

The Constitution
for
Witbank Baptist Church



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Preface

A constitution is drawn up in order that the Church may be governed and administered in a responsible manner in the light of Biblical instruction. This preface is supported by the following Scriptural statements:

- The Lord Jesus Christ, as head of the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23), calls to Himself out of the world (Eph. 1:4), those who have been given to Him by His Father (John 6:44; 17:2), that they might live in His sight, giving to Him the love and obedience prescribed by Him in the Word (Rom. 8:29-30).
- He encourages those He calls to gather in local churches (Heb. 10: 24-25; 1 Cor. 12: 12-13; Rom. 12: 4-5).
- All believers are therefore to associate themselves with local churches, when and where they have the opportunity to do so.
- All who enjoy the privileges of church fellowship must also subject themselves to the discipline and government of the church in accordance with the rule of Christ (Matt. 18:15-20; Heb. 13: 17; 1 Pet.5:5).

To formalise the Biblical principles governing church life, to give a clear statement of belief and practice and to provide guidelines for good order in the church, the following constitution has been drawn up.

1. Name, Location and Theological Persuasion

The name of this church shall be WITBANK BAPTIST CHURCH. The church is located at 57 Nita Street, Del Judor, Ext. 4, Emalaheni (Witbank), South Africa.

For the rest of this document WITBANK BAPTIST CHURCH will be referred to as “WBC” or “this church” or “the church”.

The church strives to uphold reformed theology.

Reformed Theology gets its name from the sixteenth century Protestant reformation, with its theology solidly based on the Bible itself. To be reformed includes belief in the Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God; belief that God is sovereign in this world; that He has elected His people to salvation and will effectually call them in His time through evangelism and the preaching of the true gospel; that all worship must be in accordance with Scripture; and that the lives of believers as individuals, family members, members of the State and members of the Christian church, must be increasingly conformed to the standard of God’s Word.

2. Cooperating with the Wider Body of Christ

The church will associate with other doctrinally likeminded churches to build up the wider body of Christ. (Eph. 4:4)

- The church is a member of the Baptist Northern Association of churches.
- The church will pursue association with the Sola 5 Churches.
- Witbank Baptist church will review its associations, should the association move away from a Biblical orthodox position.

3. Legal Status

This church is a voluntary association with full legal personality, with perpetual succession and the power to hold property in its own name, distinct from its members and capable of being sued and suing in its own name.

4. Purpose

This church is constituted for exclusively religious purposes. Its objectives include the preaching of the Gospel, ministering to its members, and related activities. Recognising the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible, this church is committed to the following commission as its purpose statement:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mat 28:18-20 ESV)

5. Declaration of Belief

The church will have two statements of faith.

One will be the basic requirement that members have to believe to be a member of the church.

Entitled: **What we believe (Members)**

The other will be the basic requirement that an elder need to believe to be an elder. The statement of faith directed towards the elders will be what will be taught at the church. Entitled:

What we believe (elders)

The difference between these statements of faith allows for the process of growth towards a greater understanding of the Scriptures.

What follows is a the statement of faith members of the church would need to believe in order to be a member of this church..

What we believe (Members)

5.1. The Bible

The Bible is inspired by God, is complete and consists of 66 books (2 Pet. 1:20-21). It is all sufficient, is without error and is the final authority on all matters of faith and conduct (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

5.2. God

There is one living and true God (Deut. 6:4), existing in three persons as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all equal but distinct (2 Cor. 13:14). As Creator, God is author and sustainer of all (Eph. 3:9).

5.3. God the Father

God as Father is the first person of the Trinity, the author of our salvation, having decreed this for His own glory before the foundation of the earth (Eph. 1:4-6). He saves from sin all that come to Him through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:23). He adopts these as His own and becomes, upon adoption, Father to them (John 1:12-13).

5.4. God the Son

Jesus Christ is God's Son and came to earth (Joh 3:16) fully God (John 10:30) and fully man (Phil. 2:5-8). He was born of a virgin (Is. 7:14), led a sinless life (Heb. 6:5), died on the cross (Phil 2:8), was buried (Matt 27:60), was raised up after three days (1 Cor. 15:4) and ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9) from where He will return again to establish His Kingdom (Rev. 20).

5.5. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit came from the Father and Son (John 14:25-26) to convict the world of sin (John 16:7-9). He indwells every believer in Christ (Rom. 8:9) and is an enduring Helper (John 15:26), Teacher and Guide (John 16:13).

