

# **CARMEL BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH INC**

## **CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

**SEPTEMBER 2013**

## **CONSTITUTION OF THE CARMEL BIBLE-PRESYTERIAN CHURCH INC**

### **Article 1      INCORPORATION**

This Church was planted on 27 April, 1999 in obedience to our Lord's Great Commission as stipulated in the Gospel of Matthew 28:18-20.

### **Article 2      NAME**

This Church shall be called the "CARMEL BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH INC"

### **Article 3      ADDRESS**

The address of the Church shall be at 2-8, Francis Street, Perth WA 6000, Western Australia

### **Article 4      MISSION STATEMENT**

The Church is planted to:

- 4.1      Worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24);
- 4.2      Declare the whole counsel of God through preaching and teaching (Acts 20:27);
- 4.3      Equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12);
- 4.4      Go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19);
- 4.5      Provide help to the poor and needy (Galatians 6:10).

### **Article 5      ARTICLES OF FAITH**

The chief tenets of belief of the Church are as follows:

The doctrine of the Church shall be in accordance with the system commonly called "the Reformed Faith" as expressed in the Confession of Faith set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

- 5.1      We believe in one God existing in three co-equal and co-eternal Persons; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- 5.2      We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man;
- 5.3      We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, and are therefore the inerrant and infallible Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life;
- 5.4      We believe that man was created in the image of God, but sinned through the fall of Adam, thereby incurring physical death and spiritual death which is separation from God, and that human beings, born with a sinful nature, are sinners in thought, word and deed;

- 5.5 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died a propitiatory and expiatory death as a representative and substitutory sacrifice, and that all who truly repent of their sins and believe in Him are justified before God on the grounds of His shed blood;
- 5.6 We believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His exaltation at the right hand of God where He intercedes for us as High Priest and Advocate;
- 5.7 We believe in the personal, visible and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ to judge this world;
- 5.8 We believe that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, and that all who repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become the children of God;
- 5.9 We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and to convict and regenerate the sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service;
- 5.10 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the covenant of grace, instituted the Sacrament of Baptism for believers and their children and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which sacraments shall be observed by His Church till He comes;
- 5.11 We believe in the eternal security, bodily resurrection, and blessedness of the saved, and in the bodily resurrection and eternal conscious punishment of the lost;
- 5.12 We believe in the true, spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood, and the necessity of faithfully maintaining the purity of the Church in doctrine and life according to the Word of God, and be separated from apostasy and ecumenism (2 Cor 6:14-18; Rev 18:4).

## **Article 6      MAIN PRACTICES**

The main practices of the Church are as follows:

- 6.1 **BAPTISM:** Baptism of believers is by sprinkling on personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have satisfied the Board of Elders as to their faith. Infants or children of one or both the believing parents are to be baptised in accordance with the covenant of grace.
- 6.2 **REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH:** Baptised infants or children upon coming of age in that they can satisfy the Board of Elders as to their faith shall be received into communicant membership by reaffirmation of faith.
- 6.3 **THE LORD'S SUPPER:** The remembrance of the Lord's death through the Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly by all baptised believers in accordance with the Apostle's teaching in I Corinthians 11:23-32).
- 6.4 **WEDDINGS:** The Church will solemnize marriages between born again believers. The groom must be a baptised believer and the bride either a baptised believer or is attending the baptismal class.

## **Article 7      MEMBERSHIP**

- 7.1 Membership of the Church shall be of three categories:
  - 7.1.1 Communicant Members: Persons who have been baptised or have reaffirmed their faith or transferred from another church and agree with the Church's

doctrine and practices shall be Communicant Members. They shall be eligible to vote if they are 16 years and above. Members standing for election to the Serving Committee must be 21 years and above. Communicant Members must not hold membership of another church.

- 7.1.2 Non-Communicant Members: Baptised children of Communicant Members or of believers who are not Communicant Members shall be Non-communicant Members.
- 7.1.3 Overseas Members: Persons who have been baptised or have reaffirmed their faith or transferred from another church and agree with the Church's doctrine and practices, and are not citizens or permanent residents of Australia shall be Overseas Members. They shall not be eligible to vote or stand for election at congregational meetings. They can still retain membership of another church.
- 7.2 Members are to strive to live pleasing to God as taught in His Word; to support wholeheartedly the services and works of the Church; and to submit to the discipline and authority of the Board of Elders.
- 7.2 Communicant members who have been absent from the Church for six months without any due course shall have their membership withdrawn upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders. Notice of withdrawal will then be announced at the subsequent Annual Congregational Meeting.

## **Article 8 THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

- 8.1 The government, administration and discipline of the Church shall be in accordance with the biblical standards and this Constitution.
- 8.2 The spiritual oversight of the Church in matters of doctrine, principles of government, church elections, admission and discipline of members shall be the specific responsibilities of the Board of Elders.
- 8.3 The administrative oversight of the Church shall be the responsibilities of the Session.

