



Simple Church Covenant

For Simple Churches affiliating with the Simple Church Network and the Baptist Association NSW & ACT

Preamble

The purpose of this document is to recognise a partnership between the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT (Association) and its individual Simple Churches as part of the Simple Church Network (SCN).

The Association is committed to seeing a variety in expression and models of church, including simple/organic churches, as we become a movement of a thousand healthy churches in a generation. Some of these churches will have the need and capacity to adopt a constitution, while others will not.

As a movement that champions both autonomy and interdependence, the Association recognises the value in creating an environment for the simple/organic churches to connect with one another and the broader Association. To do this, the Simple Church Network (SCN) was established in 2014.

What is a Simple Church?

A simple church is a faith community which seeks to focus on the basics of discipleship, worship, mission and fellowship with a minimum of structure & programming. Most simple churches would not have ministry 'programmes' as such, nor budgets, paid staff or property. They usually comprise up to around 20 people meeting either in a home, workplace or other available space. Rather than growing larger as a single group, they seek to multiply into a network of groups, with inter-relationship and support.

The needs of Simple Churches seem to fall into 3 broad categories:

1. Networking & relationship

To combat isolation there can be a greater desire for intentional networking than amongst the leaders of complex churches.

2. Ongoing equipping and support

Organic & simple churches are different to other churches. Their leaders need access to equipping and support opportunities that are tailored to their models, and access to support persons at a movement level that understand them and can help them continue to flourish and multiply. Appropriate leadership accountability is also a need.

3. Administrative

They don't have capacity to deal with much paperwork and have little appetite for the structures of membership, constitutions or formal affiliation. Their size (usually <20 people) works against these structures being viable anyway. However, they do need assistance with a range of administrative matters such as child protection, insurance, access to CCLI & minor finance matters.

Simple Church Network

The SCN is an Affiliated Group accountable to the Baptist Ministry Team (BMT) and therefore the Assembly Council. It shares the beliefs, purpose, values and vision of the Association.

The SCN works with the BMT to see unity across the breadth of church models which are part of the NSW/ACT Baptist Association. The existence of this network is to enable Simple Churches to connect more effectively with the wider Association, not encourage an alternative to it.

The SCN is intended for groups that are missionally driven and seeking to multiply – not a place for small ‘splinter’ groups without missional imperative. Commitment to this reality will be part of the annual affirmation of churches within the network (see below).

The SCN encourages the establishment of relationships and partnerships between Simple Churches and other churches within the Baptist Association, to encourage synergies between them.

The SCN champions missional health, networking and accountability, and a culture that empowers with a ‘viral’ rather than ‘top-down’ feel to it.

A church in the SCN receives:

- Relationship and connection with others in the network.
- Regular gatherings & relevant equipping.
- Accountability and belonging.
- Access to insurance cover through Baptist Insurance.
- Access to purchase discounted CCLI licences if needed.
- Assistance with advice re administrative matters, including Safe Spaces/child protection.
- The ability to make a wider missional contribution to the starting and support of other simple churches in the network.

Leadership and Accountability of the Simple Church Network

As representatives of an Affiliated Group, leaders and/or volunteers in Simple Churches are accountable to the BMT, and therefore Assembly Council. A Steering Group will bring leadership to the SCN. This group will be made up of simple church leaders endorsed by and accountable to BMT. At least 1 BMT team member will be part of this group.

Financial Partnership & ongoing involvement

It is recognised that financial commitment to the SCN by its participating churches will be necessary to enable its ongoing function, and to build commitment to the network. An annual contribution of \$350 is recommended for each participating Simple Church.

Simple Church Covenant

The partnership expressed in this document is between the

Simple Church Network (on behalf of the Baptist Association NSW/ACT)

and

it's partnered Simple Church

The document assumes a desire by both parties to develop a strategic partnership in the Gen1K goal of a thousand healthy churches by 2050.

In partnership with the BMT the SCN Steering Group will:

- Pray for the work of the Simple Church.
- Engage the Simple Church in the development of strategy and innovation of the Simple Church Network.
- Provide advice, training and ongoing support to the leadership of the Simple Church and their emerging leaders as they start new groups and Simple Churches.
- Assess potential leaders and assist in the formation of the team and Mission plan.
- Provide the governance, accountability and support structures for ministry and mission.

The Simple Church will:

- Pray for the churches in the Simple Church Network and the broader work of Baptists (churches and agencies) across NSW & ACT.
- Participate in the life of the Simple Church Network and other relevant events conducted by the Baptist Association (e.g. FORM).
- Proactively explore ways to reproduce leaders, groups and Simple Churches.
- Affirm the Association's statement of beliefs, vision and values.
- Provide a brief annual report on activities, including any finances, and advise the BMT of any activities that require protections.
- Communicate to the BMT and maintain a register of all leaders and volunteers.
- Commit a financial contribution to the Simple Church Network each year.

This Covenant will be reviewed yearly, operating from the 1st March in the year in which it was entered, for a period of one year. The Covenant requires agreement from a representative of the Simple Church and must be approved by the SCN Steering Group and Baptist Association Church Multiplication Team Leader.