

4. FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS

4.1 Basic doctrines

The Incorporation Act sets out the following doctrines as the basis upon which the Association is founded:

- a) The sinfulness of man
- b) The Deity of Jesus Christ
- c) His atonement for the sin of man
- d) The need of the Holy Spirit for conversion
- e) The divine inspiration of the Scripture
- f) The resurrection of the dead
- g) Rewards and punishment in a future state
- h) The baptism of believers only by immersion.

4.2 Statement of beliefs

The Association has adopted the following as a statement of beliefs:

a) THE NATURE AND UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

There is one God Who is eternal personal Spirit. He is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness and love. God is Triune in essential being and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

b) THE DEITY AND HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Godhead is eternally one with God the Father of whose person and glory Jesus is the accurate expression. To become human He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, the nature of God and human nature, were united in one Person; truly God and truly human.

c) THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity is eternally one with the Father and the Son yet He is sent by Them to achieve the divine purpose in the world and in the Church.

d) THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy people of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

e) THE SINFULNESS OF PEOPLE

People were made in the image of God and for fellowship with God. By transgression of God's command humankind fell from fellowship with God and their nature was corrupted. As a consequence all people are spiritually dead under Satan's dominion

and control and subject to God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, apart from God's grace, people are helpless and hopeless.

f) CHRIST'S ATONEMENT FOR HUMAN SIN

In order to redeem people from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, Jesus Christ became human and died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute. By His resurrection, God's acceptance of His atoning death was demonstrated. This atonement is sufficient for the whole world, but effective only in those who receive it. The sinner is justified and reconciled to God, not through any personal merit, but solely on the basis of God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ received through faith.

g) THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God's provision of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their sinfulness, leads them to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and so brings them to spiritual birth as God's children and to fellowship in Christ. Working within the life of believers the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, witnesses to their relationship with God, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for effective service and produces graces for holy living.

h) THE CHURCH

The Church is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. All regenerate persons are members of the universal Church of God which takes local form wherever groups of believers unite for worship, fellowship and service in accordance with scriptural principles. All believers are called to a priestly ministry in the offering of spiritual sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. God calls individuals to positions of oversight and leadership or to special ministries. The Church recognises such by ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

i) THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY BY IMMERSION

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of a person's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In accordance with New Testament Scripture it should be administered only by total immersion which symbolises the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the remission of sins and the believer's dedication to God to live and walk in newness of life.

j) THE COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ instituted by Him to be celebrated with the elements of bread and wine by believers in Christ until the end of the age. It commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord's substitutionary death. The celebration of the ordinance expresses our fellowship with, and in, the Lord Jesus Christ as members of the Body of which He is the Head.

k) THE RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

At the end of this age, according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in His glory to the earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return.

l) THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

At the end of the age, there is to be a resurrection both of the righteous and the unrighteous. After death people's bodies return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God - the righteous to be with Him and the unrighteous to be reserved for the judgment.

m) REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN A FUTURE STATE

God has appointed a day of final judgment for the world. At that time Jesus Christ will judge every person and each will receive reward or punishment according to their deeds. Those judged righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

5. OBJECTS

The Association exists to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in word, deed and sign, through interdependent partnerships by:

5.1 promoting fellowship and cooperation among its members, affiliated churches and affiliated groups

5.2 facilitating the provision of resources for healthy churches, pastors and other church leaders

5.3 establishing and maintaining places of worship for effective ministry and mission

5.4 educating, training and accrediting Baptist ministers

5.5 fostering collaborative ministries, projects and missional activities in NSW, the ACT and globally

5.6 articulating a public voice on behalf of the Baptist movement in NSW, the ACT and globally, and

5.7 encouraging the public worship of God in accordance with the foundational beliefs.

6. VALUES

6.1 Core values

The core values of the Association include a common life that is:

a) Christ centred

- 1) enjoying a dynamic relationship with Jesus
- 2) relying on the Bible as foundational to shaping our understanding of Christ, our faith and the world
- 3) being led and empowered by the Spirit of Christ to live a life of worship
- 4) believing God is able to do more than we ask or imagine.

b) Mission shaped

- 1) committed to the announcement and demonstration of the universal reign of God through Christ
- 2) motivated by love for God and others
- 3) seeing people, communities and societies transformed
- 4) biasing our resources toward mission, both locally and globally.

c) Relationally committed

- 1) serving each other and working together, honouring the varied expressions of our faith and practice and our cultural diversity
- 2) actively promoting healthy unity through mutual collaboration, transparency and accountability
- 3) prioritising authentic relationships over programs and structures
- 4) honouring marriage as an institution created by God as the foundation for a lifelong faithful union of a man and a woman
- 5) actively working to establish and maintain just relationships and systems in our churches, communities and world.

d) People empowering

- 1) nurturing a disciple making culture that encourages, shapes and releases every person to glorify God in all of their life
- 2) investing strategically in the identification, development and empowerment of leaders
- 3) respecting our heritage whilst championing further innovation.

e) Partnership oriented

- 1) recognising and celebrating God at work both within and beyond our movement
- 2) partnering with like-minded bodies in the mission of God both locally and globally
- 3) evidenced by mutual respect, healthy dialogue, and where appropriate resource sharing and the development of common goals.

6.2 Operational values

The operational values of the Association include:

a) Good governance which -

- 1) reflects our core values
- 2) encourages empowerment and accountability of decision makers at appropriate levels
- 3) fosters a culture of transparency in its processes and reporting, and
- 4) minimises bureaucracy and permits decisions to be made in a timely manner.

b) Godly conduct in meetings, including a preference for:

- 1) decision making by consensus
- 2) personal conduct when speaking or delivering a report or statement characterised by respect and dignity, and
- 3) avoiding unnecessary repetition, unbecoming language and any breach of agreed procedures.

c) Effective conflict resolution, noting that:

- 1) ministering together in community may occasionally give rise to conflict; the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes in private or within the Christian community
- 2) conflict impacts upon the Association and its witness for Christ
- 3) biblically based dispute resolution procedures aim to bring glory to God, allow us to grow to be more like Christ, and assist us to resolve the dispute and achieve reconciliation.