



## SOUTH VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

***“Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won’t be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.” 1 Corinthians 1:10 NLT***

South Valley Baptist church recognises the Bible as the very Word of God to man. The elders and leaders of South Valley are committed to studying and teaching the Scriptures with diligence and authority. This is done so that the people of this church family can see the priority of coming to know God personally and obediently through the truths of His Word. This document reveals the conviction of our elders regarding the theological truths of the Bible to which our church family is committed. These are primary doctrines of the Christian faith and they reflect the heart of our teaching there at South Valley. All true believers are welcome to worship and fellowship with us, even if some of their beliefs and convictions differ. However, all who become members of this local church are to be in whole-hearted agreement with the distinctive beliefs and practices of the church.

### **The Scriptures**

We believe and teach that the Bible is supernaturally, plerarily and verbally inspired of God through the Holy Spirit, is inerrant and infallible in the original writings. They are of final authority in both faith and practice. We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God’s Word to man, without error in the whole or in the part. We believe and teach that there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, but there is only one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

**2 Tim 3:16; Ps 89:34; Heb 6:18; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16; Jn 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:7-15; 1Jn 2:20**

### **The True God**

We believe and teach there is only one true and living God. He is absolute in every aspect of His nature, perfect in attributes, holy in character, and the supreme Creator and Sustainer of Heaven and Earth. He is infinite in wisdom, marvellous in power, and amazing in love. He unites in Himself the Tri-unity. These three personal distinctions are: GOD...the Father, GOD...the Son, and GOD...the Holy Spirit, yet one in divine essence, being and nature.

**Ex 20:2-3; 1 Cor 8:6; Deut 4:6; Rev 4:11**

### **GOD...The Father**

We believe and teach that God the Father, the first person of the Tri-unity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace. As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler of the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. **Isa 46:9; Ps 145:8-9; 1 Cor 8:4; Ps 103:19; Rom 11:36**

### **GOD...The Son**

We believe and teach the Deity of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ possesses all of the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, coeternal, and shares the same substance as the Father. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and lived a sinless life. He is truly God and truly man in indivisible oneness. **Jn 1: 1, 2, 14; 10:30; 14:9; Heb 1:1-3; Matt 1:20; Lk 1:26-38; Mic 5:2; Jn 5:23; Col 2:9**

## **GOD...The Holy Spirit**

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person equal with the Father and the Son. He possesses all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect, emotions, will, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and truthfulness. He is the administrator of the things of God upon this earth during this age and is the prime source of the new birth. He indwells believers and restrains evil. The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforming believers into the likeness of Christ. Every believer receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation.

We believe the Holy Spirit equips believers for service by bestowing upon them spiritual gifts. These gifts were for the glorifying of God and for the perfecting of the saints. Some gifts listed in the New Testament, however, were temporary in nature, and were intended for the infancy of the church. For example: speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles during the formation of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth.

**1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Cor 13:8-10; 2 Cor 12:12; Eph 4:7-12; Heb 2:1-4; Jn 14:16, 17; Rom 8:14-27; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Cor 21:13; Lk 24:49; Jn 16:7-9; Acts 1:5, 2:4; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 2:22**

## **The Devil or Satan**

We believe and teach the reality and personality of Satan. He was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his Creator. He is destined to judgement in the lake of fire. Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgement of God by rebelling against his Creator and took numerous angels with him in his fall. He is the declared enemy of God and man and continues to this day to tempt mankind and to seek to subvert the purposes of God.

**Matt 4:103; 2 Cor 4:4; Rev 20:10; Isa 14:12-17; Ezk 28:11-19; Lk 2:31-32; 1 Cor 7:5, 10:13; 1 Pet 5:8**

## **Creation**

We believe and teach the biblical record of creation is literal, not allegorical or figurative. Every creative act of God was supernatural, complete and perfect in itself. God brought the universe and all that it contains, into existence in six successive 24 hour days, through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Man is the direct creation of God in spirit, soul, and body. He is not in any sense the product of animal ancestry but made in the divine image and likeness.