5.6. Angels, Satan, Demons

Angels were created to serve and worship God (Heb. 1:6). Satan and demons sinned and were judged by God (Is. 14:12-17) and will ultimately be punished in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

5.7. Man and Sin

Man was created by God (Gen. 2:7), free of sin (Gen. 1:31) and in His likeness (Gen. 1:27). God's intention was that man should glorify Him and enjoy His fellowship (Col. 1:16). Adam's sin of disobedience against God brought upon him the penalty of spiritual and physical death (Gen. 3:1-19). As a consequence, all men are born with a sinful nature (Rom. 3:9-18) and are sinners by choice (Rom. 5:10-12) and are therefore under condemnation. God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished (John 3:36).

5.8. Salvation

With no ability to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost (Eph. 2:8-9). His salvation is wholly of God's grace (Rom. 5:8). Those who repent and trust in Christ as Lord and Saviour are delivered from condemnation and receive eternal life through His death on the cross (Act 2:38). All true saints are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) and will ultimately persevere in the faith (Jude 1:24-25).

5.9. Sanctification

Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:1-22).

5.10. Future Things

Christ will personally and visibly return to earth (1 Thess. 4:16) and establish His kingdom (Rev. 20). There will be a resurrection of the body of both the just (1 Cor. 15:51-57) and the unjust, as well as a final judgment of all (Rev. 20:11-15), eternal blessedness of the righteous in heaven with God (John 10:28) and the endless suffering of the wicked (1 Thess. 1:9).

5.11. God's Church

At salvation believers are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the universal church, the bride of Christ, of which Christ is the head (1 Cor. 12:12-13). The local church is a manifestation of the universal church, autonomous and free from external authority and control (1 Pet. 5:1-5). The purpose of the church is to glorify Christ by teaching, worshipping, fellowshiping and evangelising.

5.12. Ordinances

Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Baptism is an act of obedience and a sign of personal repentance, faith, regeneration (Rom. 6:1-11) and the basic foundational truths of the gospel. Believers are baptised by full immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Acts 8:36-39) as a confession of identification with Christ in burial and resurrection. Baptism may be performed by any suitable believer appointed by the elders.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for believers to commemorate His death until He returns (1 Cor. 11:23-26). The Lord's Supper is the partaking of bread and wine (or red grape juice) as symbolic of the Saviour's body and shed blood in remembrance of His sacrificial death until His return. This ordinance shall be observed regularly and all true believers may participate.

5.13. Marriage

God has sanctioned marriage only between one man and one woman; therefore, we believe that the only sexual relationship ordained by God and acceptable in the Bible is a consensual sexual relationship between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behaviour is an inherent requirement for membership of the church.

The above Declaration of Belief shall be agreed to and signed by all the members of the Witbank Baptist Church

Each applicant for membership shall be given a copy of the Declaration of Belief and the following certificate should be signed and dated by each applicant:

I, the undersigned, freely and voluntarily subscribe to the basic principles set out in this Declaration of Belief, as well as the accepted Constitution of the Witbank Baptist Church, and understand and consent to the fact that should I violate such principles, I may be required by the leadership to either accept its counsel and discipline or forfeit my membership of Witbank Baptist Church.

6. The church subscribes in general to:

- The church will subscribe to biblical orthodox(right belief based on solid exegesis of the Scriptures) statements of faith, and will amend subscribing to these statements of faith should they no longer line up with the Scriptures .
- The 2017 Statement of Belief as adopted at the Baptist Northern Association Assembly held at Pretoria Central Baptist Church on 20 May 2019.
<http://www.baptistnorthernassociation.org.za/what-we-believe/>
- The SOLA 5 confession of faith, their core values and the SOLA 5 Constitution adopted 30 September 2005. <https://sola5.org/confession/>

The Chicago statement on Biblical Inerrancy produced at an international Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago in the fall of 1978.

https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdfOr

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>

7. Statement of Baptist Principles

Baptist principles define what distinguishes the church from other denominations.

Witbank Baptist Church subscribes to these principles.

The **DIRECT LORDSHIP OF CHRIST** over every believer and over the local church. By this we understand that Christ exercises His authority over the believer and the local church directly, without delegating it to another.

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 observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.

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.

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 at constituted church meetings, subject to the direct Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture, which is the highest court of authority for the local church.

The **PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

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.

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.

8. Witbank Baptist Church's distinctions

These define what distinguishes Witbank Baptist Church from other Baptist churches.

8.1. Sovereignty of God

We believe God orders everything, rules over everything and controls everything. (Rom 11:36) Jesus is indeed the head of this church.

