


Hughes Baptist Church


Constitution and Principles of Operation 2015 FINAL

Signed by Board Members on 9 May 2017

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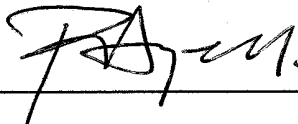
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2015 CONSTITUTION

1. PREAMBLE

Hughes Baptist Church (the Church) is composed of believers in Christ who, guided by the Holy Spirit, seek to offer worshipful lives to God for His glory and for the growth of His Kingdom.

This Constitution and the accompanying Principles of Operation articulate the common understanding of governance arrangements by Church Leaders and Members. They are an attempt to set an environment for Christian service and godly leadership under the Lordship of Christ, efficient management and uplifting and open relationships within Hughes Baptist Church and in its Christian witness to others.

2. THE CHURCH

2.1 Name

The Church will be called HUGHES BAPTIST CHURCH.

2.2 Affiliation

The Church will be affiliated with the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT and the Association of Baptist Churches of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Inc.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the Church are:

- a) to acknowledge and proclaim the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of its Members and to seek to fulfil His mission in the life of the community, the nation and the wider world;
- b) to teach and adhere to the truths of the Bible;
- c) to proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel;
- d) to be a living witness to the love, truth and grace of Christ;
- e) to be a people of faith and prayer;
- f) to be a place where people feel welcome and seek to gather weekly to worship God together;
- g) to inspire and maintain active spiritual growth within all members of the congregation;
- h) to bring God's truth, love and compassion to the needy in our community and the world;
- i) to equip youth with the faith, knowledge and character of Christ; and
- j) to be a community that demonstrates Christ's love and compassion in relationships amongst members.

2.4 Statement of Beliefs

The Church holds to the Statement of Beliefs of the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT and which in summary are:

- a) **the Nature and Unity of the Godhead** that there is one God Who is eternal personal Spirit;
- b) **the Deity and Humanity of Christ** as the nature of God and human nature united in one;
- c) **the Holy Spirit** is the third Person of the Trinity and is eternally one with the Father and the Son;
- d) **the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures** which are the infallible Word of God and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct;
- e) **the Sinfulness of People** so that apart from God's grace, people are helpless and hopeless;
- f) **Christ's Atonement for Human Sin** in that He died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute;
- g) **the Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation** so that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God's provision of salvation and produces graces for holy living;
- h) **the Church** is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ. While all believers are called to priestly ministry, He calls individuals to positions of oversight and leadership or to special ministries;
- i) **the Baptism of Believers Only by Immersion** is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ and is a public declaration of a person's faith in Jesus Christ;

- j) **the Communion** is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ instituted by Him and commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord's substitutionary death;
- k) **the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ** personally and visibly in His glory to the earth;
- l) **the Resurrection of the Dead** at the end of the age, when the righteous will be with Him and the unrighteous will be reserved for the judgment; and
- m) **Rewards and Punishments in a Future State** on an appointed day of final judgement for the world, when those judged righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

2.5 Communion

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper will be observed by the Church regularly, ordinarily monthly. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be invited to partake of the Supper.

2.6 Baptism

Any person may be baptised if he or she knowingly confesses repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Any confirmed follower of Jesus Christ is able to perform a baptism provided there is oversight from a Pastor of the Church.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Purpose of Membership

Church membership expresses a believer's connection to the local manifestation of the body of Christ and is a prerequisite for full participation in the major corporate and spiritual decisions in the life of the Church.

3.2 Eligibility

Persons seeking membership will be accepted on subscription to the beliefs in subsection 2.4 above, having been baptised by immersion, being at least eighteen years of age, and having completed the process for admission in the Principles of Operation.

3.3 Inability to be Immersed

Persons with an inability to be baptised by immersion may be accepted into membership on subscription to the Statement of Beliefs and completion of the processes for admission.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1 Congregational Governance

Recognising the Headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church is governed by its Members.

The Church membership will exercise its collective responsibility for the governance of the Church through decisions at properly constituted Church Family Meetings, its role in the appointment of Pastors, the election of a representative Board and other appointees, and its participation in decision-making as specified here and in the Principles of Operation.

4.2 Church Board

The role of the Board is to assist the Senior Pastor with the governance and strategic direction of the Church.

The membership of the Board is detailed in the Principles of Operation.

The Board will be bound by any and all decisions of properly constituted Church Family Meetings.

The Senior Pastor will normally be the Chair of the Church Board. However, the Senior Pastor may delegate the function of chairing meetings to the Senior Associate Pastor or another Board Member.

Where one is appointed, the alternate or acting Chair of the Board will assume all the responsibilities and privileges of the Chair as the delegate of the Senior Pastor.

Where, at a particular meeting, the regular Chair, or an appointed alternate or acting Chair is absent after thirty minutes of the appointed start time or is otherwise unable or refuses to act as Chair, the Board will elect its Chair for that meeting.

4.3 Quorum for Board Meetings

A quorum for a meeting of the Board will be two-thirds of the number of persons appointed to the Board at the time of the meeting.

5. PASTORS

5.1 Appointment of Pastors

The Church will call and appoint Pastors from time-to-time as detailed in this Constitution and the Principles of Operation.

The Senior Pastor is responsible to the Members for the life, vision and direction of the Church.

A person will be appointed as a Pastor of the Church by a vote of not less than seventy five percent of Members present at a Church meeting, entitled to vote, and voting. For the purpose of this meeting, fifty percent in number of the persons who are recorded on the Active Members Roll will constitute a quorum. The quorum will be indicated in the notice of the meeting.

At the same meeting, but prior to election of a Pastor, the Church will confirm the terms of the Pastor's engagement which are to be set out in the letter of call.

Persons appointed as Pastors are also granted membership of the Church and they have the same membership rights and privileges as other Members, except that only the Senior Pastor is eligible to be a Member of the Board.

Pastors who vacate their pastoral positions but remain within the church fellowship are eligible to remain as Members.

5.2 Resignation

Pastors are expected to give three months written notice of resignation to the Board.

5.3 Termination of Appointment

Pastors' appointments will only be terminated by a vote of more than one half of Members present at a Church meeting, entitled to vote and voting. For the purpose of this meeting, fifty percent in number of the persons who are recorded on the Active Members Roll will constitute a quorum. The quorum will be indicated in the notice of the meeting.

