

# CONSTITUTION OF THE BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH BALLINCOLLIG, COUNTY CORK, IRELAND

## PREAMBLE

We, being born-again, Bible-believing Christians, identifying ourselves as historical Baptists in our doctrine, in the interests of growing in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through true worship and good works; fulfilling our responsibilities to propagate the Word of God both at home and abroad; contending earnestly for the faith of Jesus Christ; that all things might be done decently and in order; do institute the following statement of our faith, principles, and church government.

The following Articles of Constitution are be presented in this document:

Article I - NAME.....	1
Article II – PURPOSE and MISSION.....	1
Article III - CHARACTER.....	2
Article IV - HISTORIC BAPTIST PRINCIPLES.....	2
Article V - AFFILIATIONS.....	3
Article VI - COVENANT.....	3
Article VII - DOCTRINAL POSITION.....	5
Article VIII - MEMBERSHIP.....	8
Article IX - ORGANIZATION.....	10
Article X - MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS.....	18
Article XI - THE BUILDINGS.....	20
Article XII - FINANCIAL POLICY.....	20
Article XIII - MISSIONS.....	20
Article XIV - CALLING A COUNCIL.....	20
Article XV - AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS.....	20
Article XVI - AMENDMENTS.....	20
Article XVII – DISSOLUTION – WINDING-UP.....	21

## Article I - NAME

The name of this assembly of born-again, baptized believers shall for the time being be:

**THE BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF BALLINCOLLIG, IRELAND.**

The name of the Church can change according to the location in which the people gather, but only by a 75% vote at a specially called Church Meeting solely for the purpose of changing the name of the Church.

## Article II – PURPOSE and MISSION

Our God-Given Mission as a Church simply is, To glorify the LORD, by producing Godly believers who will boldly live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout their lives.

To fulfil our Mission, we together, as a Church, seek to accomplish the will of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the written words of the Holy Scriptures through the uniting of ourselves in Christian fellowship; Teaching and developing a Bible-oriented education for the entire person (spiritual, mental, moral, social and physical); Winning the hearts and lives of sinners to following Jesus Christ by faith; Propagating the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelistic efforts at home and on foreign mission fields; Practicing the ordinances of believers' baptism (by immersion), the memorial of the Lord's Supper, and the commandment of loving one another.

This purpose is further expressed in the Covenant under Article VI.

## **Article III - CHARACTER**

This Church shall be an independent, self-governing, self-supporting group of baptized believers in the name of Jesus Christ, subject only to the spiritual control of the Lord Jesus Christ as defined in the written Words of God, and not in any other ecclesiastical body or church organization.

## **Article IV - HISTORIC BAPTIST PRINCIPLES**

A Baptist is a born-again Christian whose beliefs regarding the Bible and its teachings can tend to differentiate him from many other professed Christians. Strictly speaking, Baptists are not Protestants. Our spiritual forefathers were in existence long before the Reformation. Bible believers have held these basic truths from the Scriptures that have identified them apart from both the Catholic Church and Protestants throughout recorded history back to the first century, even though they have been known by various other group names, including ana-baptists, Paulicians, Waldensians, etc. A more in-depth presentation of our Church doctrine, along with the associated Scriptures is given in Article VII under our Doctrinal Position.

Being in agreement with the historical doctrinal position of Independent Baptist Churches, we choose to be called a "Baptist Church," until at such time this name shall be wholly associated with apostasy, heresy and teachings contrary to the historical Baptist principles listed:

- 1.** The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ as our Divine Lord and Master. He is the only Head over, and Lawgiver to, His churches. Local churches cannot make laws of God, but only execute those which He has given. We will not submit to any self-claimed religious leader, official or overlord, nor to any system of ecclesiastical machinery among our churches. Jesus is to be Lord in both our lives and our churches.
- 2.** The supreme authority of the Bible as God's only divine, complete, and infallible revelation. It is sufficient as our only guide and standard of authority in all matters of faith, practice, and morals; whatever it teaches is to be believed and whatever it commands is to be obeyed; whatever it commends is to be accepted as both right and useful; whatever it condemns is to be avoided as both wrong and hurtful; but what it neither commands nor teaches is not to be imposed on the conscience as of religious obligation.
- 3.** The competency of the individual soul to approach God and to interpret the Word of God according to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is the privilege of every person to read and understand the Bible for himself, without dictation from, or dependence on anyone, being responsible to God alone for his use of the sacred truth.
- 4.** All born-again believers are their own priests having Jesus Christ as their High Priest, who alone can mediate between man and God. Because we are priests, according to Scripture, we may approach God, pray to Him, worship Him freely and fully at any time. We need no other human intermediary since we have direct access to God through Christ.
- 5.** The Church membership is to be made up of only born-again individuals, who having understood their sinfulness, and need of a Saviour, have by faith alone, repented of their sinfulness, and trusted in Christ as God's own way of salvation, and then been Scripturally baptized by full immersion in water.
- 6.** There is to be absolute separation of Church and State. NO organic union of the two can be accepted. The Church should neither ask for, nor accept of, support from civil authorities, since to do so would imply the right of the same civil dictation and control. The support of the Church belongs to those who belong to it. Because Human Government is of divine appointment, we are to be subject to and obey those vested with governmental authority in all secular matters, but not contrary to conscience and the Word of God. But, civil governments, rulers and magistrates have no right of dictation to, of control over, or of interference with the practice of a Christian's faith, so long as one does not intrude upon, interfere with, or do injustice to the basic rights of others.
- 7.** The practice of one's faith is to be free and voluntary, based solely upon one's conscience, both in respect as to beliefs, worship and service; neither conformity to, nor support of religion in any form should be Church or State mandated. Christian faith and practice are matters of conscience and personal choice, and not subject to official dictation; and for either civil or ecclesiastical authority to enforce conformity, physically punish dissent, or compel the support of any form of worship, is a crime against the right of man, is an assumption of divine prerogatives on the part of humans, and is treason against Christ, the only Lord of the conscience and Sovereign of the soul.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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**8.** The local congregation of believers is to be completely autonomous. Each local church assembly is, with God's enabling, to be self-governing, and independent of all other churches, and of all persons and bodies of men whatever, as to the administration of its own affairs. In the realm of spiritual matters, it has the right to be free from any other human authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical.

**9.** There are only Three Church Offices: **Evangelist** (Church Starter), **Pastor** (which is another word for *bishop*), and **Deacon**. There are no archbishops, Canons, Vicars, Nuns, priests, or anything else that would imply a hierarchy. A Baptist Church is composed simply of brethren (Matthew 23:8), with a shepherd (pastor) leading them as they all follow Jesus Christ by obeying the commands of the word of God, the Bible.

These basic principles, identify a Baptist type of church throughout history.

### **Article V - AFFILIATIONS**

This assembly, while holding to the historic fundamental Baptist distinctives of faith and practice, desires to maintain fellowship with all fundamental, separated, Bible-believing churches, organizations, societies and individuals, which manifest both in faith and practice their agreement with the practices and faith as set forth in this constitution.

This Church shall maintain a *separatist* position towards all modernistic and unbiblical organizations and ecclesiastical groups. We will not be associated with liberals or liberalism; we oppose neo-orthodoxy, neo-evangelicalism and the modern charismatic tongues movement; nor will we have any relationship with any organization that compromises or sets aside the Scriptural principles of separation. We stand entirely outside the "ecumenical movement," repudiating its ideological position and its organizational structure in the National and World Council of Churches.

### **Article VI - COVENANT**

**As a bond of unity among us, this Church approves the following covenant which shall be accepted by each individual as a condition of membership.**

Having been led by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, and on our public profession of faith in Him, and after having been baptized (by full immersion in water) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ, and thereby form a New Testament Church.

We promise, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in Scriptural knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its spirituality and prosperity; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world by our tithes and free will offerings.

We further covenant to maintain family and private devotions; to properly rear and educate our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as presented in the holy Scriptures, and to faithfully witness for Christ in seeking the salvation of the lost around us.

We further agree, that we will watch over and counsel one another in the spirit of brotherly love, that we will remember one another in prayers, that we will aid each other in sickness and distress, and cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, being slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation keeping in mind the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

Whereas, we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, we will seek God's power to enable us to deny ungodliness and every worldly lust, living in diligent care in this present world.