**Gen 1:2; Ex 29:9-11; Prov 8: 22-31; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17; 1 Thes 5:23; Heb 1:1-3**

## **The Fall of Man**

We believe and teach that man fell from his sinless state by voluntary transgression. As a result, all men are now sinners by nature, by choice and by divine declaration. Man has lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, has become subject to the wrath of God and utterly incapable of choosing or doing what is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Man has no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself; therefore he is under condemnation without defence, excuse, or hope apart from the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Gen 1:26; Gen 2:16-17; Gen 3:16; Jn 3:36; Rom 3:23; 5:10-19; 6:23; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1-3; 1 Tim 2:13-14; 1 Jn 1:8**

## **Salvation and The New Birth**

We believe and teach that all men are totally depraved and dead in their sins. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is "born again." A new nature imparted from above and a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is essential to salvation. Genuine regeneration is revealed by fruits of repentance that are demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. **Isa 64:6; Jn 1:12-13; Jn 3:5, 18; Gal 6:15; Phil 3:4-9; Tit 3:5-6; 1 Pet 1:18-19**

We believe our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ who was made to be sin for us, dying in our place. God declares righteous, those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as sovereign Lord. This righteousness is totally apart from any virtue or work of man and involves the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. Nothing and no one can add to that finished work of Christ. His salvation is wholly of grace. **Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:5-7; Lev 17:11; Matt 26:28; Rom 5:6-9; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18-19**

We believe and teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God, granted to us and because our God is so worthy of our total consecration, that all the saved should seek to live holy lives. We should separate ourselves from religious apostasy and all worldly and sinful practises, as commanded by God in the Scriptures. **1 Pet 1:14-16; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 5:9-13; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; 1 Jn 2:15-17; 1 Jn 3:5-9; 2 Jn 9-11**

We believe it is the privilege of all who are born again, to be assured of their eternal salvation. Those who are saved, by the sovereign initiative of God, are kept by His power and are therefore secure in Christ forever. Though it is the privilege of all true believers to rejoice in their eternal assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, they should never use their Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living. **Jn 3:16, 18, 36; Jn 5:24; Jn 6:37; Rom 8:28-39; 2 Cor 5:1; 2 Cor 6:8; 2 Tim 1:12, 1 Jn 5:13**

### **The Church**

We believe and teach that the "universal church" is in reality, the Body of Christ. It is also referred to, in the New Testament, as the Bride of Christ. It began with the New Testament saints and will end at the coming of Christ in the Rapture. We believe and teach that a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel. The supreme authority for the church is Christ and all church leadership, gifts, order, discipline and worship, are appointed through His sovereignty, as found in the Scriptures. Biblically the designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders and deacons, both of whom must meet the biblical qualifications. The ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God. **Mt 16:18; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:12-28; Eph 1:22-23; Eph 3:21; Eph 5:23; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Mt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:2; Acts 6:1-6; Eph 3:21; 1 Tim 3:1-14; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-5**

We believe and teach that the role of the church is twofold. In the community it is the fulfilment of the Great Commission in evangelising and making disciples of all nations. In the congregation it is the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, both in the church and in the greater global community. We believe and teach that the local church is to be self-governing and free from any external authority or control. It's only Head is Christ. It is scriptural for churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and in the furtherance of the Gospel. The church will determine the measure and method of its cooperation through their prayerful application of Scripture. The oversight of the spiritual life and direction of the church is also vested in its elders, by the will of the congregation. **Mt 28:19-20; Eph 4:11-16; Eph 5:21-33; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 9:8-9; Rom 16:1-2; Acts 15:19-31; Acts 11:22, 29-30; 1 Cor 5:4-7; 1 Pet 5:1-4**

### **Ordinances**

We believe there are two New Testament Church ordinances, water baptism and the Lord's Supper. These ordinances are not sacraments, but are symbolic, pointing to the world's only Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Baptism**

Water baptism is the single immersion of the believer in water and is properly called 'believers baptism.' It is a testimony that shows forth a believer's faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour. It reveals his union with Christ in death to sin and in resurrection to a new life. It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ. It is a prerequisite to the privileges of local church membership, but it is not essential to salvation. **Acts 8:36-39; Rom 6:1-11; Mt 28:19; Jn 3:23; Acts 2:38-42; Col 2:12**