Church meetings called to consider termination of a Senior Pastor's appointment will be chaired by a neutral Chair nominated by the Board and Elders with no conflicts of interest in the matter and affirmed for that chairing role by the Active Members present at the meeting. The Chair for the meeting may, if appropriate, be a representative of the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT.

At least three months' notice or payment in lieu will be given.

6. MEETINGS AND PROCEEDINGS

6.1 Holding of Meetings

The Church will hold Members' meetings at least twice per year. Such meetings are known collectively as Church Family Meetings.

Special Church Family Meetings may be called at the request of the Board, or at the written request of ten percent of Active Roll Members.

6.2 Notice

Two Sundays' notice of the date of a Church Family Meeting will be given to Church Members, except where otherwise specifically provided in the Constitution or Principles of Operation.

The notice of a meeting must include the agenda of matters being brought to the meeting and adequate information about matters requiring a vote.

All Church Family Meetings may only vote on matters for which written notice has been given.

6.3 Voting

Voting at the Church Family Meetings will be taken on the voices, by show of hands, or by secret ballot.

A secret ballot will be used for all voting in relation to the election of a Pastor, Elder, or Board Member, changes to the Constitution, and on such other matters as the Church may consider advisable.

A motion at a Church Family Meeting will be carried by a simple majority of Members present, entitled to vote and voting, except where otherwise specified in the Constitution or Principles of Operation.

Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.

6.4 Quorums for Church Meetings

The quorum for Church Family Meetings will be twenty-five percent in number of the persons who are recorded on the Active Members Roll, except where otherwise specifically provided in the Constitution or Principles of Operation.

In the event that the prescribed quorum has not been achieved after three attempts using due process, the Board and Elders together may define a revised quorum based on their reasonable determination of the number of remaining Active Members.

7. NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

The income and property of the Church however and whenever derived shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the Objectives of the Church as set forth in the Constitution, and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit to the Members of the Church.

8. DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

In the event of the Church being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities will:

- a) in the case of property held in trust by the Association of Baptist Churches of the Australian Capital Territory Incorporated, be dealt with in accordance with *Baptist Churches of NSW Property Trust Act 2013*;
- b) in all other cases be transferred to the Association of Baptist Churches of the Australian Capital Territory Incorporated or to any other organisation with similar purposes and which has rules prohibiting the distribution of its assets and income to its Members and which is exempt from income tax.

9. ALTERATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution may be amended by the Church at a regular Church Family Meeting or at a special meeting of the Church called in accordance with subsection 6.1 of the Constitution.

Notice of motion to amend this Constitution must be given to the Secretary in writing prior to the meeting and signed by two Church Members. The Secretary will then give four week's written notice to Members setting out the proposed amendments and the date of the Church Family Meeting at which the vote will be taken.

Where due notice has been given, this Constitution may be amended at a Church Family Meeting by a vote of two-thirds of Members present, entitled to vote and voting. For the purpose of this meeting, fifty percent in number of the persons who are recorded on the Active Members Roll as defined in the Principles of Operation will constitute a quorum. The quorum will be indicated in the notice of the meeting.

2015 PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

1. PREAMBLE

The purpose of these Principles of Operation is to provide guidelines to achieve the intent and specified requirements of the Constitution. In particular, it seeks to ensure that Church governance processes support godly leadership, efficient management, good communication and the healthy relationships so essential to the Church we seek to be.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Responsibilities of Members

Church membership is a means for encouraging people to be actively involved in the life, governance and ministry of the Church for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.

Members are expected to:

- a) attend and sustain services and meetings of the Church;
- b) engage in some form of Christian service as they have the opportunity and ability;
- c) contribute regularly by offerings and otherwise according to their ability, for the maintenance of the work of God through the Church;
- d) be present at the Lord's Supper regularly, ordinarily monthly; and
- e) seek to maintain harmonious relationships with others in the Church family.

In the event of disagreement or dispute arising between Members, they are expected to seek to resolve the matter by adopting the values, and following the dispute resolution processes, set out in Appendix 1 to these Principles of Operation.

Members are not authorised to make statements on behalf of the Church without the specific authority of the Senior Pastor or by virtue of their appointment to carry that authority made at a Church Family Meeting.

2.2 Admission to Membership

Anyone seeking membership of the Church must complete an application form whose wording is determined by the Board and which requires that applicants undertake to abide by the Church Constitution.

Upon receiving the application the Senior Pastor or Board will appoint two Members to interview the applicant and report to a Church Board meeting. The Church Secretary will advise the Church Members of the names of people seeking membership and ask for any comments to be conveyed to the Board through the Secretary. The Board will consider any comments received before granting approval for the applicant to be granted membership.

If the applicant is already a member of a branch of the Christian Church, the Secretary will seek a letter of commendation from the applicant's former church, unless the Board believes that circumstances clearly justify not doing so.

Admission as a Member is effective upon confirmation by the Board that the eligibility requirements in the Constitution have been met.

New Members will normally be welcomed formally into membership at the next Communion Service where they are present.

2.3 Membership Rolls

The Church Secretary will maintain two membership rolls: The Active Members Roll and the Inactive Members Roll.

The Active Members Roll is the roll on which all Members will be recorded except where they are deemed to be inactive, in which case their names will be moved to the Inactive Members Roll.

All persons whose names appear on the Active Members Roll will be entitled to be present and to vote at Church Family Meetings.

Inactive Members are not counted in the determination of quorums for Church Family Meetings, and are not entitled to vote at any such meeting.

2.4 Variation of Membership Status

Members will be moved to the Inactive Members Roll when, in the opinion of the Church Secretary and the Senior Pastor, they are no longer participants in, and/or are no longer able to participate in, the day-to-day life of the Church.

Where the Senior Pastor and Church Secretary agree that a Member is no longer participating in the day to day life of the church, that member will be contacted by the Church Secretary, wherever possible, and informed that his or her name is to be transferred to the Inactive Members Roll and of the process by which he or she can be reinstated to the Active Members Roll.

The names of Members removed to the Inactive Members Roll for any reason other than infirmity, are to be notified to the Church at the next service following the decision of the Senior Pastor and Secretary. In the case of infirmity, a similar notification should be made in person to next of kin where they are Members.

Where the Member concerned is incapable of acting on his or her own behalf, contact will be made with his or her next of kin wherever possible. Where a Member or the Member's next of kin is unable to be located after a period of 3 months, the Senior Pastor and Church Secretary may, in agreement, move the name of that member to the Inactive Members Roll.