As living testimonies of His saving power and glory, we promise to be just and honest in our dealings, and faithful in our engagements. We will not engage in backbiting and unrighteous anger. We will abstain from everything that will cause a Christian brother to stumble, including all questionable practices, indulgences and appearances of evil, that might allow reproach to be brought on the name or cause of Christ. By so promising, we will strive to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, that amidst both evil and good reports, we will humbly and earnestly seek to live to the honour and glory of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.



**Article VII - DOCTRINAL POSITION**

**Section I - STATEMENT OF FAITH**

As Christians, we are commanded by God to be unified in our fundamental beliefs (Eph 4:5; Jude 1:3), and in our day-to-day practice of those beliefs, by having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8), and seeking to be able to “speak the same things” (1 Cor 1:10). We determine to accomplish these goals by studying, and holding to the following statement of faith as being a summary of Christian doctrine as presented in the Word of God, the Bible.

**A. The Word of God.** We believe that the only thing in this universe that is perfect (Ps 19:7), pure (Ps 19:8; 119:140), without error (Ps 12:6,7), and capable of directing men to God (Jn 20:31) is the written word of God, the Holy Bible. By the Holy Bible, We mean the collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, as preserved for English speaking people in the King James Authorized Version (KJV of 1611), and duplicated in other languages by translations that match both the faithfulness of the King James Bible, as well as its fruit (Matt 7:16).

**B. God.** We believe that the Scriptures present its Author as the One, and only One living (Josh 3:10), true, and eternal God (Isa 45:21; Deut 6:4). We believe that even though the God of the Bible is completely outside of this physical universe (Jonah 1:9), as well as outside of time (Deut 33:27), He has been, is, and will be completely involved in human history (Heb 1:1-3) in order to bring to pass His plan for the ages (Eph 1:9,10). We believe that God is inherently one person, and yet three individual Persons (2 Cor 13:14; 1 John 5:7), and that they are both separate and individual from each other, and yet indivisible as the Godhead (Rom 1:20).

**C. God The Father.** We believe the first Person of the Godhead is God the Father, and that as the Father of all creation (Isa 45:25,26), He is interested in revealing Himself to His creation (Jn 17:1-3).

**D. God The Son** We believe God revealed Himself to His creation in not only His written word, but also about 2,000 years ago through His living Word (Jn 1:1-3), His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord (Heb 1:1,2). We believe that Jesus Christ is God in flesh and bones (Jn 14:9), and was as a human, but without a sinful nature (Luke 1:35; 1 Pet 1:19; 3:18) by virtue of His virgin birth (Matt 1:18-25) as described in the Scriptures, and that He is now in heaven as our High Priest (Heb 7:25,26) interceding for sinners. We believe that He is the Messiah of the Old Testament, and that His only purpose in coming to this planet as a man was to save sinners (Luke 19:10), and give them "life, and that more abundant" (Jn 10:10).

**E. God The Holy Spirit.** We believe the third Person of the Godhead is the Person of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3,4). We believe that God the Holy Spirit is every Christian's Teacher and Guide in life (Jn 14:26), and that His role is that first of a Convictor of sin (Jn 16:8-11), then that of Comforter (Jn 14:16), and Intercessor when a Christian prays (Rom 8:26,27). The Holy Spirit provides gifts to born again Christians for the distinct purpose of winning people to Jesus Christ, and the edification of the local church (1 Cor 13:27-31; Eph 4:11,12).

**F. Creation.** We believe that the Scriptures plainly teach a literal six day creation of this present universe as written in the account in Genesis 1:1-28, and that the account is completely, and scientifically correct.

**G. Man.** We believe that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28) as described in the accounts in Genesis, and that that image was marred (Col 3:9,10) by wilful disobedience (Gen 3:6; Rom 5:19) when the head of the human race, Adam (Rom 5:12), voluntarily transgressed God's clear commandment, therefore marring the image of subsequent generations until the virgin birth of a Second Adam that would make a way to have the image restored (1 Cor 15:45-49). By "image", we are referring to man's tri-part being: a body, a soul, and a spirit, and that these three parts match God's Trinity of Persons (1 Thes 5:23). By "marred" we mean that the spirit of man at birth is "dead" (Eph 2:1), and in need of regeneration by the new birth; that man's flesh is corrupt and cannot serve God (Rom 8:5-8); and that man's soul is tied to his sin until it is freed from the flesh by spiritual circumcision (Col 2:11-13). By human race, we mean all humans born in every corner of this planet from the time of Adam through to the end of time (Rom 3:23; 5:12,18). By "wilful disobedience" we mean that Adam knew exactly what he was doing when he disobeyed a direct order from God (1 Tim 2:14). The Soul of Man is eternal, and immortal because it alone is what was made in the image of God in Genesis 1:26,27, and 2:7. It is called the “*hidden man*” or the “*inner man*” (1 Pet 3:4; Rom 7:20-23; 2 Cor 4:16-18) and is associated with the heart, will and emotions - not the body and the flesh.

**H. Hell.** We believe in a literal, physical place called hell that Jesus Christ referred to more often than He did heaven. We believe that this place is a place of darkness (Matt 8:12), of unquenchable fire (Matt 3:11-12), of excruciating pain and torment (Luke 16:23-26), of continual death, and yet never being allowed to die (2 Thes 1:7-9). We believe that hell was not created for humans, but rather for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41), and therefore that humans will only go to hell because they deliberately choose to reject the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Rom 2:8,9) which was the only acceptable payment to God for their forgiveness from sin. We believe that the judgement of hellfire is forever (Rev 20:14), and that there is no annihilation of the soul - Those who do not get saved will join the devil (their father, John 8:44) in the “*lake of fire*” and will be tormented with him forever and ever (Matt 25:46; Rev 14:10; Luke 16:22,23).

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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**I. Heaven.** We believe that God has a reward (Matt 5:11,12) for those who are His people (Heb 12:22,23), and that that reward is composed of an eternity with Jesus Christ in a place called the New Jerusalem, more commonly known as "heaven" (Rev 21:2-27).

**J. Salvation.** We believe that all men, women, and children are sinners (Rom 5:12), and that all humans who are old enough to know the difference between right and wrong (Jonah 3:11), are accountable to God for every sin that they commit and must atone for every one of them somehow (Rom 6:23). We believe that man's sins do not make him or her a sinner, but that he sins BECAUSE he is a sinner (Rom 5:19). Man's sinful state separates him from the holy God that created him (Rom 8:7,8), and will keep him out of heaven unless he acts to change his destiny (Luke 13:2,3). We believe that God ordained that man's sins could not be paid for in any other way than through the sacrifice of an innocent lamb (Ex 12:5). From Adam's fall all through the Old Testament, regular, bloody animal sacrifices were required to approach God (Heb 9:6-13). These sacrifices of the Old Testament enabled man to meet with God at a blood-sprinkled Mercy seat (Exod 25:21,22), but required a priestly order to continually maintain the sacrificial system. This system involved sinful humans and was flawed in that it was limited to man's imperfections (Heb 9:6-9). Then, "in the fullness of time" Jesus came, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29). We believe that Jesus Christ is THE ONLY way to get forgiveness of sins, and to go to heaven when a person dies (Jn 14:6). We believe that Jesus Christ paid for ALL the sins of the past (by redeeming them through His blood [Eph 1:7]), and future, by making a perfect, and eternal "once-for-all" sacrifice on the cross (Heb 10:12). We believe that a man is saved by faith alone (Eph 2:8,9) in the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Col 1:20,22), and that His blood cleanses a soul from the penalty of sin by having paid for each and every sin committed by the human race. We believe that salvation consists of three parts: 1) recognizing that every individual is responsible for their sins, to a Holy and Just God, 2) that Jesus took the responsibility for those sins on the cross, even though He wasn't at fault, and 3) that by accepting Jesus Christ's offer to take my place in judgment for my sins, I am allowed to go free (as Barabbas was allowed in Matthew 27)!

