



CONSTITUTION
OF
RIDGECREST FAMILY CHURCH
(FIRST AMENDMENT)

NAME

1.1 The name of the Church shall be "Ridgecrest Family Church", (hereinafter referred to as "THE CHURCH")

BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

2.1 The church shall seek and maintain membership with the Baptist Union (BU) of Southern Africa but shall be independent of any control by it save as hereinafter provided. Having become a member, the church shall remain in membership unless the membership shall resolve otherwise by a 70% (seventy per cent) vote of members present at a properly constituted meeting of members.

2.2 In recognition of the fact that some of the financial support ultimately making possible the church's acquisition of immovable property may have been provided directly or indirectly either by the BU, and/or by a BU Territorial Association, the following stipulation shall be of force and effect:

In the event of the church ceasing to be in membership with the BU as it is presently constituted in terms of the declaration of principle amplified in the Statement of Belief, 1924, and the Statement of principles either voluntarily or following a resolution of the BU pursuant to Article 4.3,

- The church shall pay back any outstanding loans or grants made available to the church from the organisations mentioned above,
- Any immovable property acquired by the membership of the church will be decided on at a special Business meeting of the church by a 70% majority vote of the members present.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND OBJECTS

3.1 The church recognises Jesus Christ as its supreme Head, and undertakes to manage its affairs according to New Testament teaching, believing that as the Body of Christ it is equipped by His Spirit to act, decide and direct as set out in Article 8.1.

This Article shall be read subject to the special circumstances envisaged in Article 2.2 and 4.3 and their relevant stipulations.

3.2 The object of the Church shall be:

- 3.2.1 To glorify the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church.
- 3.2.2 To proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and to encourage and support the proclamation of that Gospel (in accordance with Matthew 28:18-20) to the ends of the earth.

- 3.2.3 To provide instruction and fellowship for believers, seeking to build them up to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4 : 13)

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

4.1 The Church believes:

- 4.1.1 In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament in their original writings as fully inspired of God, and accepts them as the final authority for faith and life.
- 4.1.2 In one God eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 4.1.3 That Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.
- 4.1.4 That God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; and that all human beings inherit a sinful nature; which issues (in the case of those who have reached moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt.
- 4.1.5 That the Lord Jesus died for our sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, according to the Scriptures, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.
- 4.1.6 In the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His ascension into heaven, and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate.
- 4.1.7 In the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4.1.8 In the personality of the Holy Spirit, His regenerating work, and abiding presence in the true believer.
- 4.1.9 That all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
- 4.1.10 That all Christians are called to a life of holiness, devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and service for Him.
- 4.1.11 In the resurrection both of the just and the unjust, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected the offer of salvation.

4.2 Statement of Baptist Principles: The Church further believes in the following distinctive Baptist emphases:

- 4.2.1 The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.
- 4.2.2 BELIEVER'S BAPTISM as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 4.2.3 The CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLE, namely that each member has the privilege and responsibility to use his/her gifts and abilities to participate fully in the life of the church. We recognise that God gifts His Church with Overseers (who are called Pastors or Elders) whose primary function is to lead in a spirit of servanthood, to equip and provide spiritual oversight, and Deacons whose primary function is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the Church. This principle further recognises that each member should participate in the appointment of the church's leaders, and that a constituted church meeting, subject to the direct Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture, is the highest court of authority for the local church.
- 4.2.4 The PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shared with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ even to the ends of the earth
- 4.2.5 The principle of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, namely, that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.
- 4.2.6 The principle of SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in that, in the providence of God the two differ in their respective

natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.

4.3 Any change within the Church structure or organisation which is in conflict directly or indirectly with one or more of the stated Baptist Principles will be invalid unless approved by at least 90% of the members present and entitled to vote at a duly constituted Special Church meeting of which at least three month's notice has been given.

Any change to be made, shall not be of force and effect unless and until details thereof shall have been conveyed in writing to the General Secretary of the Baptist Union. It is recognised and accepted that the BU shall have the right, in the light of such change, to terminate the membership of the church, with the BU. The implications of such a termination are recognised as viewed in the light of the provisions of Article 2.2. The Article may not be deleted or amended without approval of the Executive of the BU.