Unless the Senior Pastor and Secretary receive information to cause them to reverse their decision, transfer to the Inactive Members Roll is automatically confirmed on the date two weeks after this notification to the Church or next of kin.

Where the Board in counsel with the Pastors and Elders determines that a Member has rejected essential elements of the Church's Statement of Beliefs or has failed in the character requirements specified in these Principles of Operation, his or her name may be moved to the Inactive Members Roll by decision of that meeting.

An Inactive Member may be reinstated to the Active Members Roll by resuming participation in the worship and activities of the Church and submitting a written application for reinstatement to Active Membership to reach the Secretary at least one month before voting at a Church meeting. Reinstatement must be agreed to by the Secretary and Senior Pastor.

2.5 Resignations and Transfers

Resignations from Church membership will be dealt with by the Secretary who will take whatever action is deemed necessary and report accordingly to the next Board meeting.

Requests for letters of commendation for former Members who are seeking to transfer their membership elsewhere will be dealt with by the Secretary and reported to the next Board meeting.

2.6 Regular Review of Membership Rolls

The Board will review the Membership Rolls at least once annually and may, after proper enquiry, recommend to a Church Meeting that Inactive Members be removed from the Rolls.

A record of former Members will be kept and contact maintained where appropriate.

3. PASTORS

3.1 The Roles of Pastors

The Senior Pastor is responsible to the Members for the life, vision and direction of the Church, and responsibilities will include:

- a) leadership and day-to-day management of the Church, Associate Pastors, and other paid staff; and
- b) preparation of a strategic plan for approval by the Church and its effective and efficient implementation.

The Senior Pastor may be assisted by a Senior Associate Pastor as a deputy, and other Pastors called from time-to-time by the Church.

The performance of the Senior Pastor will be reviewed annually by a review panel appointed by the Board and composed of the Elders and one Board Member.

The performance of Associate Pastors will be reviewed by the Senior Pastor and reported to the Board.

3.2 Pastoral Search

When required, the Board will form a Pastoral Search Committee of Board and Church Members. It will normally include the Senior Pastor, except when the search is for a new Senior Pastor.

The Committee may seek the advice and participation of specialist non-Members as it sees fit, but they are not to vote in determining the recommendation put to the Board.

Before proceeding with the search, the Board will submit for the approval of a Church meeting the criteria for selection of a pastor and advise the Church of the composition of the Pastoral Search Committee.

Potential candidates for appointment as pastors must satisfy the spiritual and character criteria in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and any additional criteria established by the Board in consultation with the Pastoral Search Committee and affirmed by the Church Members.

3.3 Letter of Call

Following the Church's approval of a candidate for appointment as a Pastor, a letter will be issued by the Church Secretary to the candidate confirming the call from the Church and indicating the terms of engagement.

4. ELDERS

4.1 Role of Elders

Elders provide specific pastoral and prayer support to other leaders and to the Church generally. The Elders appointed by the Church will:

- a) support the Pastors, Church Board Members, and Ministry Leaders by encouraging them and praying for them;
- b) provide advice on matters of importance for the long-term health of the Church;
- c) work closely with Pastors in the spiritual leadership and pastoral care of the Church;
- d) minister alongside the Pastors according to their individual gifts (e.g. teaching, visiting), and share with them in the ministries of prayer, visitation, and Church discipline;
- e) meet with the Pastors for mutual encouragement and prayer and to seek the mind of God together on pastoral matters;
- f) be available to come alongside the other Church leaders in a similar way; and
- g) monitor the spiritual health of the Church and its leadership.

4.2 Appointment

The Senior Pastor may, after appropriate consultation with relevant leaders and advisors, nominate to the Church one or more Members to be considered for appointment as Elders.

The nomination of Elders is at the discretion of the Senior Pastor. Their appointment is to be confirmed by at least a two-thirds majority vote at a Church Family Meeting.

4.3 Number

The number of Elders to be appointed will be not more than half of the number of Church Members approved at that time to be on the Board.

4.4 Eligibility

Active Church Members, who are judged to be mature Christians and meet the biblical criteria in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and have been in membership for at least two years, will be eligible for appointment as Elders.

4.5 Tenure

Elders are appointed to serve for a term of two years and may serve a maximum of three consecutive terms (six years). They are eligible to be reappointed after a break of one year.

4.6 Termination

Elders can be removed from their position by a simple majority at a Church Family Meeting.

5. THE BOARD

5.1 Role of the Board

The role of the Board is set out in subsection 4.2 of the Constitution.

5.2 Composition

The Board will consist of the Senior Pastor, the Church Secretary, the Church Treasurer, and other elected Members of the Church.

The number of Board Members will be confirmed at a Church Family Meeting prior to the AGM.

The Senior Associate Pastor is encouraged to attend Board meetings, but is not a Board Member and may not vote.

5.3 Eligibility

Active Church Members who have been in membership for at least one year will be eligible for election as Church Secretary, Church Treasurer or other Board Member, except Associate Pastors, spouses of pastors, and employed staff of the Church.

Elders cannot serve on the Board.

Board Members must satisfy the spiritual and character criteria in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Nominees for the Board are to be spiritually mature Christians with appropriate skills and experience for the strategic role of the Board within the Church.

5.4 Tenure

The term of office for a person elected as Church Secretary, Church Treasurer or Board Member will be two years.

The overall tenure of office for the Church Secretary, Church Treasurer, and other Board Members will be limited to three consecutive terms (six years). A person may serve again after a break of at least one year.

In defining periods of continuous service, service in any role on the Board counts as service in any other for the purpose of overall tenure.

To ensure and protect ongoing continuity of experience on the Board, approximately one half of Board positions should be subject to election or re-election at each AGM.

Existing Board Members eligible for re-election are to advise the Chair and Church Secretary of their intention or otherwise to seek renomination at least four weeks prior to the call for nominations to allow time for other potential Board Members to be sought.

5.5 Election of Board Members

The election of Board Members (other than the Senior Pastor) will normally take place at the AGM.

5.6 Vacancies

In the event of a casual vacancy, the Board may appoint a Church Member to fill the unexpired portion of the term of a Board Member, including that of Secretary or Treasurer.

Prior to filling the casual vacancy, the Board will advise the Church of its proposal to fill the vacancy and the identity of the proposed appointee, and will allow two Sundays for comments to be provided to the Board. The Board will consider any comments received before making the appointment.

A Member appointed to fill a casual vacancy must be confirmed by the Church no later than the next Church Family Meeting.

