

# Baptist Union Constitution and Rules

The Baptist Union of New Zealand (incorporated by the Baptist Union Incorporation Act, 1923)

## Constitution

### I. Name

1. The name of the Union shall be 'The Baptist Union of New Zealand' (hereinafter referred to as 'the Union').

### II. Incorporation and Relationship

2.
  - a) By the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1923 the Union is constituted a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to purchase, hold, sell, exchange, mortgage, lease and dispose of real and personal property and to do and suffer all that bodies corporate may lawfully do and suffer.
  - b) The Activities and the responsibilities of the Union shall be determined by means of an Assembly of representatives of the member bodies. This Assembly shall also be the Assembly of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society (NZBMS), which has a separate legal entity.
  - c) The Assembly shall appoint two councils to continue its work between meetings. The Assembly Council shall be responsible for work primarily within New Zealand and shall be directly accountable to the Assembly in all matters of national policy and staffing. The Mission Council shall be responsible for international mission and shall be directly accountable to the Assembly in all matters of international mission policy and staffing.

### III. Objects

3. The Union is primarily a Union of Baptist churches within New Zealand having for its general objects the extension of the Kingdom of God, the strengthening of all the associated churches and the cultivation among its constituent members of respect and love for one another and for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The particular objects of the Union shall be:
  - a) To promote unity and co-operation among all Baptist churches in membership with the Union;
  - b) To spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ by the establishment and maintenance of churches, fellowships, and by such other means as the Union may from time to time determine;
  - c) To afford opportunities for conference and united action on matters affecting the welfare of the churches and the consolidation and extension of the work of the Baptist denomination, for the dissemination of Baptist principles and for the public declaration of opinion and united action on matters calling for such declaration or action;
  - d) To establish and maintain a Baptist Theological College or colleges for the purpose of training students for the ministry of the gospel or for other forms of Christian service;
  - e) To maintain a Superannuation Fund for Baptist Ministers, NZBMS Missionaries and persons holding paid official employment in the Union and NZBMS in New Zealand;
  - f) To undertake in accordance with the provisions of the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1923 the trusteeship of Baptist churches and other properties for the purposes of the Baptist denomination, when requested so to do by the properly constituted authorities owning or controlling such properties;
  - g) To undertake in accordance with the provisions of the said Act the trusteeship, government,



management, control and maintenance of the Baptist Children's Trust; and subject to proper legal authority to establish and maintain such other institutions as may from time to time be determined by Assembly;

- h) To promote fraternal relations between Baptists in New Zealand and those in other countries;
- i) To confer and co-operate with other Christian communities as occasion may require;
- j) To maintain the right of all people to freedom from disability, restraint and persecution in matters of religious belief;
- k) To publish and circulate the magazine known as 'The New Zealand Baptist' and such other magazines, pamphlets or literature as may from time to time be approved for the furtherance of any of the objects of the Union;
- l) To establish and raise necessary funds for the purpose of carrying out all or any of these objects and to frame and put into effect regulations for the control and distribution of such funds.

#### **IV. Doctrinal Basis**

- 5. The doctrinal basis of the Union shall be the Articles of Faith set forth in the First Schedule to the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1923 as follows:
  - a) The inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice;
  - b) The true humanity and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ;
  - c) The atonement by our Lord on the cross for the sin of the world;
  - d) Salvation by faith in Christ alone;
  - e) Membership in the Christian Church for the regenerate;
  - f) The immersion of believers as the only scriptural form of baptism.  
Subject to its acceptance of the foregoing articles of Faith every church in membership with the Union shall have liberty to interpret and administer the laws of Christ and to govern its own affairs.

#### **V. Membership**

- 6. The Union shall consist of all Baptist churches in New Zealand whose names appear in the official list of associated churches published from time to time by the Union.
- 7. Churches desiring membership in the Union shall make written application to the National Administrator of the Union in such form as may from time to time be prescribed for that purpose.
- 8. Every application by a church for membership in the Union shall be certified by the Secretary of the Association for the district in which the applicant church is located as having been approved by the Executive of such Association.
- 9. Applications for membership shall be dealt with by Assembly after nomination by the Assembly Council.
- 10. In the event of any constituent church being proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly to have publicly disavowed the doctrinal basis of the Union or to have acted in a manner contrary to the general objects of or calculated to injure the Union, the Assembly on the recommendation of the Assembly Council shall have power to suspend such church from membership in the Union and fix the period (including conditions for reinstatement) of such suspension, or wholly exclude such church from further membership with the Union.
- 11. No person shall be eligible for appointment to any official position in the Union, or as a member of the Assembly, or as a member of the Assembly Council or of any other committee,



council or board of the Union unless he or she is a member in full standing of a Baptist church in membership with the Union.