8.2. Personal holiness

Being a follower of Jesus requires you to live in a Christlike manner of life. The process towards maturity is called sanctification and is accomplished through discipleship. WBC is a church that emphasises in practical ways how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

8.3. High view of Scripture

Witbank Baptist Church views the Bible as verbally and plenary inspired by God (as if spoken by God) inerrant, infallible, authoritative and sufficient for salvation and sanctification in every area of life, in church governance and practices. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:21, Ps. 19, John 17:17)

8.4. Expository preaching and teaching.

WBC is a church that emphasizes expository preaching. This means that preachers and teachers will approach Scripture from a literal, grammatical, historical approach. They will then seek to explain what the author's original intention was of the passage and seek to help to apply the passage to the life of the church member.

We preach systematically through various books of the Bible with the intent of explaining what God's Word means in its original context, and applying it appropriately to our modern context.

8.5. Biblical eldership

We believe that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Lord, the head of the church and the primary model and focus for everything we do.

We believe that the Biblical model for church leadership is to have a **plurality** (Tit. 1:5; Jam. 5:14; 1Pet. 5:1; Acts 14:23, 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17 - note the plurality mentioned) of Biblically qualified elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9) and deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13). The office of elder is primarily one of spiritual oversight, leading and feeding the flock.

The Bible uses various terms to describe the same office. These include overseer, elder, and pastor. (1 Pet. 5:1-2 uses all three terms).

These explain various roles for the same office.

Pastors care, nurture, protect (against false teachings) and feed (teach and preach God's word) those under his care.

Elders serve as managers and caretakers of the church (1 Tim. 3:5).

As overseers they determine church policy, oversee the church, ordain others, rule, teach, preach, exhort and refute and act as shepherd, setting an example for all. (Acts 15:22, 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2, 4:4, 5:17; 1Thess. 5:12; Tit. 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Elders in summary focus on teaching, prayer and the spiritual condition of church members.

Deacons focus primarily on the practical needs of church members.

8.6. Cessationism

We hold to a cessationist position regarding the miraculous sign gifts.

Cessationism **does not** mean:

- That the Holy Spirit has ceased doing His work. The Holy Spirit continues to work in and through the life of true believers.

- That we hold to a deist (The belief that God is distant, that He created the universe but left it to run its own course) position.

Cessationism believes:

- That the Holy Spirit no longer sovereignly gives individual believers the miraculous spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, prophesy and healing as listed in Scripture.
- Its not part of His plan or pattern to distribute miraculous gifts to Believers today as He did in the time of the apostles.

Why do we subscribe to a position of cessationism?

1. Miracles appeared mainly in three distinct periods in the Scripture. They happened with Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha and during the time of Christ and the Apostles
2. The purpose of miracles was to affirm the credentials of God's divine appointed messengers. (Ex 6:28-7:2, 4:15-16, 4:1-5)
3. There was a definite end to the gift of Apostleship, which at least implies a difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in the times of the Apostles and today.
4. The New Testament identifies the Apostles and prophets as the foundation upon which the church was laid. (Eph 2:29-20). Since the foundation has been laid it stand to reason their work was complete and the need for sign gifts as well
5. Church history shows that even before the completion of the Canon, there was a decline in the sign gifts.
6. Scripture is sufficient for everything we need for life and godliness.
7. There are strict rules that need to be in place when practicing some of the miraculous gifts.

Please read through the **Case for Cessationism** if you want more information.

8.7. Complementarianism

We hold the view that men and women are equal before God, yet hold different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, religious leadership, and elsewhere. (Eph. 5:22-30; Gen. 2:18, 23-24)

8.8. Reformed in doctrine

We hold to what is commonly termed TULIP.

- Total depravity
- Unconditional election
- Limited atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints

8.9. Eschatology

We hold to a pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture with regard to end time theology. (1 Thess. 4:17-18; Zach. 12-14; Rom. 11).

For further explanation on the terms refer to the article on **Eschatology**

8.10. Missions

We see Missions as a subset of our outreach element of the church which includes local evangelism and missions. Our desire is to see people from every tongue, tribe and nation become disciples of Jesus Christ.

We define missions as follows:

Missions refers to the sending out of recognized and qualified persons, from the local church, to regions or cultures beyond its immediate influence, with a view to strengthening or establishing other local churches.

8.11. Evangelism

The 2nd part of outreach of the church involves evangelism. As a church we encourage believers to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a **lifestyle**. We do this through training, modelling, providing evangelistic material, having corporate outreach events and even teaching about it.

We define evangelism as:

Evangelism is the persuasive proclamation of the Gospel which calls unbelievers to repent and believe in Christ. It is the responsibility of every believer.

Missions will include evangelism, but not be limited to it.

9. Membership

9.1. Active Membership

Active membership in Witbank Baptist Church shall be open to all persons who make a credible confession of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and who have been baptised some time subsequent to that personal confession of faith.

