



A Code of Ethics for Baptist Ministers

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

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The first draft of this Code of Ethics emerged from a consultation at the Baptist Colleges Staff Conference in 2004. Its original matrix format is appended as Appendix 1.

The virtues or themes that drew most significant attention were

**integrity,
accountability,
community
spirituality.**

These categories are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but together they offer a framework within which to express much that is centrally important. Within each sphere, the ethical commitments follow the sequence above.

These virtues are exercised in five spheres in which ministry is exercised:

**the self,
one to one relationships,
a local Baptist congregation,
the wider Christian community,
in relation to the wider Baptist world
the whole created world.**

The code deliberately does not intend to be specific about particular behaviours, such as adultery, fraud or violence against the person. These behaviours are encompassed within the broader categories as unacceptable. The presupposition is everywhere supposed that a broad biblical ethic, described in various parts of the Scriptures both Old Testament (such as the Ten Commandments,) and New (such as Paul's lists of virtues and vices as found in Galatians 5:14-26; Ephesians 4:25-32; or Colossians 3:5-9,) is normative to the Christian life.

The Code is not a description of the sanctions that might be imposed when a minister offends against the high ideals that it commends. For instance, if every minister guilty of coveting their neighbouring Baptist church's facilities, members, programmes or success were removed from the Register, few would remain, whereas, in general, those whose sexual conduct breaks the vows of faithfulness in marriage through conducting an adulterous relationship, are rightly removed from the Register, such conduct being unbecoming of any Christian, and especially of a Baptist Minister.

In Relation to Self

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

In One to One Relationships.

- Commitment to uncompromising attention to issues of status, power and control, with special attention to gender, age, ability, ethnicity and sexuality
- Commitment to fidelity in personal relationships, anchored in a personal discipline of confidentiality
- 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 value all people before God, offering to each the honour, attention and respect that is due to creatures made in God's image

In Relation to a Local Baptist Congregation

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

In Relation to the Wider Baptist World

- Commitment to grow in mutual understanding through dialogue within the wider Baptist family, expecting an encounter with ever-greater light and truth
- 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 enhance the bonds of fellowship and friendship across the world Baptist community
- Commitment to explore the journey of faith by drawing on the rich inheritance of Baptist Christians across time and around the world

In Relation to the Wider Christian Community

- Commitment to learn with and from the wider Christian community as we study the wider history of God's people
- Commitment to receive the ministries of guidance and oversight from others in the wider Body of Christ
- Commitment to speak honourably of others in the wider community of the world Church, neither undermining nor undervaluing their calling and work
- 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

In Relation to the Whole Created World

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

A Code of Ethics for those in Covenant as Ministers of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

At a joint meeting of staffs from the Baptist Colleges, gathered in Manchester in September 2004, work began on the creation of a framework within which to understand and express some ethical elements of the covenant commitment which we make with God and with each other as we live out a vocation to Baptist Ministry.

In discussion it soon became clear that assent to a 'Code of Ethics' is part of a much larger commitment to 'vocational competency'. Such a code could form the basis of promises made at ordination, and needs to find a form which can act as a 'canon' or 'rule' against which to measure a credible ministerial life-style.

In the initial exploration, two axes of understanding soon emerged:

1. A number of 'virtues' or 'themes' which describe the essential values of a ministerial vocation. The four which drew most significant attention were: **integrity, accountability, community** and **spirituality**. These categories are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but together they offer a framework within which to express much that is centrally important.

2. A number of 'domains' or 'spheres' within which a ministerial vocation is worked out on a daily basis. The six which usefully span a wide range of a minister's life and work are: **the self, one to one relationships, a local Baptist congregation, the wider Christian community, and the whole created world**.

By creating a four-by-six grid, it is possible to explore the intersection of these axes in twenty-four short statements of commitment. Together these cover the majority of the insights named in our initial conversations, and can now form a starting point for further work. Each statement deliberately takes a broadly 'positive' form, a strategy which we affirm in contrast to the common inclination to frame ethical statements in 'negative' terms.

Richard Kidd

	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
INTEGRITY	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
ACCOUNTABILITY	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
COMMUNITY	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
SPIRITUALITY	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