5.7 Voting

The election of a Board Member (including Church Secretary and Church Treasurer) will be by a vote of not less than two-thirds of Members at a Church Family Meeting present in person, entitled to vote and voting.

If nominations for an office exceed the number of vacancies, preliminary ballots will be held to equate the nominations and vacancies. Subsequent ballots will be conducted if required to test each candidate's two-thirds majority support.

5.8 Termination

Board Members, including the Church Secretary and Church Treasurer, can be removed from their positions by a simple majority at a Church Family Meeting.

5.9 Duties of the Board

The Board provides advice and assistance to the Senior Pastor in the leadership of the Church. It brings skills and experience to ensure the Church meets its corporate responsibilities for due diligence, wisdom to ensure accountability to the Membership, and a strategic focus to ensure the Vision of the Church is realised.

Where appropriate, Board Members unable to be present may participate in Board meetings and decision-making using an Instantaneous Electronic Device.

The Board will not decide the following matters, but will instead bring recommendations to a Church Family Meeting:

- a) the appointment of Pastors, Board Members and Ministry Leaders and confirmation of Elders;
- b) changes to the Constitution and Principles of Operation;
- c) appointment of a Returning Officer;
- d) the major sale or purchase of real property, or any major alteration to, or encumbrance of, the real property of the Church by mortgage or lease;
- e) major projects defined as those beyond the Board's financial delegation or running over more than any three financial years;
- f) approval of the Church Annual Budget; and
- g) any other matters as thought fit by the Board or unable to be resolved by the Board. On all other matters the Board is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Church.

On all other matters the Board is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Church

The Board is expected to seek consensus on matters under consideration and may only resolve issues provided there is at least two-thirds support.

The Board acts as a single entity and its decisions are binding on all Board Members whether dissenting or absent.

Existing Ministry Leaders are to notify the Senior Pastor of their intent or otherwise to seek re-nomination four weeks prior to the call for nominations.

The Church Secretary is responsible to the Chair of the Board for:

- a) Advising on actions necessary for Church compliance with all relevant statutory requirements and any others deemed to be appropriate by the Board;
- b) chairing the Risk and Audit Subcommittee;
- c) the Church Anti-Fraud Plan;
- d) assisting the Chair with the preparation of agenda for Board and Church Family Meetings;
- e) assisting the Chair with the conduct of Board and Church Family Meetings as necessary;
- f) assisting the Chair with the preparation of the Church Annual Report;
- g) management of Church membership processes and records;
- h) the handling of Board correspondence; and
- i) preparing and signing letters of appointment and contracts for the Senior Pastor

5.10 Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer is responsible to assist the Chair of the Board in ensuring due diligence in the financial management of the Church and for maintenance of the Financial Strategic Plan.

Duties of the Treasurer include:

- a) chairing of the Finance Subcommittee;
- b) drafting of the Church Financial Strategic Plan;
- c) provision of financial reports to the Board
- d) presentation of the Church Annual Budget to the AGM;
- e) recommendation of an Auditor to the AGM;
- f) presentation of the Annual Accounts for approval at the AGM;
- g) technical oversight of and assistance to the Finance Officer; and
- h) the conduct of periodic audits as determined by the Board.

5.11 Other Board Members

Other Board Members do not have specific duties.

Board Members are expected to be capable of forming an informed opinion as to the financial and spiritual health of the Church, ascertaining and representing the Church Member's diverse views on Church matters, and to be praying, mature Christians who can work together in leadership.

All Board Members have a duty to act with due diligence and in good faith, for the benefit of the Church.

5.12 Board Subcommittees

The Board may establish subcommittees to which it might invite non-Members as participants unless otherwise specifically prohibited in the Constitution or Principles of Operation

Board subcommittees must be chaired by a Board Member.

A Finance Subcommittee, chaired by the Treasurer, will be a standing subcommittee, the duties of which will include the formulation of a Financial Strategy for the Church.

A Risk and Audit Committee chaired by the Church Secretary will be a standing subcommittee.

5.13 Involvement of Church Members and Congregants

The Board may invite any persons to Board meetings at its discretion. This might be as observers or to furnish specialist advice.

The Board may also co-opt Church Members and congregants to serve on advisory committees from time-to-time.

6. MINISTRY COORDINATION COMMITTEE

6.1 Role of the Ministry Coordination Committee

Ministry Leaders are responsible to the Senior Pastor for the godly leadership and efficient management of their respective ministry areas so that they support the life, direction and vision of the Church, within their allocated resources.

The Ministry Coordination Committee is responsible for facilitating the ministry areas of the Church under the leadership of the Senior Pastor.

The ministry areas are to be determined by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the Board.

6.2 Composition

The Ministry Coordination Committee will include the Associate Pastors and the Ministry Leaders, and will be normally chaired by the Senior Pastor.

Ministry Leaders may be volunteers, Associate Pastors, or employed staff.

6.3 Duties of the Ministry Coordination Committee

The Ministry Coordination Committee is to meet at least four times per year to coordinate the ministry programs of the Church and to consider new initiatives in the ministries of the Church.

Ministry Leaders are to manage their respective teams as appropriate throughout the year and to hold Ministry Team meetings as required.

Ministry Leaders have the authority to appoint and change leaders or coordinators within their ministry areas as long as they accord with the requirements stipulated in the Constitution and Principles of Operation.

6.4 Eligibility

All Active Church Members who have been in membership for at least six months will be eligible for appointment as a Ministry Leader.

6.5 Tenure

The term of office of a person elected as a Ministry Leader will be two years. The overall tenure of office is limited to three consecutive terms (six years). A person may be reappointed after a break of one year.

6.6 Appointment of Ministry Leaders

Volunteers considering standing for Ministry Leader roles are to discuss their nomination with the Senior Pastor and the current, relevant Ministry Leader.

The appointment of Ministry Leaders, other than Associate Pastors, will be by a simple majority vote at a Church Family Meeting.

A Ministry Leader appointed to fill a casual vacancy must be confirmed by the Church not later than the next Church Family Meeting

6.7 Termination

Ministry Leaders other than Pastors can be removed from their position by a simple majority at a Church Family Meeting.

6.8 Involvement of Non-Members

The Community outreach nature of many Ministry Areas will often mean that non-Members and even non-congregants are actively involved. Ministry Leaders may appoint such people to positions of responsibility, but only with the approval on a case-by-case basis of the Senior Pastor.

