Sample Elders’ Charter & Code of Conduct

*Thank you to Nelson Baptist Church for sharing this document. It should be altered to suit context.*

# THE ELDERSHIP

As Baptists, we believe that Jesus is the leader of our congregation. And through the discerning work of church members, individuals are set aside and given decision making authority for different functions in the life of our church.

Elders operate under the delegated authority of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church members to undertake governance and spiritual oversight roles on behalf of the congregation. This is a highly relational leadership role undertaken through close relationships with church and ministry leaders, and the congregation.

The Eldership of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church consists of the Senior Pastor(s) and a minimum of three elected or co-opted Elders.

# CHARTER AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BAPTIST ELDERS

This Charter describes the following:

1. Constitutional requirements regarding Elders at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church
2. Considerations for prospective Elders
3. Responsibilities of Elders
4. Elders’ Principles
5. Elders’ Code of Conduct

# CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS: ELDERS

* Elders’ Charter and Code of Conduct

An Elders’ Charter and Code of Conduct will be given to all prospective Elders and will be made available on request to all Church Members.

This document will be reviewed by the Eldership annually, and any proposed changes ratified at the Annual Church Members’ Meeting.

* Nominations

It is desirable that we have a minimum of three elected Elders serving at any one time.

The Senior Pastor(s) is an Elder.

Nominations shall be brought by the Leadership to a Church Members’ Meeting. A majority of not less than 67% of the votes cast by secret ballot is required.

Elders shall serve for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-election. Elders are required to take a break of one year following three successive terms of service.

* Co-options to Eldership

1. Between Annual Church Members’ Meetings, vacancies in the Eldership may be filled by co-option as per the co-option guidelines in the Elders’ Charter and Code of Conduct.
2. Any co-opted Elder shall be appointed for a term up to and including the date of the next Annual Church Members’ Meeting, at which time the co-optee may be nominated for election as per the Nominations clause above.
3. The Eldership, on the advice of the Association Regional Leader may co-opt an external Elder. Any external co-optee must be recommended by the Region or National Leader, and must be a member in good standing of a New Zealand Baptist Church.

The Eldership will communicate to the Church Members the purpose of the external co-option, and the proposed term of external co-option. External co-options are to be ratified at the next Church Members’ Meeting.

* Character

Elders shall have exhibited the qualities of an Elder as found in 1 Tim 3:1-7.

* Responsibilities

The Elders are responsible for spiritual oversight of the congregation, support and accountability for the Senior Pastor(s), and clarifying and promoting implementation of the mission and vision of the Church.

* Meetings

Elders will meet no less than monthly.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE ELDERS

When considering a person for an Eldership role in our church is there evidence of the following:

* Character – does this person demonstrate a mature Christian character?
* Competency – do they have the leadership experience and skills necessary to serve as an Elder?
* Commitment – is this person well ‘plugged into’ the life and activities of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church?
* Call – has this person heard God’s call for them to step into this role? How has the call been heard?
* Consent – is it clear their family agree to this person stepping into this role?
* Confirmation – do God’s people recognise this person has the character, competency and calling for this role?
* Capacity – even with a mature Godly character, competency, commitment, call, consent and congregational confirmation, does this person have the time, emotional energy and resilience to undertake all that will be required in this role?

# RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

At \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church, Elders are primarily responsible for spiritual oversight of the congregation, support and accountability for the Senior Pastor(s), and clarifying and promoting implementation of the mission and vision of our Church.

## Spiritual oversight of our congregation:

* Pastoral support and availability for prayer in services, for the sick, dying and those in extreme crisis.
* Proactively protecting the congregation from unnecessary harm by:
* promoting a welcoming and warm congregational culture
* promoting and modelling the values of our congregation
* encouraging good teaching and stepping in to correct erroneous teaching when needed
* Promoting and modelling a healthy conflict resolution and reconciliation culture at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.
* Identifying and encouraging emerging leaders within the congregation.
* In cases of alleged misconduct by pastors, leaders or attendees of the church: work with Baptist regional and national staff to appropriately and in a timely manner, manage and address complaints in a God honouring way.
* Managing the Church Membership Roll.

## Support and accountability for the Senior Pastor(s):

A key Eldership responsibility is to support, encourage, protect and hold accountable the Senior Pastor(s) who hold(s) responsibility for leading and encouraging the congregation and ministry leaders to fulfil the purpose and vision of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.