4.4 That God has ordained marriage as a heterosexual relationship between a natural man and a natural woman.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership shall consist of:

5.1 Those whose names are in the Church register of members at the time of the adoption of the Constitution.

5.2 Those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have accepted this Constitution and who have been admitted to membership in terms of Article 6.2.

5.3 Those who have been accepted by transfer, from some other Baptist Church, (having accepted this Constitution) in terms of Article 6.3.

5.4 Believers baptism by immersion shall be a pre-requisite for membership.

ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

6.1 Application for church membership under Article 5.2 shall be made in the first instance to the Pastor or Secretary. The Leadership Team shall make careful enquiry regarding the applicant's spiritual experience and submit

their recommendation to a General meeting for approval by 70% of the Church members present.

6.2 Application for Church membership under Article 5.3 shall be made in the first instance to the Pastor or Secretary. The Leadership Team shall satisfy itself concerning the applicant's spiritual experience and submit a recommendation as in 6.1 above.

6.3 All prospective members will be required to complete a membership programme as determined by the Leadership Team.

TRANSFER OF MEMBERS

7.1 Any member in good standing who desires to join another Baptist Church shall be given a letter of transfer upon application from the Church concerned.

7.2 Any member in good standing who desires to join a Protestant Church other than Baptist shall be given a letter of commendation upon application from the Church concerned.

7.3 A Business meeting shall be advised of any transfers.

PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

8.1 Under the divine Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, the final authority and responsibility in all matters touching the life and service of the Church rests with the membership. Each individual member has the responsibility and right to participate fully in the Church's life and government, including the appointment of its leadership.

8.2 Every member shall be entitled and expected to attend Business Meetings, unless prevented by some reasonable cause, and to exercise his/her vote for the welfare of the whole Church, in a spirit of prayer and love.

8.3 Members shall be expected to support the ministry and maintain the fellowship of the Church:

- by prayer
- by attendance at services
- by engaging in some specific service
- by conscientious giving
- by introducing people to the Church.
- By witnessing of their faith in Christ

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- 9.1 If any member is absent from services of the Church and/or neglects to comply with any of the privileges and obligations of membership for a prolonged period without apparent good reason, the Leadership Team shall make enquiry. Should no satisfactory response result, the Leadership Team may submit a recommendation to a Special Business Meeting.
- 9.2 In the unhappy event of any allegation of unworthy conduct or erroneous belief against any member, the Leadership Team shall, if careful enquiry makes such a course necessary, report to a Special Business Meeting for appropriate action.
- 9.3 The suspension or expulsion of any member shall be resorted to only if all efforts at restoration prove unsuccessful.
- 9.4 In purely personal matters, member shall be expected to act in accordance with the Lord's injunction in Matthew 18:15 - 17.

THE ORDINANCES 10.1 Baptism

In addition to those desiring to join the Church in accordance with Article 5.2 the Pastor shall be free to baptise by immersion any believer who desires thus to confess the Lord Jesus.

10.2 The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly. Attendance shall be open to all who love the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

BUSINESS MEETINGS 11.1 Annual Business Meeting

- 11.1.1 The Church business year shall end on 31 December. The Annual Business Meeting shall be held as soon as possible thereafter, but not later than the last day of February.
- 11.1.2 Reports and audited financial statements shall be submitted by the Secretary and Treasurer respectively.
- 11.1.3 Reports shall be submitted by all departments of the Church.
- 11.1.4 The election of Elders and Deacons shall take place.
- 11.1.5 The Agenda shall be made available to all members two weeks prior to the meeting.

11.2 Ordinary Business Meetings

- 11.2.1 An Ordinary Business Meeting shall be held in June to deal with matters of which notice has been given.

11.2.2 Other business meetings may be held during the year at the initiative of the Leadership Team.

11.2.3 The Agenda shall be made available to members two weeks prior to the meeting.

11.3 Special Business Meeting

11.3.1 Special Business Meetings shall be convened -

11.3.1.1 As required in this Constitution.

11.3.1.2 On the initiative of the Leadership Team

11.3.1.3 Upon written request of at least 10 members (stating the purpose), and within one month of such request. 11.3.2 Notice of a Special Business Meeting shall be made available to all members two weeks prior to the meeting, clearly specifying the matters to be submitted for consideration.