6.9 Appeal of Ministry Leader Decisions

Where a Member is dissatisfied with a decision of a Ministry Leader the matter is to be taken by the Ministry Leader in person to a meeting of the Senior Pastor, an Elder, the complainant and himself or herself. The decision of this meeting is final.

7. CHARACTER REQUIREMENTS

All appointments to staff and voluntary positions of the Church carry an absolute requirement for demonstrable Christian character and values in both word and lifestyle.

8. CHURCH FAMILY MEETINGS

8.1 Regular Church Family Meetings

Church Family Meetings will be held not less than twice per year.

The meeting normally held in August will be referred to as the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and will include approval of the Church Annual Budget, the appointment of Board Members and Ministry Leaders, confirmation of Elders and affirmation of leaders of affiliated and auxiliary organisations associated with the Church.

The Church Family Meeting normally held in February will be referred to as the Church Family Forum and will be convened to discuss goals and programs for the year and other matters announced in the agenda.

Where possible, Church Family Meetings should include opportunity for feedback to the Members on the activities in selected Ministry Areas.

8.2 Chair

The Senior Pastor will normally chair Church Family Meetings, but in consultation with the Board, may delegate chairmanship to another Board or Church Member where appropriate and with the approval of the Members.

The Chair will normally be assisted in the conduct of the meeting by the Church Secretary and the Board may also be seated in front of the Church.

The Chair will generally abstain from casting a deliberative vote, but will be entitled to exercise a casting vote in the event of a tied result.

8.3 Conduct of Meetings

The following general procedures will be followed in conducting Church Family Meetings:

a) *Six weeks prior to the meeting:*

- (i) the draft Minutes of the previous meeting will be distributed;
- (ii) notification of meeting will be given; and
- (iii) agenda items for this meeting and comments on the Minutes of the previous meeting will be called for.

b) *Four weeks prior to the meeting:*

- (i) all agenda items for this meeting will be received;
- (ii) comments on the draft minutes of the previous meeting will be received;
- (iv) the Board will discuss any requested agenda items and decide on recommendations to be brought to the Church Family Meeting; and
- (v) the Board will also consider any comments on the draft Minutes of the previous meeting and decide on any changes to be made to them.

c) *Two weeks prior to the meeting:*

- (i) the updated Minutes of the previous meeting will be distributed; and
- (ii) the Agenda of the meeting will be circulated along with discussion papers on agenda items.

8.4 Appeal of Disallowed Agenda Items

(See the requirements for a Special Church Meeting in subsection 6.1 of the Constitution.)

8.5 Deferral of Items

In the event that the Chair or a Member feels that a matter is of sufficient importance to warrant further thought and prayer, a motion can be proposed to leave the matter in question "lying on the table" until a subsequent Church Family Meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT FOR MEETINGS

The Board may appoint an Administrative Assistant for Meetings whose role will be to support and assist the Chair with the timely preparation of Notices of Meetings and Agenda, distribution of meeting papers as necessary, recording of the discussions and resolutions at meetings, and the drafting of minutes.

10. RETURNING OFFICER

10.1 Role of the Returning Officer

The Church will appoint a Returning Officer who will be responsible for:

- a) calling nominations for the election of Board Members (including Church Secretary and Treasurer) on each of the four Sundays preceding the closing date for nominations;

- b) receiving and recording of nominations, which must be submitted in writing at least fourteen clear days prior to the election, on the prescribed Nomination Form, and include the written consent of the nominee, and the names of the nominator and seconder;
- c) checking that nominees and nominators are eligible;
- d) displaying on the Church notice board the progressive advice of nominations received, together with details of the nominees outlining their profile and relevant experience;
- e) ensuring the formal announcement of the nominees' names to the Church on the two Sundays before the election; and
- f) nominating and overseeing tellers in relation to all ballots.

Tellers must be affirmed by the Members at the meeting concerned prior to serving as tellers.

10.2 Appointment and Tenure.

Appointment of the Returning Officer will be by a simple majority at a properly convened Church Family Meeting.

Tenure of the Returning Officer is not limited, but is to be reconfirmed by a ballot every three years.

10.3 Conflict of Interest

If in the view of the Chair or Members present there may be a conflict of interest for the Returning Officer in a particular vote, his or her acting in that role will be tested with the meeting in the same way as for tellers and, if necessary, another Member will be assigned to act as returning officer for that particular vote.

11. AFFILIATED AND AUXILLIARY ORGANISATIONS

For the purposes of extending or facilitating the work of the Church, organisations or societies may be created or affiliated from time-to-time.

11.1 Affiliated Organisations

Where an otherwise independent organisation is affiliated with the Church, it will be on the terms specified in a written agreement and at the absolute discretion of the Board to terminate the affiliation without notice.

Affiliation carries no financial obligation by Hughes Baptist Church and the Board is to ensure that affiliated organisations are fully insured for the liabilities that might arise from their activities.

11.2 Auxiliary Organisations

The Church may establish auxiliary organisations which for the purpose of these Principles of Operation, means they might have a separate constitution or standing orders.

Such organisations will at all times remain under the Church's authority and the Church will retain the absolute discretion to approve the formation or termination of any such organisation and any rules or constitutions thereof.

Notice of intention of the formation or cessation of such bodies or of any alterations to their constitutions or rules will be given to the Church Secretary for consideration by the Board.

Any accounts maintained by Auxiliary organisations are subject to audit by the Board or Church auditor, and any residual funds on cessation of the organisation are to be returned to Hughes Baptist Church.

11.3 Reporting

All affiliated or auxiliary organisations shall submit Annual Reports for inclusion in the Church Annual Report.

11.4 Officers

An affiliated or auxiliary organisation or group will have the right to appoint its own officers. The senior executive officer of each organisation or group will have his or her appointment affirmed by the Church, based on the recommendation of the organisation or group. In all instances the leader of any such group or organisation must be a Church member.

12. CHURCH PROPERTY

The Church buildings, together with all property pertaining to the Church such as furniture, fittings and effects, will not be loaned or used without the consent of the appropriate Ministry Leader(s) and according to Church policies approved by the Board. All losses and breakages must be reported to the Church Office staff and, unless adequately covered by insurance, made good by the persons responsible.

13. INSURANCE

The Board is responsible to ensure that the Church is adequately covered for all areas of insurance risk.

14. CHURCH FUNDS

14.1 Signatories to Operate Accounts

Accounts will be opened in connection with Church funds at a bank agreed by the Board and requiring two people to operate.

Operators of such accounts will be at least one of the Church Secretary, Church Treasurer or Church Finance Officer. A second operator may be one of two other Members, as appointed by the Board.