The membership shall consist of:

9.1.1. Those whose names were in the church register of members on (Date _____: at the time of the adoption of this constitution) and have not been removed from the membership role.

9.1.2. These people must have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

9.1.3. These people have publicly professed faith through baptism by immersion,

9.1.4. They have accepted this constitution and the doctrinal statement of faith of Witbank Baptist Church in writing.

9.2. Application for Membership

9.2.1 All applications for church membership must be made to one of the elders. The applicant must fill out an application form and read the doctrinal statement of the church and the constitution

9.2.2. Potential members need to have had a meeting with either an elder or two members of the outreach team in which the Gospel was discussed with the person.

9.2.3 Potential members need to give a clear, credible profession of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord and have been baptised with believer's baptism of immersion.

9.2.4. Potential members must have a **personal interview** with one of the elders.

9.2.5. Potential members must attend the membership classes (Discovery Class) either before becoming a member or as soon as possible after being admitted into membership.

9.2.6. Members who have never attended the membership class must attend, when possible, a membership class.

9.3. Denial of Membership

If upon review of the person's application and a personal interview, the elders determine that the applicant does not confess Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Saviour, or that there is a lack of evidence of a godly lifestyle, membership shall be denied.

Members on the membership role, who cannot give a clear profession of faith in Christ's death and resurrection, will be removed from the membership role.

9.4. Admission of Applicants

Applicants admitted to membership shall, if possible, present themselves at a worship service designated by the elders for the purpose of publicly affirming their membership commitment, and for the public acknowledgement by the church of their membership.

The church shall maintain two membership rolls:

- The main church rolls for active members
- The supplementary church roll for members no longer active in the Witbank Baptist Church.

The names of members on the supplementary church roll shall not be included in official statistics.

9.5. Removal from Membership Roll

9.5.1. Main church roll:

Any active member who is absent from services for a continuous period of 3 months without notice, will be placed on the supplementary church roll.

Members are responsible to inform the church leadership if they foresee prolonged absence from the church.

Members on the membership role, who cannot give a clear profession of faith in Christ's death and resurrection and show no evidence of salvation, will be removed from the membership role.

Members in good standing who relocate to another church can request a letter of recommendation from the elder and will subsequently be removed from the church rolls.

9.5.2. Supplementary church roll:

9.5.2.1. A member on the supplementary church roll who does not attend the services of this church for a further 9 months (3 months + 9 months = 1 year) without plausible reason or excuse, can be removed from the supplementary roll at the discretion of the elders.

9.5.2.1. A letter will be sent to all persons on the supplementary church roll one month before the annual general meeting, reminding them of their name being on this roll and asking whether they wish their name to remain there.

9.5.2.2. The church shall be notified at the annual general meeting of all responses to this letter.

9.5.2.3. Members whose names are on the supplementary roll may be transferred to the main roll if the member begins to attend services again on a regular basis.

Changes to the membership rolls will be announced at any official church meetings.

9.6. Responsibilities of Members

Members shall seek to grow in godliness and to exercise fully their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of the church body, and shall submit to the loving rule of the elders (Hebrews 13:17).

Members shall be expected to support the ministry and maintain the fellowship of the church. They are to pursue keeping the **membership covenant of Witbank Baptist church**.

9.7. The Membership Covenant of Witbank Baptist Church

Having, we trust, been brought by God's grace to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, having given up ourselves to Him, having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, relying on His grace, His Power, His Word and the Holy Spirit focussed on Christ and understanding our own weaknesses and sinfulness in faith, we solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other:

1. *We* will endeavour to love the Lord with all our heart, mind and soul. (Mt 22:37-39)
2. *We* will surrender ourselves totally to Jesus, living a life of self-denial and complete surrender to Him. (Rom 12:1)
3. *We* will endeavour not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. (Rom 12:2)
4. *We* will remember that, we have been united in Christ's death and resurrection and endeavour to put off the old manner of life and put on the Christ-like manner of life. (Eph 4:22-24)

5. *We* will endeavour to have a humble attitude. (Rom 12:3, Phil 2:3-5)
6. *We* will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together and remember that membership to the body is not optional for a believer. (Heb 10:24-25)
7. *We* will remember that we are members of one another and have a vital part to play in the body. (Rom 12:5)
8. *We* will seek to be equipped so as to build up the body of Christ. (Eph 4:12-16)
9. *We* will endeavour to use our gifts to build up the body in unity of faith and maturity in Christ-likeness. (Rom 12:6-8)
10. *We* will endeavour to love one another as Christ loved us. (John 13:34-35)
11. *We* will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require. (Rom 12:9-10, 1 Thess 5:14)
12. *We* will not neglect to pray for ourselves and others. (1 Tim 2:1)
13. *We* will endeavour to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends. (Eph 6:4)
14. *We* will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavour with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows. (Gal 6:2)
15. *We* will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.
16. *We* will contribute cheerfully and regularly support the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations. (2 Cor 9:6-8)
17. *We* will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen

Modified from *The Deliberate Church* by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander – p63

9.8. Voting Privileges

Membership in this church shall entitle the member who is on the **main church roll and have passed their eighteenth birthday** to vote at meetings of the **members on those matters submitted** to the church membership by the elders.