## **Article 9 THE CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

- 9.1 If any member found to have acted in a manner unbecoming of a member or by that member's act or omission be likely to hinder the witness of the Church or render it ill repute, the Board of Elders shall request that member to appear before the Board. The Board of Elders shall have the power to admonish, rebuke, suspend or ex-communicate the member in accordance with the biblical teachings.
- 9.2 Any member not satisfied with the expulsion order shall have the right to appeal to the General body at an Extraordinary Congregational Meeting convened for the particular purpose. Notice of appeal in writing must be filed with the Clerk of Session within fourteen days of the service of the expulsion order on that member.
- 9.3 The decision of the General body by a majority vote through secret ballot shall be final and binding.
- 9.4 The quorum of the meeting shall be in accordance with the quorum in Article 16.5.

## **Article 10 THE CHURCH SESSION**

- 10.1 The Session shall consist of the Pastor, Associate Pastor if any, and/or an Advisory Pastor/Supervisory Pastor, Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses.
- 10.2 The Session shall appoint a Clerk of Session who shall act as the Secretary and a Treasurer from among its members and may appoint such other office bearers as it may think fit.
- 10.3 The Session may delegate specific powers to any one of its members and appoint committees as it deems fit, and to make such rules and standing orders to regulate the duties and powers of such persons and committees.
- 10.4 The Session may co-opt members of the Church as it deems fit to serve on any committee.
- 10.5 The Session shall meet at least once in three months at such place and time as the Pastor or Board of Elders may determine. Emergency meetings may be convened by the Pastor, or in his absence, by any Session member appointed to act for the Pastor. Such meetings shall also be convened at the joint request of any two Elders.
- 10.6 A simple majority of the Session members present in Western Australia who must include the Moderator or Acting Moderator shall constitute a quorum.
- 10.7 The Session shall act by consensus or by a simple majority vote when necessary. The Moderator or Chairman shall have only the casting vote.
- 10.8 The Session shall present the Annual Reports, the annual or periodic accounts duly audited either internally or externally and a budget for the next fiscal year or period at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- 10.9 The Session, through the Clerk of Session, shall be responsible for the following registers:
  - An up-to-date Register of members with full particulars of name, address, date and place of birth, dates of baptism, reaffirmation of faith, transfer, marriage, dismissal or death.
  - A Minutes Book to record the minutes of the Session, Board of Elders and of the Congregational Meetings.

## **Article 11      ELECTION TO THE CHURCH SESSION**

- 11.1 Candidates standing for election to the Session shall satisfy the requirements as listed in I Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. They shall also demonstrate the following:
  - 11.1.1 They are faithful and mature members of the Body of Christ and faithfully devote themselves to study of God's Word and develop deep prayer life.
  - 11.1.2 They have made a careful study of the Constitution and fully accept it.
  - 11.1.3 They are willing to participate wholeheartedly in the ministry of the Church with the Pastor and to consecrate to serve God in the Church as the Lord leads.
- 11.2 Members shall submit proposals for election to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may also nominate candidates for election.
- 11.3 The Board of Elders shall carefully screen all proposals of election to ensure that they are congruent with the biblical standards prior to putting forward for members to elect.
- 11.4 Elected Elders/Deacons/Deaconesses shall be formally installed into office at a Service of Consecration to be held on a Lord's Day soon after election.

## **Article 12     PASTORS**

- 12.1 No Minister shall be ordained to the Pastorate save through the hands of the Ordaining Council constituted at the request of the Board of Elders.
- 12.2 Members shall elect the Pastor and/or Associate Pastor/Assistant Pastor at a Congregational Meeting by a two-third majority of the votes cast for a term of three years or till the date of the next election. The Pastor and/or Associate Pastor/Assistant Pastor shall be eligible for re-election.
- 12.3 The Pastor shall have oversight of the spiritual life, regular service, and ministration of the Sacraments of the Church and the ordination of Elders.
- 12.4 The Pastor shall be the ex-officio member and advisor of all committees connected with the Church.
- 12.5 The Pastor shall be the Moderator of the Church Session. The Board may also appoint one of its Elders as Chairman of a particular meeting.
- 12.6 The Session may request a Pastor of a Bible-believing Church to be Advisory Pastor when there is a serving Pastor or Supervisory Pastor when the Church is without a Pastor. Both positions are honorary.

