

Baptists Together and Registration of Buildings for Same-Sex Marriage

Biblical Marriage Re-affirmed

Council positively re-affirms and commends to our churches our Union's historic Biblical understanding of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, and calls them to live in the light of it.

This is a response to the introduction of The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and churches seeking clarification of the BUGB response to the matter of registering buildings for the solemnisation of same-sex marriage.

This understanding has shaped the rules for accredited Baptist ministers regarding sexuality and the ministry and our rules continue to remain unchanged (see www.baptist.org.uk/minrecrules).

Baptist Ecclesiology

The Declaration of Principle, which is the basis of our Union, states:

'That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His Laws.'

This way of being church stresses our unity as disciples of our 'Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and acknowledges the potential for some diversity in pastoral and missional practice. As disciples covenanting together in humility we seek God's help to live with the tension of our independence and interdependence as Baptist churches.

Called to Mission

The Declaration of Principle also states:

'That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.'

Therefore, as a gospel people we renew our commitment to engaging in sharing the Good News with all people and encourage our churches to reach out to every part of their communities with imagination and compassion.

Walking together in Unity

Reflecting on the issue of churches registering their buildings for same sex marriage, Council recognises areas of genuine and deep disagreement. We believe that these are dimensions of the tension of living with unity and diversity. We continue to seek God's grace as we 'walk together and watch over one another' under the authority of Christ.

In the light of this, recognising the costs involved and after careful and prayerful reflection and listening, we humbly urge churches who are considering conducting same-sex marriages to refrain from doing so out of mutual respect. At the same time, we also humbly urge all churches to remain committed to our Union out of mutual respect; trusting that the one who unites us is stronger than what divides us.