## **VI. Administrative Powers**

12. The administrative powers of the Union shall be exercised by the annual Assembly of the Union constituted in the manner provided by Section VII hereof (hereinafter referred to as 'the Assembly'), and during the interval between the annual Assemblies by an Assembly Council constituted in the manner provided by Clause 17 and 18 hereof. In local matters the Union shall act through its Associations as defined in Section IX hereof.

## **VII. The Assembly**

13. The Assembly shall comprise those who are present in Assembly in their capacity as:
- a) Delegates from churches in membership with the Union to be appointed as provided by Clauses 11 and 15 hereof;
  - b) The Officers of the Union and NZBMS together with Senior Executive Staff as defined by Clauses 23(a) and 23(b) hereof;
  - c) One designated minister of each church in membership with the Union;
  - d) Missionaries of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society;
  - e) Persons appointed by Assembly or appointed/ratified by the Assembly Council to official positions in the Union;
  - f) Chairpersons of all officially appointed Committees, Boards and Trusts of the Union.
14. There shall be associated with the Assembly with full powers of participation and of voting except in regard to matters affecting the constitution and Rules of the Union the following:
- a) The members of the Assembly Council and the Mission Council for the past year;
  - b) Ministers, whose names are on the Official List of the Union referred to in Clause 31(d) hereof but who are out of pastoral charge or not in active service;
  - c) Missionaries of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society who have retired after not less than ten years active service and who are present in person at Assembly;
  - d) The Editor of 'The New Zealand Baptist'.
  - e) Each fellowship which is officially recognised by the Baptist Union may appoint two observers, without speaking or voting rights.
15. Each constituent church may appoint one designated minister and two members as delegates to the annual Assembly. Churches having more than 100 members may appoint one additional delegate for every complete 50 members in excess of 100 up to 250 and thereafter one additional delegate for every complete 100 members.

Number of Delegates from churches allowed at Assembly:

Up to 149 members - 1 minister 2 delegates  
150 to 199 members - 1 minister 3 delegates  
200 to 249 members - 1 minister 4 delegates  
250 to 349 members - 1 minister 5 delegates  
350 to 449 members - 1 minister 6 delegates  
450 to 549 members - 1 minister 7 delegates etc.



16. Except in case of extreme emergency (to be decided by the Assembly Council) the Assembly shall meet annually, the time and place of meeting to be determined in the previous year by the Assembly Council.

### **VIII. The Assembly Council**

17. The Assembly Council of the Union shall consist of:
- a) The Officers of the Union, as per clause 23(a)
  - b) Eight members elected by the Annual Assembly for a two year term. Four shall be elected each year in accordance with the rules of the Union.
  - c) A member co-opted from the Council of the NZBMS.
  - d) Three further members who may be co-opted by the Assembly Council. Such members will have full voting rights.
18. The Assembly Council shall meet at least five times a year. In addition to the responsibilities contained in Clause 12 it shall:
- a) Review and prepare all business for presentation to the Annual Assembly;
  - b) Advise the Officers of the Union on matters of importance concerning the welfare and progress of the Union.
19. Between the meetings of the Assembly Council the Officers of the Union may act on urgent business of the Union after consultation together.

### **IX. Associations**

20. For the purpose of extending and resourcing the activities of the denomination throughout New Zealand in the several districts on behalf of the Union there shall be at least six Associations of the Baptist churches of the Union (hereinafter referred to as 'Associations'). Assembly may from time to time approve the formation of further Associations and the variation of the boundaries of existing Associations necessitated thereby.
21. Each Association shall act as local representative of the Union so far as concerns the work of the denomination in its own district. Applications to the Union for grants to churches shall be made through the Association for the district in which such churches are situated.
22. Subject to recognition of the Union as the controlling body and to the provisions of this Constitution, each Association shall have power to govern its affairs according to its own Constitution and Rules, provided however that no person shall be appointed as delegate to its annual meeting or as an officer of such Association or as a member of its Executive unless he or she is a member of a Baptist church in membership with the Union.

### **X. Officers and Senior Staff**

- 23.
- a) The Officers of the Union shall be as determined by Assembly from time to time, but shall normally consist of the President, Vice President, Chairpersons of the two Councils and the National Leader.
  - b) The Senior Executive Staff of the Union and NZBMS shall be as determined by Assembly from time to time, but shall normally consist of the National Leader, the General Director of NZBMS and the Principal of the Theological College. They shall be appointed in the manner provided in the Rules of the Union.



