

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION
OF CHURCH BUSINESS**

A Biblical approach to church governance

ARMIDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Preamble

The Armidale Church of Christ exists to be a fellowship of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and to bring people to faith in God. We believe it is the church's task to preach the gospel of the saving grace of the risen Lord Jesus Christ and to teach truthfully and faithfully from God's written word, the Holy Bible.

We believe that there is one Living and True God, eternally existing in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; that this triune God who created all, upholds and governs all.

We accept the New Testament as the authority for all the teachings of the church, for all matters concerning the spiritual oversight of the church, and for the qualities required for leadership. The following regulations concern only the conduct of business so that "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Cor. 14:40).

1. Name

The church herein referred to should be known as the Armidale Church of Christ.

2. Membership

Membership of the Church is both a privilege and a responsibility. Membership is not a means by which power or advantage is achieved. Rather, it is a commitment to Christian fellowship; to sharing experiences of faith; to the commonality in Christ; and to the goals and vision of the Church. Membership involves growing and supporting the body of Christ and worshipping God through service.

2.1 Baptismal membership of the church shall consist of those persons who, believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God have confessed their faith in Him, have been baptized by immersion into Him and, having entered into the membership covenant, have been accepted by the elders into membership and whose names appear on the official church roll. Baptismal members may contribute to the fellowship and work of the church in any capacity as approved by the elders.

2.2 Confessional membership is available to those persons who, believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God have confessed their faith in Him and, having entered into the membership covenant have been accepted by the elders as such. Confessional members may contribute to the fellowship and work of the church in any capacity as approved by the elders.

2.3 Inactive membership applies to a member who does not regularly participate in worship or other activities organised in support of the body life of the church. "Regularly" means "at least once a month on average".

Maintenance of rolls is specified in clause **11**.

3. Authority

The authority for the transaction of all church business shall be in the Armidale Church of Christ, and shall be vested in the elders, who shall perform their duties under the guidance of God through the Holy Spirit, in accordance with these standing orders and after consideration of information arising from business meetings of the church.

4. Elders

Elders are those who have been accepted and appointed into positions of overall leadership and pastoral care within the life of our church. It is their role to uphold, develop and progress the corporate life and total ministry of the congregation. They are those who have a vision of the church united, alive, and bearing witness to God's life and love in the community. To that end, they are committed to seeing the church as a whole, and each of us personally, reach our full potential in Christ.

The fact that elders are entrusted with such high office and responsibility speaks of our recognition of their Christian character, wisdom and maturity, and of our faith in their ability to care and lead. In their humanness, candidates for eldership are painfully aware of their inadequacies. Nevertheless, they undertake eldership responsibilities with the assurance that:

- (a) Christ who calls them will also equip them and enable them for the task;
- (b) they are called into an eldership or "team ministry" so that together the elders may encourage and supplement each other, building on each others' strengths and compensating for each others' weaknesses;
- (c) the church will be understanding, supportive and encouraging of their ministry.

Process of appointment:

- 4.1** Elders shall be those appointed to the church as members willing to serve as elders and approved by the church in the light of the qualifications as set out in I Tim. 3:1-7, Titus I:5-9 and I Peter 5:1-3 and in accordance with the procedures outlined herein. Normally, it is expected that ministers will serve in the capacity of elder also (clause **8**).
- 4.2** Elders will be nominated by the existing eldership. Where there is fewer than two serving elders then suitable senior person(s) from within NSW Churches of Christ deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the Armidale Church of Christ should be co-opted to assist with nomination. Such suitable person(s) would be:
 - (a) minister or elder from another Church of Christ;
 - (b) retired minister or senior representative of Conference.
- 4.3** Nominees for eldership shall be prayerfully considered by the existing elder(s) and such co-opted persons as required by **4.2** and tested in accordance with the Scriptures referred to in **4.1**¹.
- 4.4** Nominees for eldership shall be further interviewed by the existing elder(s) and such co-opted persons as required by **4.2** to establish their calling and their spiritual giftedness in teaching, preaching, administration, attention to doctrine, leadership, pastoral care or other New Testament roles (see for example I Tim 4:14, I Tim 5:17).

¹ For a treatise on this see:

Deuble, J. 1988. *Effective Eldership*. Vital Publications.
p.17 ff.

- 4.5** Nominees meeting the provisions of **4.3** and **4.4** shall be recommended to the congregation by the elders, who shall have nominees' names publicised by standard means within the church on the first Sunday of March. The elders shall call the church to prayerful consideration of the nominees and seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Members of the Church will have until the fourth Sunday of March to advise the existing eldership in writing of any reasons why those persons nominated should not hold office. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide members with the opportunity to submit objections. Should objections be received the validity of these objections must be prayerfully considered by the existing elders and such co-opted persons as required in **4.2**. If no valid objections are received, then those nominated will be appointed as elders from the first Sunday in April. The existing eldership shall commission the new appointees before God and the congregation by prayer and laying on of hands.
- 4.6** If at any time during the year further elders are required, then further nominations may be presented by the existing elders with the same four-week process as described in **4.2-4.5** above.
- 4.7** Elders will be appointed for a period of up to two years, whereupon, should they desire to continue to hold the office, they should subject themselves to the scrutiny of the congregation as described in **4.5**. Terms of eldership should be staggered so that one half of the eldership is subject to re-appointment in each year.