**K. The Security of the Believer.** We believe that a born again believer is completely secure in Christ (John 10:27-29; 1 Pet 1:23), and that there is absolutely no way whatsoever that that person can affect their relationship with God the Father (2 Tim 2:13; 1 John 5:13; Heb 12:5-11; Eph 1:4,5) because their salvation is based upon what Jesus Christ did (1 Pet 3:18; Jude 24), and not what they did. We believe that a Christian can affect his or her "fellowship" with God by disobeying clear Biblical commandments and not confessing them and forsaking them as sin (1 John 1:8,9).

**L. Satan.** We believe that the Scriptures plainly reveal a spiritual being whose sole desire is to deceive mankind (Rev 12:9; 19:20; 20:3,8), and turn them away from the simple plan of salvation, and force them to live in the darkness of their sins, until they join the devil in his eternal judgment (Matt 25:41).

**M. The Church.** We believe Jesus Christ commanded every born again Christian to assemble together in local, physical, visible places (Matt 18:20; Heb 10:25) for the purpose of worship, preaching, gathering of tithes and offerings, sending out missionaries (Acts 13), evangelizing (Matt 28:19,20), baptizing new converts, and edification. We believe that all Christians are part of Jesus Christ's "body" (Rom 12:5; Col 1:18), which is also called "the church", but that that "body" has not assembled yet, but will, in heaven (Heb 12:22,23). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ gave Christian churches *three* fundamental ordinances (commandments of our Saviour, just to believers): **Believer's Baptism** (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:36-38), for public identification with His death, burial, and resurrection; **the Lord's Supper** (1Cor 11:20-34), for remembrance of what our salvation cost Him; and **the task of loving one another** (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23).

**N. Baptism.** We believe baptism is the act of obedience to the command by Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19,20; Acts 2:41,42) to fully submerge a believer into water, in order to identify the believer with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3,4), and to testify to the world that that believer is a new creature because of salvation. Generally speaking, Believer's Baptism, by context, means to go into and then come out of water (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:9,10; Acts 8:38,39), as in complete immersion, and by definition is the only thing that can picture a burial, whereas all other definitions (i.e., sprinkling, dipping, etc.) cannot picture this. We believe that baptism associates the believer with the doctrine of the church administering it (1 Cor 10:1-4), and therefore is the method ordained by Jesus Christ to keep the church pure from false teacher who may want to enter the church as ravenous wolves, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:28,29).

**O. The Lord's Supper.** We believe the Lord's Supper is a serious reminder that the local church, as a body of believers regularly partakes of in order to remind its members of the cost of their salvation, as well as for spiritual cleansing, that the church may keep itself pure from carnality (1 Cor 11:28-30). **The Lord's Supper is simply a memorial** – a time to remember what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. (1 Cor 11:24,25). It is not either a continuation of the crucifixion, or a repeat of the sacrifice of the cross. Only saved individuals, Scripturally baptized as a profession of their faith in Christ, and living in a godly, Christian manner as members of a local church, have a right to, or can properly partake of the Communion of the Lord's Supper in our Church. This means baptism is a prerequisite to the memorial supper and the local church can judge the qualifications of those who enjoy its privileges.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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**P. Membership.** We believe that a local church is to be composed of only born again believers (1 Cor 12:13), that have chosen not only to obey Jesus Christ's command of baptism (Acts 2:41), but also, have decided to join together with an organized body of believers for the expressed purpose of soul-winning and discipleship based upon the doctrines of the word of God (Acts 2:42).

**Q. Separation.** We believe that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor 6:19,20), that God owns the body of the Christian, and that God judges the Christian according to how he or she treats God property! God commands Christians to be different from the world (2 Cor 6:17; 1 John 2:15-17), and to not only be "peculiar" (1 Pet 2:9) but to be so "peculiar" that they are "foolish" in the eyes of the world (1 Cor 1:18). We believe that the Bible teaches that Christians are not to marry non-Christians (1 Cor 6:14), and that they should not look like them, talk like them, or even live like them in areas of promiscuous and immoral dress, or vulgarity of conversation (1 Tim 2:9; 4:12; 1 Pet 3:1-9). The area of a Christian's music and entertainment must be very conservative and sober (Col 3:16,17; Eph 5:8-11). We also believe that Christians have different levels of maturity (we are not all the same), and ought to be given time to grow and mature (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

**R. Missions.** A world-wide program of missionary evangelism in accordance with the New Testament principles, methods, and doctrine. Baptists have always known that the whole world is lost, and in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and we have always endeavoured to proclaim that Gospel locally, and throughout the world at all costs. The mission of the local New Testament Church involves winning souls, baptizing them, training them into a Biblical culture, and reproducing themselves in their local area (Jerusalem), then in their Judea, and then in their Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the earth as well (foreign missionaries) (Matt 28:19,20; Acts 1:8).

**S. Giving.** God's people are commanded to bring their tithes (1/10<sup>th</sup> of their gross income) into the storehouse (Mal 3:6-10) on a regular basis, on the first day of the week (Sunday; 1 Cor 16:1,2) when the local church meets. The tithes are for the payment of the expenses and maintenance of the Church, and its activities. Extra giving in addition to the tithe is used to support missionaries, and for various other evangelism.

**T. The Second Coming.** We believe the only hope for this world as a whole is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We believe that there will be only a downward trend in human depravity (2 Tim 3:1-9), that will only be broken by the intervention of the physical return of Jesus Christ to rule and reign on this planet (Rev 19:11-16). We believe the next event on God's calendar is the "catching away" of Christians who are alive at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:51,52; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 22:12,20). After the Rapture, Satan will reveal his anti-christ, and a one-world government will be set up during a seven year period of time called the *Tribulation*. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to this earth, and defeat the anti-christ's army, regenerate the earth to be like it was in the garden of Eden (Isa 11:1-9), and bind Satan for 1000 years. After a 1000 year reign, Jesus Christ will loose Satan for a short time just before casting him into the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:10). At that time, this present heaven and earth will pass away, and God will create a new heaven and earth for His people for all eternity (Rev 21:1).

**U. Godly Works.** We believe in righteous living and godly works not as a means of salvation in any sense, but as its proper evidence and fruit in the life of a Christian; and therefore as Christ would do, we do everything with the goal of presenting the Gospel to a lost world for their salvation; therefore we endeavour to love the unlovely, care for and meet the needs of the poor, and reach-out with compassion on all who would seek, or who need the mercy of God Almighty, through Jesus Christ the Lord (Ephesians 2:10; Romans 12:1,2; Matthew 11:5; Mark 14:7; Luke 4:18; 7:22; 2 Corinthians 9:9).

**V. The Ministry Of Spiritual Gifts.** We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all his gifts; and that the gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are sufficient for the growth and maturity of the Christian saints today; that the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established; that the gift of tongues was never the required outward demonstration of either baptism or the filling of the Spirit of God; that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith in accord with His own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7; 1 Cor 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Cor 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-16; James 5:14-16; 1 John 5:14,15).

## **Section 2 - DOCTRINAL AGREEMENT**

The following persons shall be required to be in full agreement with the doctrinal position of the Church by signing the Doctrinal Statement of Faith without mental reservations:

The pastor(s), the elder(s), the deacon(s), all missionaries supported by the Church, all evangelists of the Church, all officers and trustees, all teachers and leaders in the Sunday School and youth programmes, and all programme leaders of any ministry of the Church.

Every person seeking to join this Church shall be given this Doctrinal agreement, and encouraged to study the Scriptures of each Doctrine and learn them for themselves.

## **Article VIII - MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1 - RECEPTION OF MEMBERS**

**What are Members of this Church?** To be a member of this Church, means a person has decided that they wish to be a willing helper of this Church group as it exists to fulfil its God given mission in the Scriptures (see Mission Statement in Article II). To become a member of this Church, an individual must be 18 years of age, be born again, and express the desire to the pastor, and meet the following requirements:

**A. By Baptism** - Any person professing singular faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, giving evidence of spiritual regeneration by the new birth as described in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, and accepting the Statement of Faith and the Covenant held by this Church may, upon baptism (by full immersion in water), be received into its membership. The only proper candidates for baptism are saved persons, who have exercised and professed a saving faith in Christ. Baptism is a purely symbolic ordinance of Christ which fully immerses (not sprinkles) the believer in water as a figure of their salvation experience (Romans 6:3-5). It is a testimony of a person dying to their self and living a new life that is in Christ. Unbelieving adults and non-believing infants and children do not qualify as subjects for immersion. Immersion is a prerequisite for church membership.