### **Lord's Supper**

We believe the Lord's Supper is symbolic and a proclamation of Christ's death until He comes. It should always be preceded by a solemn self-examination. The elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, and therefore serve as a remembrance of His finished redemptive work. **Matt 26:26-29; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-32; 1 Cor 10:1-16**

### **Israel**

We believe and teach that God has a separate programme for the nation of Israel, declared in a series of covenants. This programme includes her judgement, repentance, acknowledgment of the Messiah and the restoration of a redeemed remnant to the Promised Land. Israel will occupy a place of honour and blessing when Christ reigns as King, during the millennium. **Gen 12:1-3; Deut 30:1-10; 2 Sam 7:16; Jer 31:31-37; 33:19-26; Rom 11:12, 25-27**

### **Angels**

We believe and teach that angels are created beings and therefore are not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they were created to serve God and worship Him. **Lk 2:9-14; Heb 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Rev 5:11-14; 19:10, 22:9**

### **The Return of Christ**

We believe and teach the bodily, pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ, in the air and that this will happen before the seven year tribulation period. We refer to this event as the 'rapture', in that Christ will translate His church from this Earth. He will later come with His church, at the close of the tribulation, to judge the living and set up His kingdom on earth. Between these two events, the believers will be judged and rewarded, according to their works. **Jn 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Tit 2:13; Matt 25:31-46; Rev 19:11-21; 1 Cor 3:11-15, 15:51-53; 2 Cor 5:10**

<p style="text-align:center"><b>THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOUTH VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH INCORPORATED</b></p>
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**ARTICLE I – NAME**

The name of this church shall be: South Valley Baptist Church Incorporated.

**ARTICLE II – PURPOSE**

To live a life to the glory of God, to lead others to Christ and membership in His Body, to disciple them to a mature Christ-likeness, and to train them for their ministry in the Church and their mission in the global community.

**ARTICLE III – CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND ASSOCIATIONS**

The entire assembly is responsible alone to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the Church. The oversight of the spiritual life and direction of South Valley Baptist Church is vested in its elders by the will of the congregation.

**Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 5:13; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Rev. 2:1-7; Rev. 2:13-16; Acts 6:3,5; 14:23**

This church shall cooperate in the ministry of the Word of God with such bodies of believers as are true to the Scriptures. However, such cooperation shall never be construed as a surrender of freedom or autonomy.

**ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

**Section A – Present Membership**

Any person accepting the doctrines and practices of this church as set forth and whose names appear on the rolls is considered a member of this church.

**Section B – Reception of Members**

Any person who has confessed Christ as Lord and Saviour, who gives assurance of a sincere desire to live consistently as a Christian, who accepts without reservation the doctrinal statement of this church, who has received baptism by immersion and who has attended the membership Class may become a member of this church. Candidates for church membership shall appear personally before the elders, following their attendance in the Membership Class. Having been recommended by the elders, the name(s) shall be submitted to the church for acceptance.

**Section C – Responsibilities of Members**

The responsibilities of each member is; to be clearly outlined in the Membership Class. Only those members who are in good standing and are at least sixteen (16) years of age may vote in matters of church business. Every person is heartily encouraged to live a life worthy of their calling in Christ. **Eph 4:1-3**

**Section D – Discipline of Members**

In order to maintain its purity and peace, a local church has the scriptural right and responsibility to discipline its members in need of such action. **Matt 18:15-22; 1Cor 5:14; Gal 6:1-5; Titus 3:10; 2Thess 3:6**

Any member who is wilfully negligent toward his church commitments or errs in doctrine or conduct shall be lovingly approached according to the process outlined in Matthew 18. It should be kept in mind that discipline is a loving exercise with the goal of repentance and restoration. Each individual situation needs to be prayerfully considered in its own right. When necessary, such persons may be admonished by the elders, and if the attitude and actions persist, the elders may make a recommendation to the church body. The elders shall act with love and grace but with promptness. All members who are disciplined in any way will be notified both personally and in writing. If any member wishes to appeal a decision regarding their discipline, they must notify the elders in writing within 48 hours. The elders must then respond within 21 days from receipt of the appeal.