The Board is to ensure that authority for the operation of electronic banking complies with the principles above and approved delegations.

Where a transaction is required to be completed above an individual's delegation, it is to be authorised by an approved delegate and the record of the authorisation kept with the account records.

14.2 Financial Delegations

Financial delegations are to be set and monitored by the Board, except that the Board's own financial delegation is to be set at a Church Family Meeting.

14.3 Forward Commitments

Where the Board's implementation of the approved Church Annual Budget requires financial commitment into the next financial year, it may make those commitments provided they are:

- a) within its authority and financial delegation,
- b) notified to the next Church Family Meeting; and
- c) included in the next Budget for Church approval.

A properly convened Church Family Meeting may approve commitments in forward years of the Budget by a simple majority.

15. CHURCH AUDITORS

15.1 Appointment

A Church Auditor will be appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

15.2 Duties

It will be the duty of the Church Auditor to audit all accounts of the Church in connection with the Church Treasurer's Annual Statement for presentation to the AGM and at any other time as directed by the Board.

15.3 Audit Schedule

All Church accounts, including those of auxiliary organisations, will be made available as required by the Board for annual audit.

16. AMENDMENTS TO THESE PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

These Principles of Operation may be amended by a two-thirds majority at a Church Family Meeting.

Proposed amendments must be submitted as agenda items through the normal Church Family Meeting process.

Appendices to these Principles of Operation can be amended by a decision of the Board.

Appendix A: Dispute Resolution

1. Introduction

Differences of opinion are normal and to be expected. They can in fact be very healthy. However when a dispute becomes divisive, God's word tells us what to do, providing guidelines for our personal relationships with other believers, and suggesting a framework for resolution (Matthew 18:15-17). This document addresses these issues and is a component of the Principles of Operation.

The Bible calls those who become aware of causing offence to action immediately.

So then, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your gift. (Matt 5:23-24)

Those offended are of course immediately aware of the offence but not always the other person, particularly if the hurt was inadvertent.⁵

Terminology

For the purposes of this document the phrase 'member of the Hughes Baptist Church family' means anyone, Member or not, who is a regular attendee of the Church and who regards HBC as their Church.

Those hurt by other's words or actions are referred to as offended, because they have rightly or wrongly taken offence. The other party to a dispute is initially referred to as the offending party, but it needs to be emphasised that they may have unintentionally and unknowingly caused offence.

In the early stages of dispute resolution the offence is a private matter for the offended to consider and then for both parties to consider together. By step 3 there will be others involved and the dispute is unlikely to be a trivial matter or simple misunderstanding. From this point on the offending party is referred to as the accused party.

2. Principles for a Biblical Resolution of Disputes

Matt.18:15-17 carries the potential to heal, to restore, and to foster reconciliation, and yet it is a process that is too often ignored in the local church. Don't deny a dispute, conflict or offence exists. Every day you wait to address one, violates Ephesians 4:26, which says "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry".

a. Commit to owning the values

Be the model of Matthew 18:15-17 so that it becomes part of the fabric of Hughes Baptist Church. Refer to the Personal Covenant at the end of this document.

b. Monitor yourself

Learn to discern which misdemeanours and indiscretions you can let be covered by sheer grace and which offences must be addressed. 1Timothy 4:16 says, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." Exercise verbal discipline, remembering that affirming and encouraging words reduce defensiveness and a "gentle answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

c. Redirect individuals

Resist the temptation to listen when someone discusses a dispute he or she is having with another person in the Church and instead redirect that person to honour Matthew 18:15-17 by talking directly to the other party.

d. Protect the Body – the Church

Resist the temptation to become a party to an unjust personal campaign. Don't let matters escalate to teams taking sides. Encourage a graduated escalation which gives the other party opportunity to come to resolution

without being ambushed unfairly. Think and pray about the likely consequences of forwarding e-mails and copying letters. If you are unsure, delete, burn or shred offending material.

e. Narrow the issue

Although you may be tempted to expand a dispute to include more than the original alleged offence, narrow the focus to address only that issue.

e. Be solution-orientated

The goal of Matthew 18:15 is reconciliation. Focus on understanding what went wrong, why it went wrong and how it can be prevented from recurring in the future.

f. Use the 'mirror technique'

Appreciate that Matthew 18:15 requires communication between an offended and an accused party at the former's initiative. That understood, very often we do not hear each other clearly. Listen to what the other person has to say and repeat back to each other what you hear, asking, "I understand you to be saying such-and-such. Is that true?"

g. Be open to agreeing to disagree

Sometimes a dispute is resolved by understanding each other - and then "agreeing to disagree, agreeably," - walking arm-in-arm even if you cannot see eye-to-eye.

h. Be committed to follow-up

Some relational disputes cut deeply. Be intentional about investing time in rebuilding the relationship once the dispute has been resolved.

i. Be gracious when others confront you

Allow others to respectfully express their frustrations and do not switch the discussion from the issue they have with you to an issue you have with them.

3. A Biblical Resolution Process

Step 1 - Overlooking an Offence

Many disputes could be resolved by quietly overlooking the offence caused. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook the offence." (Prov.19:11). Overlooking an offence is a form of forgiveness, and it involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent up bitterness or anger. (Proverbs 17:14 & 1Peter 4:8).

Those offended are asked to commit their ways to the Lord and let Him defend them.

Commit your future to the Lord! Trust in him, and he will act on your behalf. He will vindicate you in broad daylight, and publicly defend your just cause. (Ps 37:5-6)

So first of all glorify God and put him first rather than practicing a "me-first" attitude. Remember that Christ suffered much unfairly, and we are asked to share in His suffering. Recall that Jesus suffered wrongly for us, to the glory of God (1Peter 3:18, Philippians 2:5-11).

For this finds God's favour, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favour with God. For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps. (1 Pet 2:19-21)

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; consider what is good before all people. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people. Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Rather, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:16-21)

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist the evildoer. But whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well. And if someone wants to sue you and to take your tunic, give him your coat also. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to the one who asks you, and do not reject the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matt 5:38-42)

In Matthew chapter 5, verse 39 means that you allow yourself to be insulted without retaliation. Verses 39 and 40 must be taken in context with the entire paragraph (Matthew 5:38-42) which corrects how the Pharisees incorrectly taught that "an eye for an eye" allowed personal revenge when, in the Old Testament, "an eye for an eye" spoke of equitable justice meted out by a governmental body.