**B. By Letter** - Members from other churches of the same faith and order may be received by a letter of recommendation and dismissal from their respective churches.

**C. By Experience** - Any person to whom the ordinance of baptism by immersion has been administered by authority of a church of like faith and practice and by a satisfactory statement of faith in Christ, may be received into membership by virtue of their experience.

**D. By Restoration** - Any person whose membership has been terminated through church discipline, may upon public confession of his sins or errors and by giving evidence of other repentance may be received into full fellowship and church membership.

All applicants for membership shall meet with the Pastor and Elder(s) for consultation and examination. Applicants recommended to the Church by the Pastor and Elder(s) shall be presented to the Church and received into its membership by a vote of the eligible voting members present at any business meeting of the Church. After favourable action by the Church, new members shall receive the right hand of fellowship.

The Church has the authority to refuse membership to any individual applying if the individual does not meet the requirements for membership explained herein, or if the Church does not feel ready to accept the individual's membership based upon something they deem in the individual's life that may bring the Lord's name into dishonour.

### **Section 2 - MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

**A. Active Members** - All those who show their interest in the welfare of the Church and the Kingdom of our Lord by regular attendance and financial support and those because of sickness or infirmities are unable to attend services but still wish to be members, shall be classed as active members.

**B. Associate Members** - Associate membership shall be extended to those who meet the qualifications of active membership, but who are not permanent residents of this area or are away from this area; such as students and missionaries who may hold membership elsewhere. As determined by the Pastor, they may be permitted to serve in this Church. They shall have the privilege of attending the business meetings of this Church, but shall not have the right to vote.

**C. Inactive Members** - All those who without reasonable excuse do not attend regular services of the Church for a period of six months shall lose the privilege and right to vote on Church business; hold office or serve in this Church. All such members who are absent from services for six months shall be recommended to the congregation by the Pastor that the members be dropped from the membership roll (*1 John 2:19*). If the person desires to be reinstated as a member of the Church again, they will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and considered and accepted based upon the above stated qualifications.

### **Section 3 - DUTIES OF MEMBERS**

A. It shall be the duty of each member of the local assembly to agree with the Church's Covenant, to remain familiar with it and strive to adhere to the Covenant's obligations as set forth in the Constitution of the Church.

B. It is the duty of each member that they will always endeavour to meet together with the other members of this local Church every Lord's Day (Sunday), and every Wednesday evening at the main Bible Study (or upon whatever day the mid-week Bible Study is determined to be), as much as possible.

C. It is the duty of every member to live a godly, and clean life both among other members of this Church, as well as on the job, in their home, and anywhere the Lord would have them be a bright light for the sake of souls. This means, they shall endeavour to keep their lives and homes clear of worldly influences such as Rock Music, ungodly TV viewing, sinful activities and the like.

D. Any member is qualified by virtue of their good standing with the Church, to participate in the decisions of the Church, including voting, and making qualified requests to examine the Church finances, which are open to the review by members only.

E. It is the duty of every member of this Church to tithe of their income (10% as defined by the Lord), and make sure they tithe regularly so that the Church bills are paid, and so that the Lord God blesses the Church as He promised He would.

F. It is the God-given duty of every member of this Church to be a preacher of the Gospel (Mark 16:15) with the intent on winning the understanding of an individual over to surrender to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

### **Section 4 - DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS**

Discipline is that procedure including Christian teaching, training, admonition, and rebuke, both public and private, with the view to helping the individual Christian grow in grace, mature in the faith, separate from worldliness and live wholly for the Lord. At such time that a member shall refuse to receive such help it will be necessary for the Church to exclude him or her from its membership (Luke 17:3,4; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6)

A. Concerning differences between individuals, or sins committed not generally known by the Church. The wronged party shall follow *Matthew 18:15-17*. A person bringing a matter into the public or before the Church before following this Scripture shall be subject to rebuke.

B. Matters of discipline by the Church shall be:

1. Public sins, or sins known by the Church or the general public.

2. Holding and persistently propagating false doctrine (Titus 3:10,11; Romans 16:17).

3. Any failure to abide by the Church covenant; i.e., failing to attend the stated weekly services for extended periods of time without reasonable excuse, failure to contribute to the Church, failure to be reconciled to another member.

C. When the Pastor and Elder(s) learn that a member is living a seemingly inconsistent Christian life according to the Scriptures, they shall seek his restoration (Galatians 6:1). If a member is charged by 2 or 3 witnesses (1 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19), with an offence which requires discipline, it shall be their duty to inquire into the matter; and, if it shall appear that the case requires it, they shall proceed with a thorough investigation. They shall notify the offending member (s) with a written statement of the specific charges made against him or her, and a notice of the time and place when they wish him or her to meet with them to examine these charges and make his or her defence. In the event the accused fails to appear at the specified time and place without satisfactory reason, the case shall be presented to the Church for action at a specially called meeting within thirty days from such failure.

D. Any member under discipline before the whole Church is automatically released from any office or position, cannot speak at business meetings except in his own behalf when called for, and is deprived of his or her right to vote.

E. At the close of the hearing, the congregation shall vote by ballot whether or not to exclude the accused member. Statement of the decision, including reasons and admonitions to be presented to the member involved, shall be transmitted by registered mail.

F. An excluded member may be received back into membership after repentance and following the constitutional procedure for being re-admitted.

## **Section 5 - MEMBERSHIP DISSOLVED**

A. Death - At such a time, the member's name shall be removed from this Church's roll, rejoicing in their attendance in heaven.

B. By granting a Letter of Recommendation to sister churches of like faith and practice. When a member wishes to move to another church, and become a member there, they may request a letter of recommendation to that church recommending them for full reception by the other church.

C. By erasure of those member's names who have joined some other church, and those who request that their names be dropped from the membership may be erased from the roll by action of the Church. The Church shall be notified of the names being dropped at its annual General Business Meeting, or they can be read out specially at any called Church Meeting if the need arises.

D. By expulsion for disorderly walk - by two-thirds vote of the members present at a specially called Church Meeting for the purpose of reviewing that person's life as a Christian.

E. Dismissal by letter shall be subject to the following rules:

1. Requests must be made in writing or in person to the Church and the name of the church with which the members wish to unite must be designated.

2. Applications shall be acted on by the Church, provided the member is in good standing. If any objections are raised, then the matter shall be referred to the Board of Elders who shall present in writing a report upon the standing of the applicant, stating their recommendation in the matter.

3. All letters shall be sent by registered mail to the Pastor or Clerk of the church designated in the application. Membership shall terminate upon the granting of letters. All members who have requested letters shall be notified at their last known address when and if the same has been granted.

## **Article IX - ORGANIZATION**

### **Section 1 - GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORITY**

This Church is formed by a group of baptized believers united together according to the laws of Christ as set forth in the Bible, and is and shall continue to be wholly independent of every other church and church organisation. The government of this Assembly is and shall continue to be vested in the members who compose it and through its duly selected ministers. Recognizing that Christ is the Head of the Church, the congregation shall seek individually and collectively to determine the mind of the Lord in all matters which necessitate corporate Church action.

This Church shall never be subject to the control of any ecclesiastical body and no denominational or associational representatives shall ever sit in judgment over its affairs. The Church may fellowship and cooperate with other churches for the furtherance of the Gospel when such shall be wholly in accordance with the Scriptures, but no rules, regulations or commitments shall be made to such bodies which calls for more than voluntary action on the part of this Church and any such by 75% of the active members present and voting at any regular or special business meeting.

### **Section 2 - OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

There are three scriptural offices in the local church – **Evangelists** (which are Missionaries), **Pastors and Teachers**, and **Deacons** (Philippians 1:1). The local church can add any helpers it deems necessary, such as Treasurer, Associate Pastor, Church Secretary, Disciples, etc., but these are not indicated in scripture as official positions.