## **Article 13     ELDERS**

- 13.1 A candidate for election to the office of an Elder shall be a Deacon of not less than six years' standing, duly nominated by the Board of Elders and elected by the members of the Church at a Congregational Meeting by a two-third majority of the votes cast. The Board of Elders may, however, in its absolute discretion, shorten the qualifying period.
- 13.2 Upon election, an Elder shall hold office for a term of 3 years or till the date of the next election, and may be eligible for re-election.
- 13.3 An Elder may be elected in absentia, with his written consent.
- 13.4 An Elder, once elected and ordained, shall not be divested of his status as Elder when he is not re-elected or when he declines re-election. In either case, he shall not be a member of the Church Session or Board of Elders.
- 13.5 Elders shall be subject to the discipline of the Board of Elders. The status of an Elder found by the Board of Elders to have contravened the biblical standards shall be withdrawn and members notified accordingly.
- 13.6 An Elder shall endeavour by God's grace to serve in full conformity with the standards set forth in God's Word (1 Tim 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9), joining with the Pastor in the government, administration and discipline of the Church.

## **Article 14     DEACON AND DEACONESSSES**

- 14.1 A Deacon or Deaconess shall be elected by a majority vote of the members of the Church at a Congregational Meeting, provided the candidate shall be twenty-one years old at the time of nomination.
- 14.2 Upon election, a Deacon or Deaconess shall hold office for a term of three years and may be eligible for re-election.
- 14.3 They may be elected in absentia, with their written consent.

- 14.4 They shall endeavour by God's grace to serve in full conformity with the standards set forth in God's Word (1Tim 3:8-13), joining with the Pastor and Elders in the general administration of the Church.
- 14.5 Deacons and Deaconesses shall be subject to the discipline of the Board of Elders.

## **Article 15 BOARD OF ELDERS**

- 15.1 The Board of Elders shall consist of the Pastor and Elders and, if any, the Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Supervisory Pastor, Advisory Pastor.
- 15.2 The Pastor shall be the Chairman of the Board of Elders. In his absence or deemed prudent, one of the Elders shall act a Chairman.
- 15.3 The Board of Elders may appoint or invite Deacons/Deaconesses to take part in any meeting of the Board of Elders without voting right.
- 15.4 The Board of Elders shall meet when necessary. The quorum shall be a simple majority of the members resident in W.A.
- 15.5 The Board of Elders shall act by consensus.
- 15.6 Subject to Article 8, the Board of Elders shall:
  - 15.6.1 be responsible for the spiritual welfare and ministry of the Church;
  - 15.6.2 supervise all public worship and preaching services, the ministration of Sacraments, Bible Classes, Prayer Meetings, Special Meetings, and all similar efforts aimed at reaching the lost for Christ and at building up Christians in the faith;
  - 15.6.3 receive member into the Church by confession and reaffirmation of faith and by transfer from other churches;
  - 15.6.4 appoint Staff Workers and other office staff as it deems necessary;
  - 15.6.5 exercise discipline in the Church according to God's Word;
  - 15.6.6 enquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members;
  - 15.6.7 admonish and rebuke those who are found to deserve censure, suspend or exclude offenders from the Lord's Supper;
  - 15.6.8 determine by itself or when it deems necessary, in consultation with the Deacons and Deaconesses all matters concerning the religious services and spiritual life of the Church and the suitability of candidates for election to the Church Session.

## **Article 16 CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

- 16.1 Any Congregational Meeting of the Church may be convened for the transaction of business, provided announcement of the said Meeting has been given from the pulpit at two regular worship services on the two preceding Lord's Day or by two weeks written notice to members.
- 16.2 All worshippers, whether members or not, may attend the Congregational Meeting, but only members are eligible to speak.
- 16.3 Congregational Meetings shall be opened with Scripture reading and prayer and closed with prayer.
- 16.4 Congregational Meetings consist of Annual Congregation Meeting (ACM) or Extraordinary Congregational Meeting (ECM).
- 16.4.1 The ACM for the transaction of business pertaining to the Church shall be held once a year at the month determined by the Session.

- 16.4.2 At such Meeting the Church Session shall report on the spiritual and temporal conditions of the congregation and announce plans for the coming year.
- 16.4.3 Items of business shall include the Pastor's Reports, the Clerk of Session's Reports, the Treasurer's reports, the Budget, election of Internal Auditor, and any other matters on the agenda.
- 16.4.4 An ECM pertaining to the particular business pertaining to the Church may be convened at any time upon due notice being given.
- 16.4.5 Only such business as is specifically mentioned in the call may be considered at such a Meeting.
- 16.4.6 The Session shall call an ECM when so requested by one-tenth of the communicant members.
- 16.5 The quorum of the Congregational Meetings shall be a simple majority of all resident voting communicant members.
- 16.6 In the event of a lack of quorum, the Chairman shall adjourn the meeting for two weeks at which the members present whatever the number, shall constitute the quorum.
- 16.7 The election of the members of the Church Session shall be by secret ballot.
- 16.8 The decisions on businesses of the Church shall be adopted by a majority vote, whereas three-fourth majority shall adopt the amendments to the Constitution.
- 16.9 The Pastor shall be the Chairman of the Meeting except for prudential reasons, when the Board of Elders shall appoint one from among them as Chairman of the Meeting.