11.4 Quorum

11.4.1 25% of the total membership, or 20 members, whichever is the greater shall constitute a Quorum for meeting purposes.

11.5 Notice of Meetings

11.5.1 Notice of all Business Meetings shall be given at all services on the Sunday preceding the date of the meeting and as required by 11.1.4, 11.2.3 and 11.3.2.

11.5.2 The non-receipt of the notice as required by the above shall not invalidate the proceedings of the meeting.

11.6 Voting

11.6.1 Only members who have attained the age of 18 years shall be entitled to vote.

11.6.2 Unless otherwise required elsewhere in this Constitution, all matters shall be decided by the majority vote of those present.

11.6.3 Voting shall be by show of hands unless:

11.6.3.1 Otherwise required elsewhere in this Constitution.

11.6.3.2 The majority of those present request a ballot

11.6.4 There shall be no postal or proxy voting.

CHAIRMAN

12.1 The Chairman of any Business Meeting or Leadership Team meeting shall be decided upon by the Leadership Team.

12.2 The Chairman shall have a deliberative and a casting vote.

12.3 If 33% of members present and entitled to vote object to any matter brought up without proper prior notice, the Chairman shall rule that it be referred to a future Business Meeting.

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

13.1 The Pastor or Pastors, together with Deacons and Elders, shall constitute the Leadership Team.

13.2 The Leadership Team shall act as generally or specifically directed by the Church in Business Meeting assembled, and shall be accountable to the Church for all tasks delegated to it and for the proper administration of all Church funds.

13.3 The Leadership Team shall meet at least once monthly if possible.

13.4 70% of the Leadership Team shall constitute a Quorum.

13.5 At its first meeting after the Annual Business Meeting, the Leadership Team shall appoint from its own number a Secretary and Treasurer, these appointments to be confirmed at the next Business Meeting.

DEACONS / DEACONESSES

14.1 The Church may from its membership elect Deacons / Deaconesses - who, at the time of election, will be:

14.1.1 over 18 years of age,

14.1.2 in membership not less than six months.

14.2 The number of Deacons / Deaconesses shall not be less than four.

14.3 Should the number of Deacons / Deaconesses be less than required by Clause 14.2, the meeting shall appoint and authorise any other person or persons to comply with the requirements.

14.4 A Deacon / Deaconess shall be elected preferably, but not necessarily with responsibility for a specific ministry and shall hold office for two years but shall be eligible for re-election. They may serve for two consecutive terms, after which there shall be a lapse of one year before they may be considered for reelection.

14.5 Nomination for the office of Deacon / Deaconess shall be submitted in writing to the Church Secretary duly signed by the nominee, proposer and seconder not later than eight days prior to the date of the meeting when the election shall take place.

- 14.6 The names of all nominees shall be made known at each service on the Sunday prior to the date of the meeting at which the election shall take place.
- 14.7 In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Deacon / Deaconess such vacancy may be filled in the aforesaid manner at a Business Meeting, but only for the unexpired period of the previous incumbent's term of office.
- 14.8 Voting shall be by ballot.
- 14.9 Only nominees receiving at least 70% the votes of members present shall be declared elected to fill any vacancies.

ELDERS

- 15.1 The Church may, from time to time, appoint to the office of Elder such man/men recognised as gifted by the Holy Spirit for this office, and who satisfy the requirements as detailed in Timothy and Titus.
- 15.2 When an appointment becomes necessary the procedure shall be as follows:
- 15.2.1 The leadership team shall recommend a name/s to the church at its Annual Business Meeting or any Special Business Meeting.
- 15.3 The name/s of the person/s to be recommended shall be made known the time notice of the meeting is given, the nominees' prior consent having been obtained.
- 15.4 The initial appointments of each recommended candidate shall be subject to a two thirds majority favourable ballot vote of the members present.
- 15.5 Each elected Elder may hold office for three consecutive years, and is eligible for re-election. They may serve for two consecutive terms, after which there shall be a lapse of one year before they may be considered for re-election.
- 15.6 Elders shall be members of the Leadership Team.
- 15.7 The number of Elders deemed desirable shall be decided from time to time at a Business meeting on the recommendation of the Leadership Team.
- 15.8 The Elders shall consult with and assist the Pastor/s in the caring ministry and spiritual well being of the church.