Resignation or removal of elders:

- 4.8** A person shall cease to be an elder by submitting his written resignation.
- 4.9** A person shall disqualify themselves from eldership by consistently exhibiting behaviour contrary to the requirements of eldership and Holy Scripture. Any two members of the congregation witnessing the behaviour may bring the matter to the eldership (2 Cor. 13:1). The remaining elder(s) shall evaluate the evidence and prayerfully seek the full counsel of God on the matter. Where the matter brought against an elder is confirmed as a matter of disqualification, the remaining elder(s) shall counsel the erring elder to stand down. The erring elder will covenant to stand down from the position, whereupon the remaining elder(s) shall cover him in prayer and provide every possible means of support and] restitution (Gal. 6:1-2).
- 4.10** Where matters of dispute arise from the procedures of **4.7** or **4.9** the church should make every effort to solve the issue in a prayerful, Biblical and gracious manner. Matters remaining unresolved may be arbitrated upon by suitable senior person(s) from within NSW Churches of Christ deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the Armidale Church of Christ as outlined in **4.2**.

5. Deacons

The role of deacon is one of service. Deacons are to work under the direction of the elders to help the church achieve its purposes. Deacons are generally responsible for administrative and practical functions such as maintenance of buildings and resources, financial management, secretarial services, attending to the material welfare of the needy, and other functions as required by the elders. The role of deacon is a high calling, requiring qualifications approaching those of elder.

- 5.1** Deacons shall be those members willing to serve the church and qualified in accordance with I Tim.3:8-13.

- 5.2** Deacons will be nominated by the existing eldership. Any baptised member may be considered for nomination. Nominees shall be prayerfully considered by the elder(s) whereupon the qualifications (as in **5.1**) and duties of deacons will be discussed..
- 5.3** Nominees for deacon shall be further interviewed by the elders to establish their calling and their giftedness in administration, attention to doctrine, leadership, or other roles consistent with the New Testament.
- 5.4** Nominees meeting the provisions of **5.2** and **5.3** shall be recommended to the congregation by the elders, who shall have nominees names publicised by standard means within the church on the first Sunday of March. The elders shall call the church to prayerful consideration of the nominees and seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Members of the Church will have until the fourth Sunday of March to advise the existing eldership in writing of any reasons why those persons nominated should not hold office. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide members with the opportunity to submit objections. Should objections be received the validity of these objections must be prayerfully considered by the elders. If no valid objections are received, then those nominated will be appointed as deacons from the first Sunday in April. The eldership shall commission the new deacons before God and the congregation by prayer and laying on of hands.
- 5.5** If at any time during the year further deacons are required, then further nominations may be presented by the elders with the same four-week process as described in **5.1 - 5.4** above.
- 5.6** Deacons will be appointed for a period of up to two years, whereupon, should they desire to continue to hold the office, they should subject themselves to the scrutiny of the elders and the congregation as described in **5.3** and **5.4**. Terms of deacon should be staggered so that one half of the deacons are subject to re-appointment in each year.

Resignation or removal of deacons:

- 5.7** A person shall cease to be a deacon by submitting a written resignation.
- 5.8** A person shall disqualify themselves from the diaconate by consistently exhibiting behaviour contrary to the requirements of deacon and of Holy Scripture as outlined above. Any two members of the congregation witnessing the behaviour may bring the matter to the eldership (2 Cor. 13:1). The elder(s) shall evaluate the evidence and prayerfully seek the full counsel of God on the matter. Where the matter brought against a deacon is confirmed as a matter of disqualification, the elder(s) shall counsel the erring deacon to stand down. The erring deacon will covenant to stand down from the position, whereupon the elder(s) shall cover them in prayer and provide every possible means of support and restitution (Gal. 6:1-2).

6. Meetings of elders and deacons

As far as possible the elders shall meet at least monthly for the conduct of church business and the elders and deacons shall meet bi-monthly to coordinate the functions of the church.

7. Duties of officers

- 7.1** The minister(s) shall report to, and consult with, the elder(s) at their monthly meetings and shall report to the church at all regular business meetings. The elders and minister shall be ex-officio members of all church and auxiliary committees.
- 7.2** The church secretary shall keep or cause to be kept a proper record of all business

transactions; maintain minutes, attend to correspondence and carry out such other duties as may, from time to time, be decided by the elders.