## **Article 17 TRUSTEES**

- 17.1 The Church shall have the power to acquire immovable property and such other properties, as the relevant authorities shall permit in its name.
- 17.2 The Church shall vest it in trustees not less than two or not exceeding four in number appointed by the members at a Congregational Meeting convened for such a purpose.
- 17.3 Any trustee may resign from trusteeship.
- 17.4 When a trustee dies or is found to be of unsound mind, or become bankrupt or emigrates from Australia or ceases membership of the Church, or is incapacitated for any reason, that trusteeship is deemed to have ceased.
- 17.5 When a trustee is guilty of misconduct of such a kind as to render it undesirable for such a person to remain a trustee; the Congregational Meeting may remove such a person from the trusteeship.
- 17.6 Notice of any proposal to remove a trustee or appoint a new trustee shall be given in the Church Bulletin or announced at the regular Worship Service two weeks preceding the Congregational Meeting convened for the purpose.

## **Article 18 COMMON SEAL**

- 18.1 The Common Seal of the Church engraved with the name of the Church in legible characters shall be kept in the care of the Moderator or the Clerk of Session.
- 18.2 The Common Seal of the Church shall not be used without the express authority of the Church Session and every use of that Common Seal shall be recorded in the minute book to be kept by the Clerk of Session.



- 18.3 The Moderator and the Clerk of Session or the Treasurer shall witness the affixing of the Common Seal of the Church. In their absence, two Elders or Deacons, in that order, shall witness.

#### **Article 19 FINANCE AND AUDIT**

- 19.1 The ministry and the program of the Church shall be supported by the freewill offerings of its members and gifts or donations from friends and by such other income as may be derived by the Church according to the Scriptures.
- 19.2 The funds of the Church shall be used in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.
- 19.3 The Session shall elect one of its members as Treasurer and other members as Assistant Treasurer/Treasurers if necessary, or appoint a Finance Committee from among its members or co-opt members of the Church to take charge of the financial affairs of the Church. The Treasurer shall keep a cash balance of not more than \$1,000/- at any one time. All monies exceeding this amount shall be deposited with a bank designated by the Session. The Treasurer and one other member of the Session appointed by the Session shall sign all cheques.
- 19.4 The Church shall elect an internal auditor who is not a member of the Session at the ACM to audit the accounts of the Church.
- 19.5 The internal auditor shall hold office for one year but shall be eligible for re-election.
- 19.6 The Session may also appoint an auditing firm as external auditor.
- 19.7 The internal auditor and the external auditor, if applicable, shall certify the correctness of the accounts for presentation to the ACM at the end of each financial year.

#### **Article 20 INSPECTION OF RECORDS, ETC OF THE CHURCH**

A member may at any reasonable time inspect without charge the books, documents, records and securities of the Church.

#### **Article 21 NON PROFIT**

- 21.1 The income and property of the Church shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Church.
- 21.2 No portion of the income and property shall be paid, transferred or distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Church. Payment in good faith of remuneration to any officer, employee, staff worker, Pastor and missionary of the Church or to any person other than a member of the Church in return for services rendered to the Church is excluded from this provision. Payment of other expenses, such as rental and transportation expended for the benefit of the Church is allowed.

#### **Article 22 DISCRETIONARY POWER**

The Session may make rules not inconsistent with this Constitution for giving effect to the provisions of this Constitution for but not limited to the following matters:

- The way and manner the activities of the Church shall be administered.

- The appointment of staff workers, secretaries, clerks and other personnel for the proper functioning of the Church.

### **Article 23      AMENDMENTS**

- 23.1 Amendments to this Constitution shall only be made at a Congregational Meeting of the Church.
- 23.2 Amendments to this Constitution shall only be adopted with at least three-fourth majority of the votes cast.

### **Article 24      INTERPRETATION**

The Board of Elders, in consultation with the Deacons and Deaconesses, shall decide on the interpretation to be adopted or the necessary steps to be taken if there is a dispute over the interpretation on any point not expressly provided for in this Constitution.

### **Article 25      DISSOLUTION**

- 25.1 Only with the consent of not less than three fourths of the members present in person or by proxy at a Congregational Meeting convened for that purpose shall the Church be dissolved.
- 25.2 If upon the dissolution of the Church there remains after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities any property whatever, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among its members but shall be given or transferred for charitable purposes as members may determine at a Congregational Meeting.
- 25.3 In the event of the dissolution of the Church, the Commissioner of Taxation shall be advised of the date of dissolution with 30 days of the dissolution.

**- END -**

Prepared on 18 September 2013