notice requirements having been already fulfilled.
  3. Proxy voting [*shall/shall not]* be allowed.
  4. Motions shall be declared passed by a simple majority unless otherwise stated in the constitution.
  5. Scrutineers shall be appointed to manage all ballots.
  6. A record of the meeting will be kept and the major decisions and any key matters shall be reported to the church within a month of the meeting being held.

# Indemnity

* 1. To the extent possible under law, members (including Governance Group Members and Staff) are entitled to be indemnified out of the assets held for the church for any debts or liabilities incurred personally by a member when acting on behalf of the church, so long as the member was:

1. authorised by the church to take that action, and
2. acting in good faith (fairly and honestly and in the best interests of the church).
   1. This indemnity is a continuing obligation and is enforceable by a person even if that person is no longer a member of the church. This indemnity only applies to the extent that the person is not otherwise entitled to be indemnified and is not actually indemnified by another person (including an insurer under an insurance policy).

# Contract Arrangements & Financial Management

* 1. The Governing Group is entrusted with the stewardship of the resources of the church and shall ensure that they are directed to the achievement of its purposes. The Governing Group will abide by the church’s Financial Practices Guidelines.
  2. The Governing Group shall be responsible for the preparation of an annual budget, which is presented to the church at the annual members meeting.
  3. The financial records shall be reviewed annually by a qualified, independent party, with the financial reports provided at an annual meeting and kept for the required period of time to meet external affiliation requirements.
  4. The financial year of the church runs from [1 July to 30 June].
  5. As an unincorporated association, where the association cannot enter into contracts in its own name, the Governing Group may appoint three or more individuals to be signatories to these contracts. CofCQld may, at times, fill this role where appropriate.

# Dissolution

* 1. Should the church either permanently close, or cease to be an affiliated member of the Churches of Christ in Queensland, all funds, assets, property and equipment that remain after the satisfaction of all liabilities, shall become the property of Churches of Christ in Queensland or another entity being an entity with the purpose of the advancement of religion and endorsement by the commissioner of taxation as a tax concession charity, in consultation with Churches of Christ in Queensland.
  2. Any surplus assets must not be distributed to a member or a former member of the church.

# Altering the Constitution

* 1. Amendments to this constitution can only be made by a simple majority vote of members at a church meeting. This constitution shall be changed to meet any requirements of the Churches of Christ in Queensland constitution adopted by affiliated member churches.
  2. Where this document is interpreted to be at odds with the constitution of the Churches of Christ in Queensland, then the constitution of Churches of Christ in Queensland shall take precedence.
  3. The members must not pass a resolution that amends these rules if passing it causes the church to no longer be a charity.

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