THE PASTORATE

- 16.1 The choice and appointment of a Pastor/Pastors is vested in the membership of the Church.
- 16.2 When an appointment becomes necessary the procedure shall be as follows:-

- 16.2.1 A Business Meeting shall appoint not less than four members to serve with the Leadership Team as a Call Committee.
- 16.2.2 The Committee shall recommend only one name to any Special Business Meeting.
- 16.2.3 The invitation shall be contingent upon the following:
 - 16.2.3.1 At least 75% of members present shall vote in favour by ballot.
 - 16.2.3.2 The prospective Pastor shall have been baptised by immersion and shall accept in writing this Constitution, the church's vision statement and core values.
 - 16.2.3.3 The Pastor shall become a member of the Church upon assuming the Pastorate.
 - 16.2.3.4 Any engagement between the Church and the Pastor shall be terminable by three months notice on either side, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon.
 - 16.2.3.5 The Pastor's name must be on one of the Ministerial lists of the BU.

DEPARTMENTS

- 17.1 The appointed leaders of all departments shall be Church members.
- 17.2 Each department shall appoint its own committee.
- 17.3 The appointment of each Departmental leader shall be ratified at a General Business Meeting

FINANCE

- 18.1 The Church shall be supported by voluntary giving.
- 18.2 The methods of voluntary giving shall be decided upon by the Leadership Team.
- 18.3 Proper books of account shall be maintained.
- 18.4 The members shall appoint annually a competent person or persons who shall examine the Church securities, audit the accounts and financial records of the Church and furnish a report thereon to the members in writing, not less than 14 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting (see 11.1.2). Such report shall refer to the existence of the securities and the adequacy of the records maintained and shall express an opinion on the accuracy of the accounts presented.

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

19.1 The Church shall have power to buy, sell, donate, let or hire, exchange, transfer, receive by way of donation or otherwise movable and immovable property and to invest its funds in Government or Municipal stock, mortgage bonds, or on fixed deposit or otherwise in banks, post offices, building societies or approved organisations and shall further have power to borrow money with or without security in such manner as the Church shall think fit, negotiate loans from bankers or others by overdraft or otherwise and by passing mortgage and notarial bonds for registration with the proper authorities, and to open and operate upon banking accounts and to make, draw, accept, discount, execute and issue promissory notes, bills of exchange and other negotiable and transferable instruments.

IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

- 20.1 All immovable property acquired by the Church in any manner shall be registered in the name of the Trustees of the Church.
- 20.2 The Trustees of the BU of Southern Africa shall be the Trustees of the Church. They shall act as required by resolution of a Business Meeting.
- 20.3 All acquisitions of immovable property in any manner shall require the approval of a Business Meeting, due notice having been given of the proposed transaction, and approved by a 70% majority of the members present.
- 20.4 Any proposal to sell, donate, exchange, mortgage, hypothecate, or otherwise alienate or encumber any immovable property shall have the prior approval of a Special Business Meeting by a 70% majority vote of the members present.

SALE OF PROPERTY

- 21.1 The proceeds derived from the sale or other disposal of any property of the Church shall be used in such manner as the Church may deem best fitted to secure the furtherance of its objects.

INDEMNITY

- 22.1 The Trustees and all Officers of the Church shall be fully indemnified against all actions, costs, charges, losses, damages and expenses which they or any of them shall or may incur in the execution of their duties, except such as they shall incur by their own wrongful action done intentionally or with gross negligence.

DISSOLUTION

- 23.1 The dissolution of the Church may be effected by a 75% majority vote of members present at a Special Business Meeting.
- 23.2 In the event of 23.1 such meeting shall thereupon authorise the Leadership Team to take the necessary steps to wind up the affairs of the Church, and in particular to transfer the immovable property in due and proper form to the Baptist Union - (see 23.4).
- 23.3 In the event of the Church at any time ceasing to exist, due to the lack of membership and interest all acquired property or rights to property at such time shall *ipso facto* vest in and become the property of the BU which shall hold, administer or deal with it in such manner as the said Union through its Leadership Team may deem best fitted to secure the objects in Clause 3.
- 23.4 The Church shall be deemed to have ceased to exist -
- 23.4.1 when dissolution shall have been resolved in accordance with 23.1;
- 23.4.2 when public worship shall have been discontinued for a consecutive period of six calendar months;
- 23.4.3 when the number of members whose names and full addresses are known, has dropped to below 10.

MODIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 24.1 Any proposal to change this Constitution may be submitted by way of Notice of Motion to any Business Meeting.
- 24.2 Such Notice of Motion shall be circulated to all members for consideration at a Special Business Meeting convened not less than three months after the Business Meeting referred to in 24.1.
- 24.3 Proposed changes shall require the approval of 70% of the members present at the meeting with the reservation that the number so present shall be not less than ten, regardless of the number of members on the membership roll.
- 24.4 In that approval of this Constitution by the Executive of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, is a pre-requisite to membership of such Union, any amendment of this Constitution or any replacement thereof, shall likewise be subject to the approval of such Executive as a condition of continuing membership.
- 24.5 Notwithstanding anything to the contrary hereinbefore contained, no modification of this Constitution may be made which has the effect directly or indirectly of modifying the principle outlined in Clause 2 (BU Membership and Clause 3.1 (the nature of the Church) and Clause 8.1 (final authority resting with membership).

24.6 It shall be understood that Clause 3.1, 8.1 and 24.6 are entrenched, and may not be revoked, amended or amplified.

24.7 The Statement on Baptist Principles contained in Clause 4.2 is an entrenched provision and may not be revoked or amended save on a 90% majority vote of members present and entitled to vote at a duly constituted special Church meeting of which at least three months notice has been given.

RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES/AREA OF CONCERN

25.1 In the unhappy event of serious dispute or anxious concern:

- 1) As between a group or groups of members and the remaining membership, or
- 2) As between the Pastor and the whole membership or a group or groups within that membership, or
- 3) As between a Pastor and his Leadership Team, or 4) As between the Leadership Team and the membership, or 5) As between Pastor and Pastor.

which in the opinion of any one of the disputants abovementioned is impinging on the effective ministry of the Church or is seriously threatening its unity, it shall be the right and privilege of any such Pastor or of any four members of the Leadership Team or of any ten Church members to call for a special meeting of the Leadership Team with a view to resolving the differences. At such a meeting, three persons who are not members of the Church shall be present, namely the Area Co-ordinator of the Association with which the Church is in membership, the Confidential Consultant of such Association and one other person nominated by the local Territorial Association acting through its Executive. If the Area Co-ordinator is also the Confidential Consultant of the Association or if there be no Area Co-ordinator or no Confidential Consultant, the Executive of the Territorial Association shall nominate a substitute or substitutes in order to ensure that there are three representatives in attendance who are not members of the Church. The Area Co-ordinator, if available, shall serve as Chairman of the meeting or meetings with power to delegate this office to either of his two colleagues.

25.2 It shall be the obligation of the disputants and of the Church membership as a whole to afford the Church Leadership Team and the three Association representatives when so invoked, every reasonable opportunity to assist in bringing about a God-honouring solution. The Association representatives may, if they so elect, submit a written report with appropriate recommendations.

25.3 In the unlikely event of these deliberations still not resulting in any satisfactory resolution of the differences or the areas of concern the assistance of the Baptist

Union of Southern Africa shall be sought. It shall likewise be the obligations of the disputants and of the Church membership as a whole to afford the Baptist Union (including its Executive and/or its Officers) when so invoked, the same opportunity as is envisaged in 25.2 above. The Baptist Union representatives, like those of the Association, may also if they so elect submit a written report with appropriate recommendations.

25.4 Should the local Territorial Association acting through its Executive or alternatively should the Baptist Union acting either through its Executive or through its Officers seek of its own volition and on its own initiative to assist in the circumstances of dispute envisaged in 25.1 above, but in the absence of formal request, the Church shall give due and proper consideration to such an approach.

ON BEHALF OF THE CHURCH _____

DATE APPROVED BY CHURCH 18 May 2003

DATE OF FIRST AMENDMENT _____