Members on the inactive supplementary church roll may not vote at a church meeting

9.9. Privileges of church members

As a church member you have the privilege of:

- people praying for you.
- of mutual accountability by the fellow members and church leadership
- church restoration (Church discipline)
- of being equipped by the elders to serve
- of experiencing the blessing of church family hospitality and the practice of one another's
- of having Biblical counsel from a trained counsellor
- of mutual encouragement to love more and do-good deeds
- of serving in an official capacity under the discretion of the leadership team
- of having the opportunity to obey all the commands Jesus instructed believers to obey, that relate to the relationships within a local church body
- of being disciplined in Christ-likeness
- of being shepherded, protected and led by the elders.
- of a funeral service

Members on the Supplementary roll may not

- Hold any church office
- Vote

By their absence, intentionally or unintentionally, they exclude themselves from many of the benefits mentioned above of an active church member.

9.10. Discipline or restoration of members

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Cor. 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Tim. 5:20), and to promote the spiritual

welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a Biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal. 6:1).

Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the elders, shall be lovingly subjected to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15- 18.

Before such dismissal, however (1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individually in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then

(2) the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then

(3) it shall be brought to the attention of the elders.

If the elders determine—after thorough investigation in accordance with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matt. 18:15-18, 1 Tim. 5:19, and Tit. 3:10—that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the elders shall inform the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly-scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance.

The erring individual shall be informed by email, or written communication that this public announcement will be made prior to the regularly-scheduled worship service where the announcement is given.

If the erring individual demonstrates Biblical repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly-scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then (4) he or she shall be

publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly-scheduled worship service.

The erring individual shall be informed of his or her public dismissal by email or written correspondence prior to the actual announcement of dismissal. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the elders, then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership.

Based upon 1 Cor 6:1-11, Paul questioned why believers were taking fellow believers to court concerning trivial cases. It makes no sense to lay the issue before men who have no standing in the church. This is described in vs 7 as a defeat. Its better to suffer the wrong.

The motive is that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Vs 9

Based on this principle we would strongly encourage members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church not to appeal or review to any court of law in this country, because of the dismissal, or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline.

Members, who are under discipline by the church, as defined in the previous paragraph, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action.

10. Meetings

10.1. Annual General Meeting (AGM)

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the church members shall be held as soon as possible before, on the date or thereafter but no later than the end of March.

Proposed AGM agenda items must be submitted in writing to the elders for approval not less than three days before the AGM.

At this AGM the members shall:

- Circulate an attendance register to be filled in by those present
- Ratify that the previous AGM Minutes are accepted as a true reflection of the previous AGM.
- Set apart and pray for the new elders and Deacons for the next year.

- Receive the elders' Reports and ministry reports if present.
- Receive the Financial Report and the proposed budget.
- Consider any changes to the Constitution that have been proposed.
- Any other business that the elders bring before the meeting.

10.2. Ordinary general meetings

Ordinary general meetings of the church may be held quarterly, or as often as the business of the Church deems necessary.

10.3. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the members may be called at any time by the elders.

10.4. Notices of Meetings

Notice (including the time and the place) of the AGM and ordinary general meetings shall be given from the pulpit for two successive Sundays prior to the meeting.

Notice (including the time and the place) of special meetings shall be given from the pulpit at least seven days prior to the meeting.

The time and place of the meetings shall be determined by the leadership team.

10.5. Quorum

At all business meetings of the members, whether the AGM, ordinary general meetings or special meetings, 50% of the members on the active membership role shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

11. Church Leadership (elders)

11.1. Powers

All the affairs of this church shall be exercised by, or under the direction of, the elders who are responsible to teach and give oversight to the congregation. The elders shall have the following powers in addition to any others granted in this Constitution:

(A) To select and remove all the officers, agents, elders, and employees of the church in a manner consistent with the law; prescribe appropriate duties for them; and fix the terms of their office or appointment, and the amount of their compensation.

(B) To make disbursements from the funds and properties of the church as required fulfilling the purposes of the church as stated in this Constitution.

(C) To conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the church, establishing such policies, practices, rules and regulations necessary for this purpose.

