



## **A Code of Ethics for Baptist Ministers**

This document lays out the code of ethics for Baptist Ministers with specific attention given to the virtues of integrity, accountability, community and spirituality. Its original form emerged from a consultation at the Baptist College Staff Conference in 2004.



# A Code of Ethics for Baptist Ministers

## Introduction

This Code of Ethics emerged from a joint meeting of staffs from the Baptist Colleges in September 2004<sup>1</sup>. It aims to provide a framework for understanding and expressing some ethical elements of the covenant commitment which Baptist ministers make with God and with one another as they live out their vocation.

Assent to the Code of Ethics is part of a much larger commitment to vocational competency. The Code should be read alongside:

**The Marks of Ministry** ([www.baptist.org.uk/marks](http://www.baptist.org.uk/marks)), that describe the characteristics we wish to observe and affirm among all ministers who are recognized or accredited by the Baptist Union of Great Britain or its regional associations; and

**The Ministerial Recognition Rules** ([www.baptist.org.uk.mrrules](http://www.baptist.org.uk.mrrules)), that list particular behaviours deemed to be inappropriate for those so recognized or accredited.

The Code of Ethics supplements the above documents. It reflects on the ministerial vocation from the perspective of a number of desirable virtues. It forms the basis for a 'canon' or 'rule' against which to measure a credible ministerial lifestyle. It also presupposes that a broad biblical ethic, described in various parts of both the Old and New Testaments<sup>2</sup>, is normative to the Christian life.

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<sup>1</sup> This document is a update of an earlier version from 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Such as the Ten Commandments, or Paul's lists of virtues and vices in Galatians 5:14-26; Ephesians 4:25-32; or Colossians 3:5-9.

## The virtues and domains of the ministerial vocation

**Four ‘virtues’ or ‘themes’** describe the essential values of a ministerial vocation. These are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but together offer a framework within which to express much that is centrally important. They are:

- 1. Integrity**
- 2. Accountability**
- 3. Community**
- 4. Spirituality**

**Six ‘domains’ or ‘spheres’** describe the ministerial vocation as it is worked out on a daily basis:

- A. The self**
- B. One-to-one relationships**
- C. A local Baptist congregation**
- D. The wider Baptist world**
- E. The wider Christian community**
- F. The whole created world.**

## The intersection of the virtues and domains

The six domains of ministerial vocation may be expanded into a series of commitments against each virtue, numbered 1-4, as shown below. The commitments deliberately take a broadly positive form, in contrast to the common inclination to frame ethical statements in negative terms.

### **A. In relation to self**

1. Commitment to intellectual honesty and growing self-awareness, nurtured and sustained through study, reflection and prayer.
2. Commitment to the disciplines of self-examination and self-regulation under God.
3. Commitment to growth as a disciple, in community with others who speak into our lives as we speak into theirs.
4. Commitment to locate our identity and security first and foremost in the Christ-like God.

### **B. In one-to-one relationships.**

1. Commitment to uncompromising attention to issues of status, power and control, with special attention to gender, age, ability, ethnicity and sexuality.
2. Commitment to fidelity in personal relationships, anchored in a

- personal discipline of confidentiality.
3. Commitment to receive ministry from others as well as to minister to them, recognising strengths in their gifting as well as limitations in our own.
  4. Commitment to value all people before God, offering to each the honour, attention and respect that is due to creatures made in God's image.

### **C. In Relation to a Local Baptist Congregation**

1. Commitment to root out personal prejudices, rejecting the easy temptations of exploitation and manipulation, and a commitment to Baptist identity.
2. Commitment to learn and grow with others in a local Baptist congregation, as they affirm and confirm our calling in Christ.
3. Commitment to encourage the unity of the local congregation in a generous spirit of welcome and inclusivity.
4. Commitment to transparency of life, particularly in matters of finance and personal lifestyle.