* Undertaking an annual review with the Senior Pastor(s) to ensure they have sufficient resources, guidance and support to lead the congregation effectively.
* Helping the Senior Pastor(s) uphold their annual Baptist Union of NZ leadership registration commitments.
* Assisting or supporting the Senior Pastor(s) with staff and ministry leader appointments and performance management as required.
* Protecting the Senior Pastor(s) and their family members from belligerent or abusive members of the community or congregation.
* Ensure appropriate support is provided to the Senior Pastor(s) and their immediate family members during the processing and management of complaints of misconduct involving or initiated by the Senior Pastor(s).

## Clarifying and promoting implementation of the mission and vision of our Church:

Elders are tasked with holding a global ‘governance’ perspective regarding the mission and vision of our congregation. Our Senior Pastor(s) with the Management Team and Ministry Leaders are tasked with the ‘operational’ implementation of our mission and vision. Elders must actively resist getting bogged down in operational matters so they can effectively fulfil their governance responsibilities.

The Elders of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church have delegated authority to call and lead the congregation in discerning God’s will regarding the mission (purpose and values) and vision of our congregation. Elders do not determine or impose purpose, values or vision on the congregation, rather they create forum opportunities for the membership to gather and discern together.

And from this work they are tasked with the following key responsibilities:

* Collate and refine forum discussions to produce statements outlining the current mission (purpose and values) and future vision for our church.
* Present these distilled statements to the church membership for ratification
* Actively support and promote the mission and vision of our church
* Through regular communication.
* Through ensuring adequate resources are available to the Senior Pastor(s) and ministry leaders.
* Through setting strategic goals and monitoring progress as the congregation seeks to fulfil its mission and achieve its vision.
* Through resisting actions and unhealthy habits that would distract the congregation from fulfilling its mission purpose.

## Additional responsibilities that support the three primary responsibilities:

* Overall responsibility for ensuring \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church meets its legal, financial and health and safety compliance obligations.
* Ensuring open and appropriately transparent communication pathways between Elders and church members and attendees.
* Ensuring \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church maintains healthy connections with the wider Baptist Union and Regional Association, and Arotahi (NZBMS).
* Whenever available, undertaking any Elders or governance training offered by the BUNZ.
* Working with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Trust to enhance ministry opportunities in our neighbourhood and beyond.
* Being an ambassador for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church and its mission to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Community and beyond.

## Chair of Elders:

* The Senior Pastor(s) cannot be the Chair of Elders
* The Chair is responsible for the following:
* Setting the agenda for Elders’ meetings.
* Facilitating Elders’ meetings.
* Encouraging all attendees to contribute during meeting discussions.
* Ensuring time is set aside in meetings for prayer:
* For the discernment of God’s will.
* For the wellbeing of the congregation and its leaders.
* For the ongoing mission and work of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.
* Maintain regular contact with the Senior Pastor(s) for prayer, care, support and accountability.

# ELDERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Elders will apply the following principles to their work together on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church:

1. Honesty - We will be truthful and honest in our communication with each other. We will not withhold from each other information and insights which are important for us to discuss together for the sake of the church community.
2. Steadfastness - We will be supportive of one another in our discussions with other team members, staff, and members of the congregation. We will avoid allowing ourselves and others to be triangled or manipulated.
3. Discernment - We will intentionally listen to God, listen to the congregation and listen to each other as we seek together God’s will in our decision making.
4. Harmony – On the basis of the Baptist principle of *Freedom of Conscience*, we will not avoid disagreement, but we commit to ‘disagreeing agreeably’, and will actively seek to resolve any conflict in healthy biblical ways, seeking outside assistance when needed.
5. Commitment - We will be intentional in giving priority to our Eldership duties, including regular attendance at, and preparing well for Elders’ meetings.
6. Prayer - We will pray regularly for each other, for our Pastors and Ministry Leaders, for the congregation and for the mission of the church.
7. Affirmation - We will affirm the value of having different personalities and leadership styles. We will respect and accept each other and learn to serve together.
8. Encouragement - We will be purposeful in stimulating each other in our commitments to learn, grow and explore new ideas.
9. Accountability - We will be accountable to each other to develop a balanced lifestyle, to fulfil our responsibilities to the church and maintain spiritual health.
10. Caring - We will support and care for each other. We will be aware of each other’s personal pressures and family situations. We will look out for each other and be willing to raise concerns appropriately with each other.
11. Honouring - Bullying, abusive or manipulative behaviours will not be tolerated as we work together on behalf of our congregation.
12. Partnering – We will reach out to the wider Baptist Family of Churches when we need help to fulfil the governance and congregational care needs of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church - and in turn, whenever possible we will help any in our wider Baptist family who reach out to us for help with their governance and congregational care needs.

# ELDERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

See separate document.