(D) To assist the Pastor-Teacher in the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and Communion.

(E) The elders do not have the power to incur debt. If in extraordinary circumstances the elders believe that limited debt is necessary to fulfil the purposes of this church as set forth in this Constitution, they shall call a special meeting of the members to detail the amount and purpose of the debt. Unanimous approval by the elders and a three-fourths majority vote of the members present at this special meeting shall be necessary for the church to incur debt in any instance.

(G) To carry on a business and apply any such profit that results from the business activity in which it may legally engage for the purpose of the church.

11.2. Number of elders

The leadership team should consist of Biblical qualified elder(s) only.

A fully fledged elders board is formed when you have at least three Biblically qualified elders.

The elders board is the **leadership team**.

In the case of no elders: then the leaders in training become the **interim** leadership team until a Biblical appointed elder(s) can be appointed.

The elders have the responsibility to teach, exercise oversight and shepherd the church members.

In the case where there are less than three elders, then those elder/s should consult on leadership decisions in line with the principle Pr 15:22

²² Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed. Proverbs 15:22 (ESV)

The elder/s **may** invite the leaders in training to form part of the leadership team.

11.3. Leaders in training

The elder can form a group of men that will be involved in leadership training.

These men will form a pseudo eldership team and may on invitation participate in the leadership team meetings.

This is done to grow and facilitate a potential eldership team.

They will train at least for a period of two years and cover all the material required after which some **may** or **may not** at be selected to be presented to the church a proposed elders and deacons.

Deacons will serve as deacons and elders as elders.

Church members in active service, not under church discipline **may be invited** for consultation and input especially when there is no elders board in leadership meetings.

Final decisions based upon prayerful consideration of all facts, Scriptural principles in a spirit of humility will be made by the leadership team.

In the case where there is no unity on a matter, wisdom may dictate to delay making the decision, until consultation has been made with other doctrinally and likeminded Pastors and then if need be, bringing the matter to the church to search the Scriptures and pray through the matter and give their input.

In the case not having an elders board and having a major decision, consultation should be made with other doctrinally and likeminded Pastors and, and then a proposal should be brought to the church to search the Scriptures and pray through the matter and give their input before a final decision is made.

Ultimately the final decision will remain with the leadership team.

11.4. Nomination, Selection and Tenure of Office

11.4.1. Training:

The elders shall teach once a year (or as otherwise deemed necessary) an elders' Training class for potential elders.

To be eligible to be nominated as an elder, one must:

- Subscribe to the doctrinal statement of faith for an elder called: “What we believe (elders)”
- Have successfully completed the class for potential elders
- Have passed an oral examination by the elders over the church’s elders’ doctrinal statement and practical ministry issues
- Fulfil the Biblical qualifications of an elder. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9)
- Have a desire to serve in that capacity.

11.4.2.Nomination:

Nominations for elders shall be requested from the church members once a year, **five Sundays prior to the AGM.**

Only those who have successfully completed the elders Training class (that year or in the past) are eligible for nomination.

11.4.3.Selection:

The elders shall review the list of nominees and add or remove names based on each nominee’s qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), desire to serve (1 Tim. 3:1), and successful completion of the elders’ Training class.

The list of nominees approved by the elders shall be announced to the congregation for three successive Sundays before the AGM. At the AGM the elder nominees shall be presented to the members for affirmation.

11.4.4.Tenure:

The newly affirmed elders shall assume their office immediately. Their service should be continues unless they become biblically disqualified, become physically incapacitated, voluntarily choose to step out of the office.

11.5. Vacancies

Any elder may resign effective upon giving a written notice to the Chairman of the elders, unless the notice specifies a later time for the effectiveness of the resignation. If the resignation is to take effect at some future time, a successor may be selected and appointed before that time.

The vacancy created by the resignation does not need to be filled before the next AGM as long as the **elder Board** consists of at least three remaining elders.

The appointment of a successor shall follow the process outlined in Article 6, Section 3 of this Constitution (except that confirmation by the members shall take place at a duly called special meeting rather than the AGM).

A **vacancy** in the elders shall be considered to exist in case of the death, resignation, or removal of any elder, **or if a need exists** and the specified limit is not exceeded.

11.6. Removal of elders

Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the elders.

11.7. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the elders shall be held as determined from time to time by the elders. However, the elders shall not meet less than ten times per year with due consideration to those who are indisposed with reasonable excuses.

11.8. Special elders meeting

Special elders' meetings may be called at any time by the leadership team. Special meetings can be held at any time if all the members of the elders have been personally contacted and not less than two-thirds can attend.