Only members in good standing are eligible to election or appointment as officers or leaders in any organization of the Church. They must not belong to a secret society, clandestine organization or politically motivated organizations of disrepute. They must totally abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors, addictive drugs, tobacco in any form and live in accordance with the provisions as set forth in this Constitution.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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**ELDERS.** All of the following officers must first qualify as Elders in the Church. No one may be elected to any office of the Church (Evangelist, Pastor/Teacher, or Deacon) unless they first have been recognized as being an elder in their Christian life. Also, most helpers in the Church need to first be a recognized Elder before engaging in any ministry (i.e., teaching Sunday School, etc.).

1. An Elder is a mature Christian man (not a new Christian, nor a woman, 1 Tim 2:12) who is faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in his Christian life, both privately and publicly, and who is a member in good standing with this Church (1 Peter 5:5).
2. Any person over the age of 18 can be considered an Elder based upon the general consensus of the Church, as long as the Pastor of the Church agrees that the person qualifies with an exemplary life. If there is a disagreement by the pastor and the Church, the man must be given some time to prove his maturity and be evaluated again within 1 year.
3. Anyone who is respected enough to be considered as an Elder in the Church, shall from that time be known as an Elder, and shall participate in leadership decisions along with the Pastor. They shall form a **Board of Elders**, with the Pastor being the Head Elder (Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23).
4. The Pastor shall form the Board of Elders first, when there is none, but after that time, shall work with the Board of Elders in maintaining them as a strong team serving and leading the Church. If there is no pastor, then the Elders shall choose a Head Elder by a 75% vote, and shall notify the Church who that temporary Head Elder is.
5. The Board of Elders shall keep an up-to-date list of men who are members of the Elder Board. No one shall be voted as an Elder into the Board of Elders unless the Church is first informed at a Church Business Meeting, and the people given their consent that the new member is respected enough to become known as an Elder.
6. The purpose of the Elder role is to help the pastor lead the Church, but they themselves will not take over responsibilities in the Church unless the Pastor is incapacitated, under review for heresy or immorality, or unless appointed to do so by the Pastor.
7. An Elder may lose their place on the Board of Elders if the following conditions are met:
  - a. If there is known sin in their life that they are having trouble resolving and correcting – they should step down until the other Elders feel the person has sufficiently resolved the problem.
  - b. If there is a loss of confidence in the Elder by either the other Elders, or by the general membership of the Church, that Elder shall step down from the Board of Elders. If they do not step down, then a Church meeting shall be called to decide what to do.
8. No Elder shall accept any re-numeration from the Church unless the expense is already authorized by the Elders prior to the expense.

### **A. PASTOR**

1. **DEFINITION** - The word Pastor means a shepherd or spiritual overseer. The Scriptures refer to the office commonly called Pastor, as head Elder, Overseer, Minister, or Bishop. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:24; Colossians 1:25; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:7,17, are examples of such and also show clearly that the Pastor is to oversee and supervise the affairs of the Church. He shall not only have the general supervision of this Church, but shall have liberty to present any matter he deems necessary to this Church for its consideration and instructions.
2. **DUTIES** - The Pastor shall preach regularly to this Church, administer and maintain the ordinances of the Gospel (Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Love of the Brethren), and generally engage in ministering and instructing the flock, always willing to give his life for their protection..
  - a. He shall personally seek out the lost and lead the Church in winning the unsaved to Christ.
  - b. He shall be responsible for the appointing of CHURCH STAFF, OFFICIALS, and PAID EMPLOYEES (usually Deacons).

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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c. He shall be the moderator of this Church, preside at all its business meetings, *ex-officio* member of all the committees and organizations, which includes the privilege of voting, in charge of the pulpit and responsible for supplying speakers. In legal matters he shall act as President, with the Board of Elders under him.

3. **QUALIFICATIONS** - 1 Timothy 1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give the clear qualifications of a Pastor.

a. Those qualifications involve the following characteristics:

1) Blameless, as the steward of God - He must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil

2) The husband of one wife – preferably, a pastor should be married, and only to one wife, but if previously having a proper divorce (the church shall have the right to determine if such divorce was proper or not), and therefore freed from the previous relationship, the man may be considered for the pastorate if he and his current wife (if married) are believed to be determined to be permanent in their marriage.

3) One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. The life of the Pastor and his family should be an example of Godliness and spirituality. They should not indulge in worldly or sinful practices which would tend to weaken the testimony of the Church (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Any Pastor who brings disrepute upon the Lord's ministry committed to him, through sinful language, sinful practice or association shall not be considered for this pastorate or having fallen into such, be retained as Pastor, if he persists in such a course (Romans 12:1,2; 2 Corinthians 6:11-18).

4) Not selfwilled – not motivated by his own plans and desires, but consistently and passionately motivated by the commands of the word of God, the Bible.

5) Not soon angry – the pastor must have solid control over his temper, and be patient and long-suffering by nature.

6) Not given to wine – the pastor should have nothing to do with alcoholic drink in his life or home. This means he has no interest in wine or alcoholic drink as a beverage at all, but is rather “given to” or interested in hospitality (see point 9).

7) No striker, or brawler – the pastor should never hit anyone, and should be known as someone who has turned the other cheek in fights.

8) Not given to filthy lucre (covetous) – not concerned with making “fast” money, but a hard worker, that will live within his means.

9) A lover of hospitality – of good behaviour - he must be always serving and ministering to people, and his home must be open to the people of this Church.

10) A lover of good men – the kind of people that the pastor counts as mentors and influences in his life need to be above question in their lives.

11) Apt (ready) to teach – the pastor needs to be well trained (2Tim 2:2) in the areas of preaching, and teaching, and feeding the flock of God.

12) Sober – the pastor needs to be a thoughtful man, who is studious and careful in his preaching and doctrine.

13) Just – the pastor must be right in his decisions and must shun emotional pressures in order to stay faithful to God.

14) Holy – the personal life of the man of God must be evidently (visibly) holy and pure.

15) Temperate – he must be under the rational control of the Holy Spirit in his life.

16) Vigilant - Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince (win) the gainsayers (unbelievers and antagonizers).

b. No Person shall be considered for the office nor serve as Pastor whose beliefs are not in accordance with the STATEMENT OF FAITH as set out in the Constitution, or who will not declare himself to be a Christian Fundamentalist (i.e. one who accepts the literal, historical, and grammatical interpretation of the Bible, and who is

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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personally and ecclesiastically separated from modernistic and liberal churches), believing the Bible to be fundamental to life and doctrine. He must hold to being a Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Millennial, Independent Baptist.

c. **No woman** shall be considered for or serve as Pastor of this Church since the Lord Jesus Christ ordained only men to lead His Church, and the Apostle Paul declared that the bishop must be the “husband of one wife” not the other way around (1 Timothy 3:2; see also 1 Timothy 2:12).

d. No person shall be considered for the office nor serve as Pastor of this Church who maintains any connection with the National or World Council of Churches or any of its agencies, conventions or ecclesiastical bodies.

4. **CHOOSING A PASTOR** - Pastors are to be secured for their position by election, as a free choice of the members of the Church. No individual or combination of people can appoint pastors over them, or compel the Church to accept as officers those whom they have not freely chosen. Nor does a pastoral appointment require the consent of any synod, presbytery or council. The Church may ask for, or accept advice from anyone concerning the appointment of a man to the Office of Pastor, but no one is to assume the sacred position of Overseer, until he has been chosen to do so by a majority vote of the Church.

a. **Selection and Election** - The choosing of a pastor is one of the most important acts - if not the most important - pertaining to the independency of the Church. The interest of the body of believers, and the welfare of religion depend so largely on it, that it should be entered upon with the utmost care, deliberation and prayer – specifically, prayer for divine direction. That a wise and safe leader, an able and instructing teacher, a devout, spiritual and holy man may be secured for this sacred office, and that the choice be influenced by no carnal ambition, by no personal prejudices, and for no selfish ends. When the choice is made, and the pastor secured, then let him be received, loved, supported, honoured and obeyed, as one sent of God for this sacred work.

b. **Dependency** - No man can do of himself all that is desired and expected of a pastor. He must not only have divine help, but he must have the sympathy, cooperation, and prayers of the Church.

c. **Good Report** - The Church should take deliberate care to know his record in and out of the Lord's work elsewhere and how he is esteemed, and valued where he previously lived and laboured. It is reckless folly that on the credit of a few fascinating sermons the Church call and settle on a pastor when they are wholly ignorant of his private character and his ministerial history. A man of deep piety, thoroughly in love with the Word of God, is much to be preferred than to a brilliant platform pulpiteer.

d. **Novice Pastor** - If a mature man without a record is called to be ordained and begin his pastorate, his reputation for piety, sound sense, and pulpit ability should be carefully considered and well understood. If he be of the right spirit and the right material, he will grow into larger usefulness through study, the endowment of the Spirit, and the prayers of the people.