"If the matter be small, which we may lose without considerable damage to our families, it is good to submit to [overlook] it for peace' sake." (Matthew Henry – Theologian)

Look into your own heart and your motivation for wanting to address a perceived offence.

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For by the standard you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use will be the measure you receive. Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but fail to see the beam of wood in your own? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye,' while there is a beam in your own? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Mat 7:1-5)

First get the log out of your own eye before confronting a brother/sister over an issue. Ask yourself, how have my ways or words contributed to the conflict? That's a hard thing to do - the admission of our own possible wrongdoing. It's much easier to blame the other person. But blaming others is not the Christian way.

Bottom line is to act not according to human nature, but according to the new Christ nature within you. To help you do this take time to meditate and reflect on God's word, seeking His love and being aware of His provision for us.

Step 2 - Personal Reconciliation

Of course, letting all bad action go unchallenged is not helpful in the long run. As was stated earlier the offending party may be unaware of the issue. Also, an indiscretion or offence may be too serious to overlook or may have already caused damage to relationships within the church.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (Mat 14:19)

The first step in taking action against offence is for the offended party to privately speak with the person who has caused the hurt and ensure that they are aware of the grievance. We need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness.

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. (Mat 18:15)

State the circumstances and the hurt – that is all. Once the other party is aware of the grievance it is their obligation to act. The offended does no more. The prime obligation to take action to restore relationships rests with the alleged offender, not the offended party (Matthew 5:23).

If this step fails refer again to Step 1 before proceeding. Not over-reacting will be heaping coals on the other party's head.

Step 3 - Witnessed Reconciliation

If after prayerful consideration it is necessary to take further action then the next course of action according to Matthew is to involve one or two other Christians as witnesses to your attempts to explain the perceived offence and as further accountability to the alleged offender.

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Mat 18:16)

Note that the witnesses accompany you; they don't approach the accused person on your behalf. Christians are aptly qualified to evaluate and resolve issues and disputes involving Christian disputants. These

“witnesses” are to facilitate the parties to see the issue more clearly and to help identify solutions (Matt.18:16).

The witnesses’ role is not to take sides, but to encourage each individual to work towards resolving the dispute between them and to consider the situation from the other person’s perspective, identifying his/her feelings for the other person’s role and how he/she sees the problem and its resolution from that position, so that “every matter may be established”.

The witnesses are more than just a support to one side of the dispute. We do not want to elevate a one-on-one dispute to a two-on-two or three-on-three dispute. It would be best to use people who know both the offended and the accused people, who are mature Christians trusted by both parties, and who are motivated by a desire to see reconciliation. Their joint role is to hold both parties to account for accuracy and gentleness in what is said and to assist within insight into the other person’s perspective of the issue. They do not need to be church leaders or Pastors, but could be. Before beginning this process, remember confidentiality is essential.

At this step you are not yet formally bringing the matter to the notice of the church leadership, and an accused person is entitled not to be prematurely made the subject of public discussion.

If this step fails to achieve a satisfactory resolution then check Step 1 again. Perhaps just knowing that other people are aware of the issue, despite a recalcitrant believer, is comfort enough.

Step 4 - Appeal to Church Authority

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; (Matt 18:17a)

According to Matthew the third step is to take the matter to the church. This does not mean standing in front of the congregation and blurting out your hurt, but rather making an approach to a Pastor or Elder depending on the nature of the alleged offence.

You have heard that it was said to an older generation, 'Do not murder,' and 'whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.' But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the council, and whoever says 'Fool' will be sent to fiery hell. (Mat 5:21-22)

When any of you has a legal dispute with another, does he dare go to court before the unrighteous rather than before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to settle trivial suits? Do you not know that we will judge angels? Why not ordinary matters! So if you have ordinary lawsuits, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame! Is there no one among you wise enough to settle disputes between fellow Christians? Instead, does a Christian sue a Christian, and do this before unbelievers? The fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves demonstrates that you have already been defeated. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? But you yourselves wrong and cheat, and you do this to your brothers and sisters! (1 Cor 6:1-8)

Aggrieved people *who have followed Steps 1, 2 and 3* and who wish to take the matter further should bring a written and/or verbal complaint to a church leader – Pastor or Elder.

The Senior Pastor (or other church leader acting on their behalf) will assist the two people/parties seeking reconciliation to meet with a specialist facilitator acceptable to both parties who is not yet involved in the dispute. Should the dispute be between the Senior Pastor and another Pastor or church family member, and still be unresolved, the Church secretary is to contact the Baptist Union and ask them to appoint an external facilitator to help resolve the dispute. This facilitator shall be a committed Christian.

It may be appropriate to use formally trained mediators or arbiters in more complex matters or matters involving significant amounts of money. It is also acceptable when considered necessary to use non-Christian advisors with advanced or specialized medical, legal, scientific or technical knowledge to help the Christian decision-makers make a fair and just decision.

All disputes between Christians should be capable of being resolved through these first four steps. If the process has failed, after being followed faithfully according to scripture and respecting all parties’ rights to due

process and natural justice, this calls into question the Christian standing of the person who cannot be reconciled.

If a person, who professes to be a Christian, refuses to be reconciled and do what is right, the elected Church Leadership, as the representative of Hughes Baptist Church, after deliberate discussion and prayer, will bring the matter to the Church membership. A Special Church Family Meeting shall be called by the Leadership to deal with the matter in the biblical way. The Church may exercise its ultimate sanction, which is to remove from ministry and/or membership the offending person/party, or the person/party who has refused to be reconciled. The decision of the Church shall be final and binding.

Step 5 - Appeal to Civil Authority

...and if he refuses to listen to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Matt 18:17b)

This passage from Matthew suggests that, when all steps for brotherly reconciliation have failed, the offender should be treated as an unbeliever. For many people this means the way is open to then pursue the matter in the civil courts.

Of course some matters between Christians will involve civil authorities of necessity; matters such as property settlement or eviction, bankruptcy and divorce. In some of these cases, however, it may be possible to achieve a private Christian assisted agreement before finalising the matter with civil authorities. But recall that Paul was horrified with Christians who rushed straight to the civil authorities to resolve disputes with other Christians.

If another Christian has brought a suit against you, then you should request the case to be put on hold while Christian mediation is pursued first. If this fails then you may appear in court to defend yourself. If your adversary has a valid case against you, agree to a settlement quickly to avoid further costs, damages and/or attorney's fees (Matthew 5:25). A speedy settlement will also diminish harm to the cause of Christ by taking the matter out of the public eye.