11.9. Quorum for elders' meetings

A majority (at least two thirds) of the elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum, except as otherwise provided in this Constitution.

Whenever the matter to be considered concerns 1) calling or dismissing a pastor, or 2) buying or selling real estate, a quorum shall consist of not less than two-thirds of the members of the elders.

11.10. Action without Meeting

Any action required or permitted by the elders may be taken without a meeting, if all members of the elders consent in writing to a resolution to such action; provided that the resolution is recorded and signed by all members of the elders at the first meeting of the elders following the adoption of the resolution.

11.11. Decisions of the elders

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration by unanimous vote in a spirit of humility, each member regarding the others before himself.

11.12. Fees and Compensation

elders who serve in a full-time capacity may receive a salary and reimbursements for ministry expenses according to the annual budget agreed to by the church.

Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from Witbank Baptist Church shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of that compensation.

All salaries, reimbursements and payments made need to comply with the legal requirements by SARS.

12. Church leadership (deacons)

12.1. Duties:

The deacons shall assist the elders in the practical needs of the saints and perform other duties as assigned by the elders.

Qualified wives of deacons will serve under the authority of their husbands as helpmate in ministry. They will not be allowed to teach or have authority over men in the church.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 1 Timothy 2:12 (ESV)

12.2. Training:

The elders shall teach training class (as deemed needed) for the training of potential Deacons and their qualified wives.

12.3. Nominations:

Nominations for deacons and qualified wives of deacons shall be requested from the church members once a year five Sundays prior to the AGM from a list of those who have duly and successfully completed the training class.

12.4. Selection:

The elders shall review the list of nominees and add or remove names based on each nominee's qualifications (1Tim. 3:8-13) and willingness to serve. The list of nominees approved by the elders shall be announced to the congregation for three successive Sundays before the AGM. At the AGM the list of Deacons and qualified wives of deacons nominees shall be submitted to the members for affirmation.

Affirmation means that the members agree that the nominees meets the biblical requirements to serve in the office. Indication of affirmation will take place by a favourable vote of two-thirds of a general meeting voting.

12.5. Tenure:

The newly affirmed deacons shall assume their office immediately. Their service will be continuing unless they become biblically disqualified, become physically incapacitated, voluntarily choose to step out of the office for a time period.

13. Officers

13.1. Officers

The officers of this church shall be a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman.

13.2. Election

The officers shall be chosen annually by the elders from the elders' own members. Each officer shall hold his office until he shall resign, be removed or become otherwise disqualified to serve, or until his successor shall be elected by the elders.

13.3. Removal and Resignation

Any officer may be removed, with legitimate Biblical reasons by the remainder of the elders at any time. Any officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chairman or the elders as a whole. Any such resignation shall take effect on the date of its receipt or at any later time specified therein.

13.4. Vacancies

A vacancy in any office shall be filled by the elders from among their own members.

13.5. Inability to Act

In the case of absence or inability to act of any officer, the elders may delegate the powers or duties of such officer to any other officer or elder the elders select.

13.6. The Chairman

The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the elders. Those meetings shall be conducted according to Scriptural principles such as those set forth in Philippians 2:2-8

The Chairman shall be responsible to inform the appropriate authorities (like the bank institutions) of any changes to this Constitution.

13.7. Vice-Chairman

In the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall perform all the duties of the Chairman.

13.8. Minutes

A designated member of the elders shall keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes. These minutes shall include:

- the time and place of elders meetings,
- the names of those present
- the discussions and decisions of the meeting.
- The minutes will be available to the elders at least one week before the next meeting.
- The minutes shall be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings at the subsequent meeting and signed by the Chairman.

14. The Pastor-Teacher

14.1. Election and Dismissal or Resignation

The Pastor-Teacher shall be selected by the elders, and that selection shall be affirmed by the members of this church, either at its AGM or a special meeting. He shall remain in office for an indefinite period of time, subject to the following reservations:

- (A) The elders reserve the right to dismiss the Pastor-Teacher upon giving him two month's written notice of their intention to dismiss him.
- (B) The Pastor-Teacher must give two month's written notice if he intends to resign.
- (C) The Pastor-Teacher's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Pastor-Teacher and the elders by unanimous and or mutual agreement provide otherwise. (See 13.3 above)

14.2. Duties

The Pastor-Teacher shall be responsible to the elders. He shall be responsible for general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church, especially through his studying and teaching ministry.

14.3. Settlement of Disputes

In any dispute arising between church members, elders and deacons, or employed staff pertaining to spiritual teaching or practices, church finances, or title to property purchased with church contributions, the dispute shall be resolved by the elders. A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding the others before himself.