Persons who have been removed from membership of the church by whatever means shall have no right to make claim to any church property, and shall return any such property in their possession immediately. Members who have been expelled may be restored to the membership upon evidence of repentance and vote of church.

#### **Section E – Termination of membership**

Membership in the church may be terminated by request of a member, the transfer of membership, or by disciplinary action.

### **ARTICLE V – CHURCH OFFICES AND STAFF**

The New Testament teaches that there are two church offices: elder and deacon. The church may have as many of each as its size and work demands. They shall serve for an indefinite period of time with the right to terminate their ministry function at any time. If at any time their doctrine or conduct shall be deemed unscriptural, the members and/or elders shall discuss the matter with them and seek to resolve the problem. If a satisfactory resolution is not realised, it shall be the responsibility of those members and/or elders to bring a recommendation to the church at a special business meeting.

**1 Tim 5:19-20**

#### **Section A – Elders and Pastors**

The primary role of the eldership is to oversee the spiritual ministry, doctrine, direction and shepherding of the church. This not by force of dictatorial power, but by precept and a humble servant example. The eldership includes both pastors and elders, with the senior pastor directing the management and oversight of the elders.

**1 Pet 5:1-3; 1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12; 1Tim 5:17; 1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:3**

Within a Spirit led eldership there should be unanimity in the decisions that are made, reflecting the unity and harmony of the church. **1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:1-7; Phil 1:27; 2:1-8**

The elders shall be responsible to see that the various areas of church ministry have capable leadership and oversight. The eldership is responsible for leading the church in a prayerful consideration of those who should be appointed to fill the offices of the church. All officers shall have a God given desire to serve in this office and shall reflect the character qualities outlined in Scripture. As ministry expands and needs arise, the elders may also create staff positions to meet those needs.

**Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5-9**

The primary role of the pastor(s) is to teach, train and equip the members of the church to carry out the work of the ministry. **Eph 4:11-12**

Within one week after the pulpit has been vacated, the elders shall appoint from among themselves a Pulpit Committee, whose names shall be presented to the church for approval. It shall have the responsibility of assembling a list of prospective candidates for evaluating, screening, interviewing and recommending the person to be considered as a candidate. All candidates for a pastoral position must accept the Doctrinal Statement of the church and be in harmony with its purposes and ministry directions. Upon a unanimous vote of the eldership the pastoral candidate shall visit the church and minister for a specified time. During this time the elders and members of the church shall be given the opportunity to meet and question the candidate. If the eldership unanimously approve the candidate, a special business meeting shall be called at which time the membership shall vote on the matter.

The salary and benefits of the pastor should always reflect an attitude of generosity. Pastors shall serve for an indefinite period of time with the right to terminate their ministry function upon thirty days notice. If a pastor is dismissed, he shall vacate his ministry responsibilities immediately but shall receive four weeks wages.

**1 Tim 5:19-20; Matt 18: 15-20**

### **Section B – Deacons**

The primary role of the deacons is to ensure the smooth and effective running of the ministry in its many practical areas. They will carry out their vital ministry under the oversight of the eldership.  
**Acts 6:17**

In fulfilment of legal requirements, the deacons of the church shall serve as trustees of the corporation and shall exercise all functions of that office in the State of Victoria and as governed by this constitution.

### **Section C – Church Staff**

**Clerk** – The church clerk shall record and keep the minutes of the church business meetings.

**Treasurer** – The Treasurer shall be responsible for the recording and keeping of all financial transactions in permanent records and shall make monthly and annual reports to the church.

## **ARTICLE VI – CHURCH TEAMS AND MINISTRIES**

It is recognised that as a church grows it will expand within its various areas of ministry. A variety of ministries may be formed to meet the changing needs of a growing church. Leadership teams that will oversee these various ministries will also be created to provide proper vision and direction. All ministries will be integral parts of this church and will reflect a commitment to the spiritual purposes and direction of the church. Each leadership team will fall under the oversight of the eldership.