24. Subject as hereinafter provided the retiring Vice-President shall become President of the Union. During his or her term of office the Vice-President may be referred to as the President-elect.

### **XI. Boards or Committees**

25. The Assembly shall appoint annually for the conduct of the special activities of the Union such Boards as it may deem necessary. Each Board shall elect its own chairperson for the year and shall operate under rules/constitutions approved by Assembly. The Boards shall report annually to the Assembly and at other times to the Assembly Council, through the National Leader.
26. To assist their work the Assembly Council and the Boards may appoint committees who will be responsible to them.
27. Boards appointed under authority of Clause 25 hereof shall report annually to the Assembly on the work done during the year.
28. The Assembly Council will administer on behalf of the Union the Baptist Children's Trust, which responsibility it may delegate to a Board or subcommittee under Clause 26 hereof. The Trust shall report annually to the Assembly on its operation and activities.

### **XII. The New Zealand Baptist**

29. The Editor of 'The New Zealand Baptist' shall be appointed by the Assembly Council for a term of up to three years. Reappointment is possible.

### **XIII. Baptist Ministry**

The Baptist Union's official recognition of those ministering within, or on behalf of, a Baptist faith community or entity will be through Baptist Registration - in a manner provided for in the Criteria and Requirements for Baptist Registration.

30. There shall be kept by the Baptist Union an Official List of its pastors and leaders. This List shall include those recognised by the Union in the following categories:

#### **Section one – Registered Pastors and Accredited Ministers**

- a) Registered pastors who continue to meet the qualifications of clause 31a hereof.
- b) Accredited Ministers who continue to meet the qualifications of clause 31b hereof.
- c) Provisionally registered pastors

#### **Section two - Unregistered Pastors**

Other pastors recognised by member churches and who are not registered.

#### **Section three - Retired Accredited Ministers**

Accredited Ministers who have retired or left active ministry and are in membership with a New Zealand Baptist church.

#### **Section four – Other Registered Leaders**

Other non-pastoral leaders who are registered.

- 31.
- a) The qualifications for enrolment in Baptist Registration shall be according to the Criteria and Requirements for Baptist Registration and will include the following categories of leader:



- i.
    1. Pastoral
    2. Chaplaincy
    3. Ministry/missional
    4. Kaiārahi Māori
    5. Baptist Entity
  - ii. The holding of an approved Registration Development Agreement with its accompanying provisions.
- b) The qualifications for enrolment as an Accredited Minister of the Baptist Union will apply only to those Ministers accredited by the Union up to and including Assembly 1996 and who hold an appointment as pastor or assistant pastor or chaplain in a constituent church of the Baptist Union; or Fellowship recognised by the Union; an appointment to an official or staff position as a missionary of the NZ Baptist Missionary Society; an appointment to an official or staff position in the Baptist Union, its Associations or their agencies, or to an ecumenical position in which the Union shares officially in making the appointment and/or in contributing to its support.
- c) The names of Accredited Ministers of the Baptist Union without the necessary occupational qualifications as in clause 31a(i) will be added to Section Three of the Official List under the following conditions:
- i. Those whose names appear on that List shall be under obligation to advise the Baptist Union of their current address, occupation and church membership.
  - ii. In the event of such persons resuming the necessary occupational qualifications their names shall be transferred back to the appropriate section of the List.
32. Applications for enrolment on the Official List shall be in the manner approved by the Assembly Council under the rules and guidelines accepted by Assembly (National Hui).
33. The Official List shall be reviewed each year by the Assembly Council which shall make the necessary transfers or removals therefrom whether by reason of death, voluntary resignation from the ministry or the denomination, retirement from active service by reason of age or infirmity, permanent change of residence to some other country, lack of occupational qualifications in terms of clause 31a(i) hereof, or disciplinary action by the Union in accordance with clause (35) hereof.
34. In the event of any person whose name appears on the Official List being proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly Council to have publicly disavowed the doctrinal basis of the Union or to have been guilty of improper conduct, or to have acted in a manner contrary to the general objects of or calculated to injure the Union, the Assembly Council shall have power to suspend such persons from the Official List, and may fix the period of such suspension or may remove the names of such persons from the Official List.
35. The fact of any person's name being enrolled on the Official List shall not be construed as implying that either the Union, its Boards, Associations, or the College Board is under any obligation to find employment for such a person whether in a ministerial capacity or otherwise.

#### **XIV. Procedure**

36. Where there is no form of procedure provided for herein or in the Rules hereunder the Standing Orders of the House of Representative shall apply.