Those involved in attempting to reconcile Christian disputants should note that their conduct should conform to civil principles of due process and natural justice, which are not inconsistent with what might be described as Christian fairness. Not to do so is to invite recourse to civil law.

Finally, note that when Christians are before the civil authority they need to submit to it (Romans 13:1-7). The Apostle Paul cited Roman law and utilized secular courts to protect his legal rights (Acts 16:37-38, 22:25-29, and 25:10-12).

Christians may use civil courts to resolve legitimate legal disputes with unbelievers. As with any behaviour, the Christian should do so prayerfully and with regard for the example they are setting. Other options for civil dispute resolution should be considered first.

Summary of Process

The Christian process for resolving conflict is counter-intuitive and not according to human nature. Often the hardest steps to personally accept and perform are the earlier steps - leave it to God and private resolution. Do not be tempted to skip these steps and go straight to witness support or church leaders.

Neutral parties, and particularly church leaders, need to ensure that people have thoroughly followed Steps 1 and 2 before agreeing to assist with Steps 3 or 4. People who become third-parties to the dispute should start first with offering support and assistance in Bible study and prayer time to help with Step 1.

The purpose of resolution is not personal victory but rather to build up the body and promote growth and maturity by quickly removing corrosive conflict with the least impact on the rest of the body.

Note that this process does not apply to criminal activity (Matt and 1Cor refer to civil dispute cases, not criminal ones). Resolution of cases involving the threat of physical violence should not be attempted using Step 2.

4. Responsibilities

a. The Offended

If you have taken offence or been hurt or intimidated by the behaviour of others at church, you should follow the process above and do so while reading relevant Bible passages and coming before the Lord in prayer. If you become aware of some contributing fault on your part, then take action immediately as per the instructions below for the accused.

Be aware that if you cannot resolve the matter through Step 1, resorting to Step 2 and perhaps Step 3 requires your personal involvement. Scripturally you cannot expect others (e.g. church leaders) to resolve the matter for you while you remain anonymous.

b. The Accused

If you are genuinely unaware of an offence you have caused there is no need to act. If you become aware, either through the prompting of the Holy Spirit or because of an approach by an offended person, then take action as soon as possible. God is not interested in all your other good deeds or your worship until the matter is resolved (Matthew 5:23). Don't get on the wrong side of God, because if you do not act he promises to defend the righteous.

In simple cases (where no harm was intended) the Christian thing to do is to submit to one another in love. It does not matter if the actions were righteous – if they have ended up being hurtful then some response and/or explanation is due.

If you believe the accusation against you to be wrong, then you may well become the offended party due to the false allegations. You still need to be engaged in this resolution process, seeking to consider in what ways you may have contributed to the misunderstanding and talking it through with your accuser privately in the first instance if possible.

c. All Church Members

Don't participate in gossip and rumours, and don't rush to conclusions about perceived hurts that are told to you. Support an offended brother/sister (including those falsely accused) by first encouraging them to work through step 1 and prepare for step 2, before agreeing to help them with step 3.

Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. (Gal 6:1)

d. Church Leaders

The Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, Elders, Board members, Ministry Leaders and all other mature Christians who become aware of conflict within the body of Christ need to encourage the offended party to follow this Biblical process for resolution. Most of all, *do not be tempted to shortcut the process or confront the accused on behalf of the offended*. First, check whether Steps 1 and 2 of the process have been followed, and if they have not, counsel the offended party to follow them. Whilst carrying another person's burden sounds like a kind act, in this case it is not nearly as effective as when the offended makes the first approach, no matter how difficult this may be to do.

Note that should Step 3 be reached, the witnesses accompany the offended and accused people as they attempt the next stage of reconciliation. They do not take the matter over on the offended or accused party's behalf. Note also that church leaders who have a conflict of interest with respect to a dispute/grievance should declare this and not participate in resolution efforts.

Where the matter reaches Step 4, it may be necessary for proper resolution of the matter to arrange for Christian reconciliation or arbitration services, and in these cases both parties may be supported by specialist legal advice.

5. A Personal Covenant of Values

As a member of the Hughes Baptist Church family, I agree and subscribe to the following biblical attitudes and values.

- a) I accept that people are different and will have differences with one another.
- b) I accept that disagreement will be an experience of life and that divergence of opinion can be positive and useful.
- c) I will seek to be Godly in all my responses to others who raise an issue/s against me.

- d) I recognise that avoiding issues or relationships solely for the reason that there may be disagreement is not helpful and can be destructive.
- e) I will seek to have a dispute dealt with directly and quickly.
- f) Towards the other person, I will show compassion, empathy, love, respect and self-control, seeking to do so in a Christ-like way.
- g) For my part I agree to focus discussion of issues, relationships or descriptions of feelings. I will not resort to inappropriate attitudes and behaviours including, but not limited to:
 - name calling;
 - mind reading (attributing evil motives);
 - guilt making (“look how you made me feel”);
 - rejecting, disparaging or discrediting another person;
 - escalating a dispute by seeking to draw others into the dispute, other than those immediately affected or directly approached to assist with resolution efforts; or
 - keeping a detailed historic record of ‘he said, she said’ with the intent of using information to build a case against someone. [Note that good record keeping is important for defence against false allegations.]
- h) I will listen well and not over-ride or interrupt.
- i) My attitude will be one of grace, patience, forgiveness and humility.
- j) I recognise that I may need to change my attitude and understanding of an issue for progress to be made.
- k) I commit myself to honesty, openness, confession in seeking to understand my role and responsibility in an issue in dispute.
- l) I will seek to be positive, sensitive and to seek God’s help.
- m) I will work towards resolution and reconciliation, accepting differences where appropriate.
- n) I will not gossip to others and will seek to move on ‘in God’, rebuilding relationships based on trust.
- o) If I am a party to a dispute and cannot see a resolution being achieved, I will voice that I am prepared to take the issue to the next biblical step, but I will only say this if I am prepared to do so.
- p) I will not use information from confidential sources, nor indicate that such information exists without the express permission of the source or owner of the information.
- q) I will pray for myself as well as the other person.
- r) I will not publicly or privately denigrate the office holders of Pastor, Elder, Board Member or Ministry Leader. Rather I will uphold these office bearers as God’s chosen leaders of His people, and ensure that any criticism or holding to account is done in an appropriate Biblical manner.

Therefore let us stop passing judgement on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. (Rom 14:13).