## **ARTICLE VII – MISSIONS**

This church will support missionaries and missionary endeavours that are in harmony with our doctrinal position. A team of mission minded people shall be responsible for promoting a greater awareness and personal involvement with world missions. They will submit to the eldership missionary candidates they believe should be financially supported by the church, who will in turn make recommendations to the church. Support of missionaries may be discontinued by church vote for unresolved problems dealing with doctrine or conduct deemed unscriptural.

**Acts 1:8; 13:1-4**

## **ARTICLE VIII – CHURCH SERVICES**

The regular weekly services of this church normally shall include Sunday school, Sunday services and small groups that meet at various times throughout the week. The eldership may recommend at any time that service structures be altered in order to more effectively fulfil the purposes of the church.

## **ARTICLE IX – BUSINESS MEETINGS**

All business meetings shall be conducted decently and with a sense of order that is honouring to Christ. Roberts Rules of Order or similar may be used as a guide for meeting protocol. Any of the elders may moderate at both the special and routine business meetings. All business requiring a vote of the congregation shall be transacted in a business meeting. All votes in any business meeting shall be cast only by a voting member actually present when the vote is taken. Such a vote shall only be on behalf of the person casting the said vote.

### **Section A – Special Business Meeting**

The calling of a pastor, the amending of this constitution, the election of church officers or staff, the adoption of the annual budget, and the transfer of any titled property or to lease, rent or mortgage such property shall take place only at a called special business meeting. A special business meeting must be called twenty-one days prior to the meeting and must be announced from the pulpit for at least two Sundays prior to the date of meeting. The voting members present will constitute a quorum and is required and a three-fourths vote shall constitute adoption or acceptance.



### **Section B – Routine Business Meeting**

A routine business meeting is one which does not concern the specific items mentioned in the above special business meetings. A routine business meeting may be called by the elders at any regular service of the church. The voting members present will constitute a quorum and three-fourths vote shall constitute adoption or acceptance.

## **ARTICLE X – FINANCES**

The fiscal year of the church shall begin 1<sup>st</sup> January and end on the following 31<sup>st</sup> December of each year.

### **Section A – Methods**

In keeping with God's Word, the work of the church shall be carried on by regular free-will offerings of God's people. No money shall be raised by the church or any ministry group within the church, except by this method. No financial obligation shall be placed upon the church either as a mortgage, note, outstanding bill or any other form unless money is on hand to meeting same, or by express vote of the church. **Mal 3:8-10; 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:7**

### **Section B – Audit**

An audit by an independent accountant hired by the church shall be done of the church's financial records annually. A report of the findings shall be made available to the church at the annual meeting.

## **ARTICLE XI – CHURCH PROPERTY**

### **Section A – Church Building**

The church building is dedicated to the glory of God and the carrying out of His purposes. The use of the building for special functions shall be by the approval of the deacons.

### **Section B – Real Estate**

All titled property belonging to this church shall be titled in the name of the south Valley Baptist Church Incorporated of Highton, Victoria 32126. When the church, by corporate vote wishes to transfer the title to any titled property, or to lease, rent, or mortgage such property, the trustees acting for the church shall be authorised to act as directed in the matter in the corporate name of the church.

### **Section C – Disposition of Property**

If at any time, the active membership of this church shall be reduced to less than seven, all of its property; real, personal and mixed shall become the property of Bible-believing witness such as a mission, church of Christian ministry to be determined by the remaining members. Any such disposition shall be consistent with Australian Taxation laws and provisions of the Associations Incorporated Act 1981.

## **ARTICLE XII – ALTERATIONS OF CONSTITUTION**

These articles and the Statement of Purposes of the Church shall not be altered except in accordance with the Associations Incorporated Act 1981.

## **ARTICLE XIII – SEAL**

The common seal of the Church shall be kept in the custody of the senior pastor. The common seal shall not be affixed to any instrument except by the authority of the elders and the affixing of the Common Seal shall be attested by the signature of two elders.

## **ARTICLE XIV – INTERPRETATION**

Whenever reference is made in this constitution to "this Church", "the Church", "South Valley Baptist Church" and like expressions, it shall be deemed to be South Valley Baptist Church Incorporated.