#### **XV. Amendments and Additions**

37. This Constitution may be amended, modified, rescinded or added to from time to time by resolution duly passed by three fourths of the delegates present and entitled to vote at any



meeting of the annual Assembly of the Union, provided that in the case of any proposed amendment, modification or addition to the Constitution that notice of intention to propose such resolution, specifying the proposed amendment, modification or addition and the place at which the Assembly at which it is to be proposed, shall be sent to the secretary of every church or published in the denominational magazine known as 'The New Zealand Baptist' not less than three nor more than six months before the date of the meeting.

## Rules

### I. Sessions of the Assembly

1. The agenda for the sessions of the annual Assembly shall be prepared by the National Administrator in consultation with the Assembly Council.
2. The official Assembly programme shall state the day and time when the election of Officers shall take place and when notices of motion under Clause 38 of the Constitution and Rule 3 hereof shall be considered by Assembly. Except for reasons of necessity, of which the President shall be the final judge, elections and motions listed on the programme shall take place at the times stated.
3. Priority shall be given to notices of motion of denominational or public concern which are in the National Administrator's hands a month before the Assembly meets and which appear in the issue of 'The New Zealand Baptist' immediately preceding such Assembly. Consideration will be given to notices of motion duly given at the meetings of the Assembly as and when, in the opinion of the President, time and convenience permit.
4. Reports on the activities of the Union during the twelve months ending 31 August of each year shall be presented at the business sessions of the Assembly. Statements of the financial transactions of the various funds of the Union for the same period (which may be referred to as the financial year of the Union) duly audited as required by Rule 26 hereof shall likewise be submitted to the Assembly delegates.
5. All business sessions of the Assembly shall be presided over by the President, or in his or her absence by the Immediate Past-President. Should neither of these be present or competent to act, the Assembly shall appoint a Chairperson. Any point in dispute or in doubt shall be decided by the Chairperson whose ruling shall be binding, provided however that on motion properly put and carried the meeting may disagree with such ruling.

The method of voting at business sessions may be either on the voices or by show of hands as the Chairperson may decide; but if a poll is demanded by not less than one-tenth of the Assembly delegates present voting shall be by ballot.

### II. Election of Officers

6. As provided by Clause 24 of the Constitution, the Vice-President upon retirement from that office (which shall take place at the closing session of the Assembly following the Assembly at which he or she was elected) shall, unless prevented by death, by removal from New Zealand or by other adequate cause, become President of the New Zealand Union.
7. Should the Vice-President for any such cause as aforesaid be unable to assume the office of President the Assembly at its opening session shall elect a President. The method of election in such case shall mutatis mutandis be the same as that prescribed in Rules 13, 14 and 15 hereof for the election of the Vice-President.
8. The President shall normally assume office at the closing session of the Assembly.
9. Should the President die or retire during his or her term of office the Vice-President shall thereupon become President and shall also continue to be President during the following year.



10. A retiring President shall not be eligible for election or re-election as Vice-President or President for a period of three years after retirement from the position previously held.
11. Submissions of possible candidates for the office of Vice-President shall be made only by churches to Assembly Council who will make the formal nominations to Assembly for election. Every submission shall be in writing signed by the secretary of the nominating church and by the nominee. All such submissions shall be lodged on or before 1 August of each year with the National Administrator of the Union who shall, after Assembly Council and Mission Council consideration, notify the churches of the names of the nominees with a brief statement of each of such nominee's association with the Baptist denomination and shall insert a copy of such names and statement in the October issue of 'The News Zealand Baptist'
12. No person who has not been in active membership of a constituent church for at least five years shall be eligible for nomination to the office of Vice-President. If there be no nomination for the office of Vice-President pursuant to the preceding Rules 11 and 12 the Assembly may proceed to the election of a Vice-President after nominations have been made to the Assembly by the Assembly Council and Mission Council. The Assembly shall be deemed to have a like power in the event of either
  - a) the death of the person or persons nominated for the office pursuant to such last-mentioned Rule where such death has taken place subsequent to nomination and before the date of election; or
  - a) the removal from New Zealand of such person or persons subsequent to nomination and before election; or
  - b) any other adequate cause arising.

In the event of the appointment of Vice-President needing to be made between Assemblies the Assembly Council shall be deemed competent to act in nominating a person.

The appointment in such a case would be determined by a 75% vote following a postal ballot of the member churches held within three months of the Assembly Council nominating a person.
13. Should there be more than one nomination for the office of Vice-President a ballot shall be taken by the Assembly.
14. A majority of 75% of the votes cast shall be required for a candidate to be elected. Should there be more than one candidate and such majority not be achieved, then the highest polling candidate shall be submitted for a second ballot.