5. **CALL AND ELECTION OF THE PASTOR** - Whenever it is necessary, by death or resignation of the Pastor, this Church shall, **WITHOUT NECESSARY DELAY**, proceed to secure a new Pastor in the following manner:

a. The Elder(s) shall call a congregational meeting to convene at the regular place of worship to elect a Pulpit Committee. They must give public notice of the time, place and purpose of the meeting at two regular public meetings at least a week apart, prior to the time of the meeting.

b. The Pulpit Committee shall consist of not less than three and not more than seven men who have been members of this Church more than a year, who are not related to each other in any manner. Only male members of the Church who are 18 years or older, and considered to be Elders in the Church may be appointed to said committee.

c. It shall be the duty of the Pulpit Committee to investigate and to bring before the Church as candidates such men of God for the purpose of filling the vacancy as they feel is the will of God. Before candidates are presented, they will study the doctrinal statement and Constitution of this Church, and must be in full agreement with and state so to the Pulpit Committee prior to candidacy for the pastorate of this Church. No one will be invited to preach in the Church as a candidate until the Pulpit Committee has met and evaluated him.

d. When the committee is ready to make a recommendation, it shall notify all the Elder(s), who shall then announce in at least one regular public service prior to the visiting minister's speaking that he is a candidate for pastor.

e. The Elder(s) shall announce at the regular service in which the candidate speaks that a vote by ballot shall be taken the following mid-week Church meeting as to whether to call the candidate as Pastor.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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f. At the mid-week congregational meeting, duly called for the purpose, a Pastor may be elected by a 75% vote of the eligible membership present. Each candidate shall be voted upon by the congregation before another candidate shall be considered.

g. During the time the Church is without a pastor, it shall be the responsibility of the Elder(s) to arrange a pulpit supply for all regular services, until such time as the Pulpit Committee is chosen. The duly constituted Pulpit Committee shall assume responsibility for pulpit supply until a pastor is elected and arrives to assume his duties with the congregation. The Pulpit Committee shall automatically be dissolved with the arrival of the Pastor on the field to assume pastoral responsibilities.

**6. TERM OF OFFICE** - The term of the Pastor shall be for an undesignated period of time and shall be left in the hands of the Pastor whether so stated in the call to the office or not; unless dismissed by this Church for sinful conduct or unscriptural teaching.

a. The pastor may terminate the pastorate by giving the Church thirty (30) days written notice.

b. Because of the office, the pastor shall be counted worthy of double honour (1 Timothy 5:17). That means:

1) He shall be honoured by the membership of this Church by virtue of the office that he holds.

2) He shall be regularly paid by this church according as it is able, according to its own financial ability.

c. No accusation shall be accepted against him without two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

d. In the event the Pastor is accused by two or three witnesses of immorality or heresy, a mutual council (a council of pastors and elders, selected one-half by this Church and one-half by the Pastor) may be called. After the Council's thorough investigation and upon receiving its opinion and advice, this Church may then take action. If the Pastor is found guilty of heresy or immorality, he shall be dismissed immediately (shall not preach, teach or administrate this Church) at a specially called meeting requiring a majority of members present and a 75% vote against him, to terminate his services. The Pastor will receive 2 weeks salary and the use of any Church approved housing for 30 days.

**7. PASTORAL AUTHORITY** - The Pastor is to be loved, honoured and obeyed, in the Lord (relating to spiritual matters - Hebrews 13:7,17; 1Thes 5:12,13; 1Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2,3). He is placed as Overseer of the Church by the Head of the body (Jesus Christ) to lead and instruct the group of believers he is the pastor of.

a. The Pastor shall call such staff members as shall be required. Each staff member shall be called for a specific duty or duties, in the exercise of which he shall be responsible at all times directly to the Pastor.

b. He shall have the power to select the officers and teachers of the Sunday School organization, the music program of the Church, office workers, and/or paid employees of the Church as the need arises. He shall be free to select men of his own choosing as associates. He has the prerogative to dismiss those he has selected for any and all positions.

c. He may call the Elder(s) or the Church together for special meetings to transact the business of the Church and will be the moderator over such meetings. No meetings of Church business shall be conducted without his approval.

d. He shall have authority to purchase supplies necessary for his work and the carrying out of his ministry to the Church.

e. He shall have full authority over the pulpit, such as, who is to preach, speak, sing, etc.

## **8. PASTORAL SUPPORT**

When this Church has its own pastor, it shall minister back to the pastor in carnal things (i.e., monetarily) just as he ministers to the Church in spiritual things (1 Cor 9:11).

a. It shall be the responsibility of the Church to provide adequate parsonage/housing facilities for the Pastor and his family (or sufficient financial pay as to allow them to rent/purchase their own accommodation). The pastor's regular wages should be enough for him to minister full-time to the Church. If the Church is unable to meet the financial needs of the pastor, it should provide as much as possible for he and his families' care, with the goal of increasing his wages until he is able to be working full-time as pastor of this Church.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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b. It shall be the responsibility of the Church to provide such remuneration, as the Lord enables, as will meet the living expenses of the Pastor commensurate with his position and responsibilities. The amount of remuneration shall be established by the Church at time of the issuance of the call, and shall be reviewed at the end of each fiscal year and approved by the church at the general Church business meeting held in January.

c. In the payment of the pastor's salary, private donations and personal gifts given to him will not be counted.

### **9. PASTORAL BENEFITS**

a. Such matters as a car and operating expense, life and health insurance benefits, retirement, book purchases, religious publications and expenses in connection with ministerial activities shall be considered at time of call, and may be added as finances make it possible.

b. The Pastor shall be granted a total of three (3) weeks (21 days) holiday per year with full pay. The time of the year and other practical matters connected with the holiday shall be left to the discretion of the pastor.

### **B. EVANGELISTS - MISSIONARIES**

1. **Definition** – An Evangelist is a Church starter who evangelizes an area, winning souls to faith in Jesus Christ, and then training them to fully follow the Lord Jesus. The Evangelist not only trains people how to follow the Lord and live the Christian life, but also trains men to pastor churches.

2. **Duties** – Like the Pastor, he is to win souls, disciple them, baptize them, pray with them and for them, watch over them, and pastor them. But unlike a pastor, he is to prepare the church he has started to be a fully functional, local Bible believing Baptist Church, and endeavours to one day turn the responsibility of the church he started over to a qualified man who has been accepted by the Church as its pastor.

3. **Qualifications** – The exact same qualifications as a pastor. An Evangelist is to be a paid member of the staff of a Church, or may be paid by a collection of free-will monthly giving by multiple churches towards his and his families' living expenses.

### **C. DEACONS**

1. **Definition** - The word Deacon means, servant, attendant, helper, who basically serves the physical needs of people, and runs errands – specifically a Deacon is a helper to a specific need in the Church. Deacons are paid Elders of the Church, so that they can fulfil their duties full-time without having to work a secular job. In Acts 6:1-4, the first servants were chosen by the Church and were appointed to their tasks by the overseers (Pastors) of the Church for the purpose of performing such tasks as would free those in charge of the services for prayer and the study of the Word. Therefore, the position of Deacons shall not in any way be taken to mean authority over the Church and Pastor. The Church will choose Deacons out of the group of Elders; the pastor shall appoint/direct them into a specific ministry as needed; and the Deacons shall serve in that ministry full-time, for the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **2. Duties**

a. The general duties of the Deacons, aside from appointed tasks, shall be to assist the Pastor in building up this Church spiritually, numerically, financially, and to visit the sick, the sorrowing, and the needy; to **personally** strive to win the lost to Christ by going soul-winning, to guard and protect the reputation of this Church and Pastor against gossip, lies, and false accusations, to investigate delinquent members and to endeavour to remedy any spiritual weakness in the lives of its members.

b. Their duties toward the Pastor shall be to pray for him earnestly and continually, to act as a friend in behalf of this Church, to see that his material and physical needs are taken care of, and to strive in every way to help him in the performance of his Scriptural duties.

c. They shall assist in making proper provisions for the observance of the ordinances of the Church.