- 7.3** The church treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept a proper record of all receipts, expenditure, assets and liabilities, and shall present a bimonthly financial statement to the elders. They shall submit to the church at the annual general meeting audited financial statements in respect of the previous year, together with a report thereon; and a cash budget for the ensuing year. They shall be one of the three signatories to the church bank account. Where possible, the elder(s) should seek from within the membership a suitably skilled person other than the treasurer to act as auditor.
- 7.4** Further duties of the secretary and treasurer, as well as the duties of coordinators/supervisors are as determined by the elders.

8. Engagement of a minister

- 8.1** We accept the Biblical notion of the “priesthood of all believers” i.e., that all God’s people are called to be ministers of the Gospel. The Bible nevertheless speaks of pastors (shepherds) and teachers who are called by God for particular ministries in His church. The purpose of these particular gifts is not to monopolise ministry, but to multiply ministries (Eph. 4:11-12).
- 8.2** According to its needs, the church may appoint a person with these ministry gifts for the purpose of building up the body of believers. The negotiations for the calling and appointment of a minister shall be entrusted to the elders, who shall make recommendations to the church membership. The elders shall call the church to prayerful consideration of the candidate and seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit. The person must meet the scriptural requirements of elder as outlined in **4.1**. Members of the Church will be given a period of two weeks to consider the candidate and advise the eldership in writing of any reasons why the candidate is inappropriate for the role of minister. Should reasons be received the issues arising must be prayerfully considered by the elders. It is the elders who are charged with the responsibility of appointing or not appointing the candidate. The eldership shall cause to have a new minister appointed before God and the congregation by prayer and laying on of hands.
- 8.3** During negotiations, a term of appointment shall be agreed upon. Any extension of term shall require the endorsement of the elders and the opportunity for the members to scrutinise the candidate as in **8.1**. Decisions concerning future ministry should, in the normal course of events, be made at least six months prior to the expiry of a current term of ministry.
- 8.4** Any termination of a ministry prior to the expiry of term shall be subject to the same provisions as for elders (**4.8-4.10**).

9. Church business meetings

The purpose of church business meetings is to provide members with information and reports as are necessary to explain the condition and progress of the church, and to provide a forum in which church members may provide comment and discussion on such important matters as the elders see fit. The elders must prayerfully consider such comment and discussion prior to taking decisions on such matters.

9.1 Ordinary meetings

The church shall meet for an annual general meeting in the month of February to consider the life and function of the church in review and prospect. To this end reports shall be received from the minister and office bearers. Ordinary business sessions are to be held through the year once per quarter or as determined by the elders or the church. Notice of an annual general meeting should be given at least six

weeks in advance, or in the case of an ordinary meeting, at least four weeks in advance.

9.2 Special meetings

Special meetings of the church may be called by the elders, or should be held following a written request to the elders signed by not less than one quarter of the active membership. A request for such a meeting must state the nature of the business to be dealt with. Notices of a special meeting shall be commenced at least two weeks in advance.

9.3 Agenda

Any member wishing to have a matter placed on the agenda for a meeting are requested to give written advice to the elders or secretary not less than two weeks prior to the meeting.

9.4 The secretary shall prepare or cause to be prepared an agenda for each church meeting.

9.5 Procedure

9.5.1 The chairperson for all meetings of the church shall be an elder or a person appointed by the elder(s).

9.5.2 All church business meetings shall be conducted in a proper and orderly manner. In participating, members are expected to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is the responsibility of the elder(s) to protect the church from offence or deception (Titus 1:5-11). The order of business to be followed at meetings of the church shall be as the elders from time to time may direct.

9.5.3 The elder(s) shall decide whether or not sufficient representation of the active membership is present to continue with any meeting. In normal circumstances, the minimum number should be taken as one-third of the active membership.

10. Auxiliaries

10.1 No auxiliaries or associated committees shall be commenced in the name of the church without the prior approval of the elders.

10.2 No important alterations shall be made in the activities or objectives of any auxiliary without consultation with the elders.

10.3 All auxiliary equipment and records shall become the property of the church and must not be disposed of without the approval of the elders.

10.4 All auxiliaries shall present an annual report with a financial statement to the church annual general meeting.

11. Church rolls

The elders shall keep or cause to be kept a record of attendances at the church's Sunday Service/s. The elders shall also keep or cause to be kept a roll in respect of:

* Active members

* Inactive members

The elders shall cause to have the rolls reviewed annually.

12. Amendments

Wording of any proposed amendment of these standing orders shall be given to the church secretary in writing no later than four weeks prior to the date of the business meeting at which the amendment is to be considered and the wording shall be announced to the church when the announcement of the meeting is made. To be adopted, amendments require the approval

of the elders after prayerful consideration of all comments and suggestions from members.