### **D. In Relation to the Wider Baptist World**

1. Commitment to grow in mutual understanding through dialogue within the wider Baptist family, expecting an encounter with ever-greater light and truth.
2. Commitment to form significant relationships at many levels of Baptist life, in Britain and across the world, walking with and watching over one another in covenant love.
3. Commitment to enhance the bonds of fellowship and friendship across the world Baptist community.
4. Commitment to explore the journey of faith by drawing on the rich inheritance of Baptist Christians across time and around the world.

### **E. In Relation to the Wider Christian Community**

1. Commitment to learn with and from the wider Christian community as we study the wider history of God's people.
2. Commitment to receive the ministries of guidance and oversight from others in the wider Body of Christ.
3. Commitment to speak honourably of others in the wider community of the world Church, neither undermining nor undervaluing their calling and work.
4. Commitment to search out, be challenged and changed by the work of God's Spirit beyond the local congregation and the particular tradition to which we belong.

### **F. In Relation to the Whole Created World**

1. Commitment to listen and respond to the real condition of the global community to which we belong, with all the pain of poverty and conflict,

- together with ecological responsibility.
2. Commitment to listen for the word which God speaks in every age from beyond the boundaries of the covenant community.
  3. Commitment to speak and act prophetically into the many contexts of a hurting world, crossing all the boundaries of race and creed.
  4. Commitment to relate respectfully to all people, those of other religions and of none, upholding the causes of tolerance and religious freedom.

The intersection between the four virtues with their commitments and the six domains of ministerial vocation may alternatively be expressed in a six-by-four grid, shown overleaf.



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	IN RELATION TO SELF	IN ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIPS	IN RELATION TO A LOCAL BAPTIST CONGREGATION	IN RELATION TO THE WIDER BAPTIST WORLD	IN RELATION TO THE WIDER CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY	IN RELATION TO THE WHOLE CREATED WORLD
<b>INTEGRITY</b>	Commitment to intellectual honesty and growing self-awareness, nurtured and sustained through study, reflection and prayer	Commitment to uncompromising attention to issues of status, power and control, with special attention to gender, age, ability, ethnicity and sexuality	Commitment to root out personal prejudices, rejecting the easy temptations of exploitation and manipulation, and a commitment to Baptist identity	Commitment to grow in mutual understanding through dialogue within the wider Baptist family, expecting an encounter with ever-greater light and truth	Commitment to learn with and from the wider Christian community as we study the wider history of God's people	Commitment to listen and respond to the real condition of the global community to which we belong, with all the pain of poverty and conflict, together with ecological responsibility
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	Commitment to the disciplines of self-examination and self-regulation under God	Commitment to fidelity in personal relationships, anchored in a personal discipline of confidentiality	Commitment to learn and grow with others in a local Baptist congregation, as they affirm and confirm our calling in Christ	Commitment to form significant relationships at many levels of Baptist life, in Britain and across the world, walking with and watching over one another in covenant love	Commitment to receive the ministries of guidance and oversight from others in the wider Body of Christ	Commitment to listen for the word which God speaks in every age from beyond the boundaries of the covenant community
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Commitment to growth as a disciple, in community with others who speak into our lives as we speak into theirs	Commitment to receive ministry from others as well as to minister to them, recognising strengths in their gifting as well as limitations in our own	Commitment to encourage the unity of the local congregation in a generous spirit of welcome and inclusivity	Commitment to enhance the bonds of fellowship and friendship across the world Baptist community	Commitment to speak honourably of others in the wider community of the world Church, neither undermining nor undervaluing their calling and work	Commitment to speak and act prophetically into the many contexts of a hurting world, crossing all the boundaries of race and creed
<b>SPIRITUALITY</b>	Commitment to locate our identity and security first and foremost in the Christ-like God	Commitment to value all people before God, offering to each the honour, attention and respect that is due to creatures made in God's image	Commitment to transparency of life, particularly in matters of finance and personal lifestyle	Commitment to explore the journey of faith by drawing on the rich inheritance of Baptist Christians across time and around the world	Commitment to search out, be challenged and changed by the work of God's Spirit beyond the local congregation and the particular tradition to which we belong	Commitment to relate respectfully to all people, those of other religions and of none, upholding the causes of tolerance and religious freedom