#### **3. Qualifications**

a. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 gives the qualifications of a Deacon, and his wife, and family. The life of a Deacon and his family should be one of godliness and spirituality. They should not indulge in worldly and sinful practices which would tend to weaken the testimony of the Church (1 Thessalonians 5:22). A Deacon must subscribe and completely fulfil 1 Timothy 3:8-13 to qualify as a Deacon. Anyone who brings disrepute upon this Church through sinful language,

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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practice or associations shall not be considered for Deacon or having fallen into such practices and persisting in the same, shall not be retained. In keeping with the Scriptures: gossiping, tattling, backbiting, undermining, holding grudges, violent uncontrolled temper, etc., are unbecoming to the position of Deacon and if indulged in by either a Deacon or his wife shall be grounds for not considering him for the position or dismissal.

b. No person shall fill the position of Deacon who has not been a faithful member of this Church for a period of one year or more (1 Timothy 3:10), and is not considered to be a respected Elder in this Church.

c. No woman shall be considered for the office of a Deacon.

d. A Deacon is to be faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11) therefore, absenteeism from two consecutive business meetings, or 2 weeks of Church attendance without a legitimate reason shall disqualify said Deacon and his position shall be declared vacant.

e. No one shall be considered for, nor serve as Deacon, who is not total in agreement and practice with the Statement of Faith of this Church.

f. Deacons automatically cease to be Deacons when they cease to be church members.

### **4. Election**

a. Term of Office - The Deacons shall be elected by majority vote (51%) of the members, and hired basically for an undetermined length of time. They do not have to be hired, but can be based upon the amount of work they are needed to perform as servants of this Church.

b. Nomination - The Elder(s) and Pastor shall serve as a nominating committee. This committee shall submit a list of candidates of Elders at the annual Church business meeting. All such nominations for Church offices must meet the qualifications set forth in this Constitution. Nominations may be made from the floor, but the one making the nomination should exercise extreme care that the one being nominated meets the Constitutional and Scriptural qualifications. The Pastor will be responsible to make the Church aware of the qualifications of the one nominated.

c. Termination. A Deacon will be a hired as a staff member of this Church until such time as they either resign, retire, or are terminated by the Pastor because of failure to live up to the Scriptural requirements as set forth in the Scriptures, and outlined in this Constitution.

## **Section 3 - CHURCH OFFICIALS**

The Church Officials listed here should be Elders, but may be just active members, if there are not enough elders to fill the need. Women are allowed to fill some of the roles as listed. These officials, and others may be added as they are needed.

### **A. SUNDAY SCHOOL**

The purpose of the Sunday School is to teach the message of the Bible at the level of designated groups of children and adults by age and category (i.e., singles, young married, etc.).

1. **Head Teacher** – This shall be a man. He shall be appointed by the Pastor from among the Elders. His duties shall be to cooperate with the Pastor in suggesting supplies and materials pertaining to the Sunday Bible School and in the operation of the Sunday Bible School. Teachers and workers necessary to the growth and prosperity of the school shall be suggested by him to the Pastor. All teachers and helpers shall report to, and work with the Head Teacher.

2. **Teachers** - must be Active Members of this Church (unless they qualify as Associate Members), in good standing whose lives are consistent as Christians, and an example of Christ. They may be either men or women. No teacher shall teach who does not fully subscribe to and obey the **Church Covenant** and **Articles of Faith**. The teacher must scripturally qualify for the position by being considered an Elder or Elder Woman, and must meet the qualifications as a Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Timothy 2:12). Teachers shall be appointed by the Pastor by recommendation of the Head Teacher.

3. **Sunday School Secretary** – This may be either a man or a woman. They shall keep an accurate record of all class information, attendance, offerings, promotions, etc. The Secretary shall be a member of this Church in good standing. He or she shall be appointed by the Pastor at the recommendation of the Head Teacher.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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4. Due to the seriousness of working with children, at any time, any of the Sunday School officials can be terminated and replaced by the Pastor, or the Board of Elders if a worker is deemed to be living inconsistent with the Christian life, or a threat to his or her class. When they are terminated, the charges against them will be investigated, and if found to be false, they will be reinstated. If the charges are found to be true, it may mean termination as an Elder, and possibly expulsion from the Church Membership.

### **B. MUSIC DEPARTMENT**

The music of this Church will always be clearly conservative, and without the use of drums. The people who lead the music of this Church will be required to be very careful in their choice of music, and even in their own personal listening habits. The music they promote must be Scriptural in content, and Godly in character.

**1. Music Director** - shall be a male member of this Church, who is in good standing and whose life is an example of Christ to the Church. He shall fully cooperate with the Pastor and be responsible for the selection and direction of the congregational singing of hymns conducive to spirituality and the reception of the sermon. He shall be appointed by the Pastor, who can change the proposed music to be performed if not deemed conservative, or questionable.

**2. Pianist and Organist** - He or she shall be approved and appointed by the Pastor, at the recommendation of the Music Director. Their duties are to play at all Church services possible, and to fully cooperate with the Pastor and Music Director. If one cannot be at a Church meeting, they must notify the Music Director.

### **C. ADMINISTRATION**

The Pastor and Elders shall require the assistance of various helpers in the administration of the Church.

**1. Church Clerk/Secretary** - shall be a man or a woman appointed by the Pastor by recommendation of the Elders annual meeting for a term of one year and he or she may be reappointed. The Church Clerk shall be an Active Member in good standing and responsible for keeping an accurate and confidential record of all the legitimate business of this Church, an up to date record of names of members, missionaries and other correspondence pertaining to this Church, and the safe-keeping at this Church or in a safety deposit vault of legal papers. The Clerk shall act as Secretary in legal matters, recording the minutes of the Church Business meetings, and he or she shall fully cooperate with the Pastor at all times. The Clerk can be dismissed if the need arises, by a majority (51%) vote by the Board of Elders.

**2. Church Treasurer** - shall be a male member of this Church, in good standing and shall be appointed by the Pastor from among the Elders at their organizational meeting to be held within two weeks after the annual meeting, for a term of one year and may be reappointed. The Treasurer shall fully cooperate with the Pastor at all times.

a. The Treasurer shall safeguard and be responsible for accurately and confidentially caring for all Church funds and financial records entrusted to him, receive and immediately count all offering monies and deposit said monies in respective accounts.

b. When monies are counted, one other Elder and/or Active Church member shall be present and will initial the weekly offering report.

c. He shall keep a true, accurate, and confidential book of accounts, pay all orders drawn upon him by order of (1) the Church, (2) the Pastor, (3) the Elders, (4) the Deacons, providing such drawing down of funds is for the work of this Church. He shall produce Pastoral approved quarterly financial reports. Cheques shall be signed only by the Treasurer, Pastor or any other person authorized by this Church. All cheques must have two authorized signatures.