### **III. Appointment of Senior Executive Staff**

15.
  - a) The appointment of the senior executive staff shall be made by Assembly on the joint recommendation of the Assembly Council and the Missionary Council. The nomination must be supported by three quarters of the members of each Council.
  - b) The voting by Assembly on all such staff appointments shall be by secret ballot and a two-thirds majority shall be required.
  - c) The term of the appointment shall usually be four years but may be extended by Assembly on the recommendation of the Councils up to a further three years. Normal nomination procedures will be followed thereafter.



- d) All appointments of ministry staff and Theological College teaching staff shall be made by a 75% majority vote of the Assembly Council on a recommendation from the Board concerned.
  - e) In the event of a sudden Senior Executive Staff vacancy the Assembly Council may make an appointment until the next Assembly when an appointment shall be made under normal procedures.
16. All ballots required for elections or special appointments shall be conducted by scrutineers appointed for that purpose by Assembly.

#### **IV. Election of the Assembly Council and Boards**

- 17.
- a) Voting for members of the Assembly Council and for the Boards shall be by secret ballot. All nominees must give their prior personal consent and be members in good standing of Churches of the Union.
  - b) No person shall be elected to serve on both the Assembly and the Mission Councils at the same time.
  - c) The Assembly Council shall elect its own chairperson for the ensuing year.
  - d) In order to be declared elected, all nominations for Assembly Council and the Boards must receive at least 33% of votes of those entitled to vote for such nominations and except for the provisions of clause 18(e), those elected will be those persons receiving the greatest number of votes.
  - e) Where, however, the number of nominations exceeds the places available and the number of votes for two or more persons are equal (but above the minimum required as specified in clause 18(d)) the scrutineers shall advise the Chairperson of the Assembly who shall have a casting vote.
18. The Officers of the Union shall be member's ex-officio of all committees of the Union and members of the trustees of the Baptist Union Superannuation Scheme.

#### **V. Meetings of Assembly Council**

19. Meetings of the Assembly Council may be convened during Assembly as required.
20. 60% of the composite of elected and ex-officio members of the Assembly Council personally present at any duly convened meeting thereof shall form a quorum.
21. Meetings of the Assembly Council shall be convened by the National Administrator in consultation with the National Leader.

#### **VI. Funds and Accounts**

22. Subscriptions, donations and legacies for the work of the Union shall be invited and all constituent members as defined in Clause 6 of the Constitution shall be expected to contribute to the various funds of the Union.
23. All moneys received by or on behalf of the Union shall be deposited forthwith in the name of the Union with an approved bank or banks carrying on business in New Zealand and the said bank accounts shall be operated by two of the persons appointed by the Assembly Council for this purpose, providing that at least one such person shall be the National Administrator Officer of the Union.
24. The National Administrator shall keep proper books of account in which shall be entered particulars of all moneys received and expended on behalf of the Union and he or she shall furnish Assembly Council with monthly statements showing the balances of the various funds.



25. At each annual Assembly at least one member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand shall be appointed to act as auditor or auditors to the Union. It shall be the duty of the auditor or auditors to examine the whole of the Union's accounts each year and to certify the annual statements of the various funds for presentation to the Assembly as required by Rule 4 hereof. Any vacancy in the office of auditor occurring during the year shall be filled by the Assembly Council.
26. The general funds of the Union shall be held and disposed of for carrying out the objects of the Union in accordance with its Constitution and Rules, but no church shall have a separate interest therein.

#### **VII. Grants**

27. The general fund of the Union, subject to payment thereof of duly authorised working expenses, may be applied in making pastoral subsidies to constituent churches needing financial support, in assisting Associations or churches in the purchase of church sites and otherwise in the furtherance of the objects of the Union or any of them.
28. Pastoral subsidies shall be made to churches in accordance with the Rules thereof.

#### **VIII. Mortgages on Church Properties**

29. Having regard to the fact that the Union is involved in any mortgage commitment relating to church property vested in the Union, it shall be required of any church whose property is so vested that, before entering into arrangements for a mortgage loan, the National Administrator of the Union shall be advised of the proposal

For property vested in the Union, the Union is required to affix the Seal to any mortgage agreement. The affixing of the Seal by the Union is solely in its capacity as Trustee for and on behalf of the church concerned and in all cases the liability of the Union is limited to the assets of the Trust held by it as Trustee for that church.

#### **IX. Changes to the Rules**

30. The Rules may be changed by the decision of Assembly.

Amended 1970, 1978, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2023