15. Finances

15.1. Financial Reports

A designated member of the elders shall exercise oversight over the financial book keeping of the church. The elder may delegate the book keeping responsibility to a member of the church who has adequate book keeping abilities or select an accredited institution to perform such duties.

This person or persons:

- Should keep adequate and correct records of the accounts of the properties and business transactions of this church.
- They will arrange for the deposit of all funds and valuables in the name of this church with such depositories as may be designated by the elders.
- These depositories must be registered financial institutions.
- They shall arrange for the disbursement of funds of this church as ordered or empowered by the elders.
- They shall render to the Chairman or the elders whenever they request it an account of all the transactions and of the financial condition of this church.
- They shall make financial reports available to each regular elder's meeting and for the AGM.
- The church's financial records shall be audited each year by a professional external auditor appointed by the elders.

15.2. Financial Policy

The church will operate its financial activities with the principle of being transparent in all its practices.

The elders should develop a Financial Policy of Witbank Baptist Church.

This policy should be open to inspection by any person who so requests.

This Financial Policies of Witbank Baptist Church document should be reviewed annually by the elders and amended if necessary.

15.3. Financial transactions

The church, on approval by leadership team, shall have the 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 to guarantee the performance of contracts by any person or duly constituted church having objectives wholly or partly similar to the objectives of this church and to enter into guarantee or suretyships of every description.

15.4. Financial Year

The Financial Year of Witbank Baptist Church shall be from 01 March of each year to the end of February of the following year.

15.5. Sale of Property

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.

15.6. Assets Distribution and Rights

The church's income and property are not distributable to its members or office-bearers, except as reasonable compensation for services rendered or reimbursements towards budget approved ministry expenses. Members or office bearers of the church do not have rights over things that belong to the church solely by virtue of their being members or office-bearers.

15.7. Immovable Property

All immovable property acquired by the church in any manner shall be registered in the name of Witbank Baptist Church.

All acquisitions of immovable property in any manner shall require the approval of a general meeting, or a special meeting. 3 weeks' notice explaining the proposed transaction should be sent to the members on the active role.

Any proposal to sell, donate, exchange, mortgage, hypothecate (pledge money by law for a specific purpose) or otherwise alienate or encumber any movable property shall have the prior approval of the leadership team of which, 3 weeks due notice shall be conveyed to church members of the aforementioned intention or proposal.

16. Indemnity

16.1 The elders and deacons (who are the trustees) or members of the church shall be fully indemnified against all legal actions, costs, charges, losses, damages and or expenses which may arise in the execution of their duties, except in reference to 16.2

16.2 In the case where an elder, deacon or church member performs an action not ratified by the elders, or any wrongful action or gross negligence, they will be liable in their own private capacity.

17. Dissolution

The church may close down if the leadership team and at least two-thirds of the members present vote at a meeting convened for the purpose of considering such a matter, are in favour of closing down.

In the event of the dissolution of this church, the elders in consultation with the members shall decide how to wind up or dissolve the affairs of the church, they shall use the church's assets

to pay off all the debts of the church, and shall cause the assets of the church to be distributed to another, non-profit organisation with purposes similar to this church as defined in this Constitution. Remaining property or money left over after all the church's debts have been met shall not be paid to or given to members of the church.

18. Amendments to the Constitution

13.1 This Constitution may be changed by a resolution. Changes must be proposed by the leadership team on an Annual General Meeting or an ordinary General Meeting or a Special General Meeting.

13.2 A written notice must go out not less than fourteen (14) days before the meeting at which the changes to the Constitution are to be voted on. This written notice must indicate the proposed changes to the Constitution and the date and time of the meeting.

13.3 The quorum for an Annual General Meeting, ordinary General Meeting or Special General Meeting at which a vote to change the Constitution is taken must consist of not less than two-thirds of the current members on the main church roll of the church.

13.4 No proposal to modify or alter this Deed and Constitution shall be considered unless two thirds of the voting members present vote to pass it.

18.1. Record of Amendments to the constitution

Whenever this Constitution is amended or a new section or article is included, or removed it, it shall be recorded in the book of minutes with the original Constitution. If any section or article is repealed, the fact of its repeal with the date of the meeting at which the repeal was enacted and or written assent was filed shall be stated in the book of minutes.

We, the undersigned, being the officers of Witbank Baptist Church, hereby certify that the above Constitution was adopted by the elders, deacons and members of Witbank Baptist Church at Witbank at _____ on _____.

This Constitution shall be, as of the date of certification, hereunder, and as indicated above and duly adopted, by the authorised signatories herein attached below, as the spiritual, legal and only existing Constitution of this church. (WBC)

Elder

Consulting members of the leadership team

Consulting members of the leadership team

Church member

Church member