### **3. Trustees**

a. The Church shall choose from among the Elders, as many Church Property Trustees as needed by a Bank for the purchase and maintenance of any properties in the name of the Church. The pastor can veto a nomination for a proposed trustee.

b. The Trustees shall, as provided by law and the action of the Church, hold in trust the title to all property of the Church and shall represent the Church in all matters of legal responsibility regarding the purchase, improvement, and the disposal of Church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, encumber, mortgage, lease or transfer any property of the Church without a quorum vote (75 per cent) of the Church authorizing such action; neither shall they have any control over the use of Church property except by said vote of the Church. After the vote has been duly

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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passed by the Members of the Church the Trustees shall have power to purchase, take on lease, or otherwise acquire, hold, let, sell, exchange, mortgage or otherwise dispose of real property of the Church.

c. No person shall be appointed from the membership of the Church that does not fully agree with the constitution and doctrinal position of the Church.

d. The names of the Trustees shall be duly transmitted to the Bank through which property mortgage(s) are held. Any changes in the names of those Trustees shall also be transmitted to the bank.

e. Elders who are Trustees, shall only remain Trustees for three years, and afterwards, must be re-elected, or replaced.

f. The Pastor is a permanent Trustee. Election of Trustees shall occur at the Annual General Church Business Meeting, or as deemed necessary by the Pastor, or if there is no pastor, by the head Elder due to an emergency like the death of a trustee.

g. The position of Trustee shall be vacated whenever a Trustee shall die, or resign their Church membership, or cease to hold to this Church's doctrine, or whenever a trustee shall become personally bankrupt or compound with his creditors, or convicted of any felony, or shall be guilty of any offence against God's Word, its believers, or its morals.

h. If a Trustee disgraces his role as a trustee, or even as an Elder, he shall be brought before a special Church meeting for the purpose of examining his role in any act that might be dishonourable to the Church, and if found to be in sin, shall be publicly dismissed by the Pastor of his office and immediately replaced by a Church-wide vote with another Elder.

i. The Trustees shall make a report to the Church at the annual business meeting.

j. No Trustee shall receive any re-numeration (salary) for being a trustee, and if there are any expenses incurred by a trustee while acting in good faith representing the Church, those expenses will only be paid back if there are receipts and invoices.

k. The Trustees shall maintain a membership list of the active trustees, and keep the bank to which the Church has its mortgage always up-to-date with the names of the trustees. Whenever there is a change in the trustees, the bank shall be notified. The Church shall also be notified of any such changes at a called Church Business Meeting.

## **Article X - MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS**

### **Section 1 - WORSHIP SERVICES**

1. The Church shall meet regularly every Sunday for the public worship of Almighty God, and the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. These meetings shall include Sunday School, Morning and Evening Church Worship, as well as Bible Studies, teaching and training classes that can be fit into the day.

2. The Church shall meet for a mid-week Bible Study and Prayer Meeting.

3. The Church shall meet at any other time or date as the Church may designate.

4. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be ordinarily observed at the rate of at least once every other month, or when designated by the Pastor.

### **Section 2 - BUSINESS MEETINGS**

1. This Church shall have an annual business meeting and other business meetings as may be deemed necessary.

2. The annual business meeting shall be held following the Sunday evening Church meeting the third week in January. In the absence of a quorum it shall be held one week later, after the Sunday evening Church meeting.

3. Other business meetings shall be announced on the Sunday before they are to be held.

## **Constitution and Operational By-Laws of the Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig**

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4. The Pastor shall be moderator of all business meetings of the Church except when the Pastoral office is under consideration. In such event the Head of the Board of Elders shall moderate.
5. Notes of the Business Meeting shall be taken and kept by the Pastor, and shall be open to viewing by request of any Active Member.

### **Section 3 - SPECIAL MEETINGS**

1. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, or the Clerk shall call a meeting on written request signed by not less than ten active members. Notice of such special meetings shall be given from the pulpit on the preceding Lord's Day.
2. Such notice as outlined above shall be given by the Elders before the election or dismissal of a pastor.

### **Section 4 - VOTING**

#### **1. Quorum**

- a. To transact business at any meeting 50% of the active membership must be present to constitute a quorum. A two-thirds (66%) majority of the voting members present at a meeting shall be necessary to carry action except in the case of calling or dismissing a pastor, buying, selling or encumbering property, then 75% of the active voting membership shall constitute a quorum, with 75% majority vote.
- b. No Church business shall be conducted in the absence of a quorum.

**2. Age** - All active members eighteen (18) years of age and older may vote on all matters except as otherwise provided by Irish law.

**3. Procedure** - A voice, rising, or show-of-hands vote is binding, except where otherwise provided for, whenever it is apparent that two-thirds of the members present are voting; if more than one-third of the members present do not signify their vote, then a ballot vote shall be taken. A majority vote shall decide all matters except the expulsion of members (as outlined in Article VIII, Membership, Section 5), the election of a pastor (which shall be decided by a three-fourths ballot vote of the members present), and the vote to amend the constitution (which shall be as outlined under Article XVI, Amendments).

**4. Absentee Ballot** - There shall be none.

**5. The Annual Election of Officers** - Shall be by ballot and those receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. In case of a tie, the Elders shall immediately order a new election, by ballot for the office in which the tie occurred.

### **Section 5 - ORDER OF BUSINESS MEETING AND CONDUCT**

1. Every business meeting shall be opened and closed by prayer.
2. The standard for conduct of business meetings shall be Robert's Rules of Order, except as otherwise specified by the Moderator.
3. A review of the previous Church Business Meeting minutes shall be read out and sought to be accepted by those attending the Business meeting.
4. Any speaker who introduces any matter foreign to the subject under discussion shall be ruled out of order.
5. Discourteous language or remarks adapted to injure the reputation or feelings of any member shall be ruled out of order and shall forfeit the speaker's right to the floor.
6. The moderator may speak upon any subject under discussion.
7. Every active member wishing to speak shall rise and respectfully address the moderator (pastor).

8. Every proposition presented for action of the Church must be introduced by motion of one member and seconded by another.

9. All questions shall be decided by a majority vote of the active members present at such meeting.

## **Article XI - THE BUILDINGS**

1. **Use of Buildings** - The worship and educational buildings and structures shall be used only for such meetings and activities as shall promote the Gospel and honour our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

2. **Authority for Use of Buildings** - The Pastor and Elder(s) shall exercise the authority to refuse the use of the worship and educational buildings for any service that seems contrary to Church policy and belief.

3. **Weddings** - The worship and educational buildings may be used by members for weddings conducted by the pastor. Others desiring the use of these units for weddings must have the agreement of the pastor and consent of the Elder(s).

4. **Profit-Making** - The worship and educational buildings of this Church shall not be used for profit-making. The Church is permitted to make a profit on the sale of property.

## **Article XII - FINANCIAL POLICY**

This Church shall be supported by the voluntary gifts of the Lord's people. We believe that every Christian should seek to give systematically, regularly, proportionately to their income, sacrificially, and cheerfully of his substance to the Lord's work through the local church (2 Corinthians 8:9).

## **Article XIII - MISSIONS**

This Church shall support missionary causes and educational institutions consistent with its own belief and practices. All missionaries supported by this Church shall generally be in agreement with the doctrines and practices of this Church. The Pastor shall make a decision about whether a missionary or mission project meets the requirements of this Constitution. Designated personal or special offerings by the Members of this Church will be honoured when the designated project or person is in harmony with the doctrines and practices of this Church and the amount to be given is not in conflict with the budget.

## **Article XIV - CALLING A COUNCIL**

In such cases where the wisdom and advice of external impartial brethren of like faith and practice is needed, a council may be called by the Church for consideration of the matters in question, as long as they are of a serious nature. The Head Elder shall moderate (which usually will be the pastor, but can be a specifically chosen man to fulfil that job if the pastor can't fulfil it).

## **Article XV - AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

No auxiliary group shall organize as a ministry of the Church without receiving authority from the Church by general vote of a quorum of the membership.

## **Article XVI - AMENDMENTS**

### **Section 1**

This Constitution may be amended at any regular business meeting, by a two-thirds vote (66%), providing notice has been given of the anticipated amendment at four previous regular Sunday services of the Church and also that the proposed change has been published and conspicuously posted in the Church building four weeks in advance.

**Section 2**

No amendment shall be made to Article VII, the Doctrinal Position of this Church - **it is irrevocable**. Only minor clarifications may be made if absolutely necessary.

**Article XVII – DISSOLUTION – WINDING-UP**

In the event of the disbanding of this Church, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its property, either real or personal, as well as other assets, shall be divided among the members or other individuals, but shall be designated by a vote of the Church prior to dissolution to be given to another church of like faith and practice, or as a gift to any designated mission projects, as the Church may by vote deem right for the monies, as long as that designated mission project is in line with this Covenant, and for the preaching of the Gospel.

Finalized, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2004  
Formally Signed by the Church, 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2004  
Craig Ledbetter, Acting Pastor  
Bible Baptist Church  
Ballincollig, Co. Cork  
Ireland