

Consultation with Churches, Associations and Colleges on Ministerial Rules

Introduction

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this Consultation. As a valuable member of Baptists Together we really want to hear from you.

You do not need to have come to a conclusion or consensus as a church in order to participate. We would appreciate your contribution, even if all you want to say is that this is not an issue for your church.

The Baptist Union Council is inviting churches and ministers to share their responses to a request to change Appendix 3 of the Ministerial Recognition Rules, through this consultation process, in order to enable Council to respond to the question that has been asked.

This survey is designed to give Council a clearer picture of how our churches are engaging with issues of marriage and sexuality, together with any feedback about the specific question that you would like to be heard. It should take around 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

There are a few permissions questions that you need to respond to (marked with an asterisk), but otherwise questions are optional. You can move back and forward through the survey using the 'Prev' and 'Next' buttons at the end of each page.

At the beginning of the survey, you will be asked to give some information about your church, so you might want your most recent annual return details to hand to help with this. We are asking for this so that we can ensure that the overall survey feedback is representative of Baptists Together.

You are being asked to complete a survey on behalf of your church, association or college.

The following is a list of the questions being asked on the online survey so that you can take time to reflect on your responses and talk to others in your church, association or college before completing the online survey.

1. This survey is to allow consultation with churches, associations and colleges. If you are replying in your role as a minister or a regional minister, please use the survey that has been sent directly to you instead. We're asking this to ensure you are answering the correct survey.

I'm responding on behalf of a church

I'm responding on behalf of an association

I'm responding on behalf of a college

I'm not responding on behalf of a church, association or college (consultation will close)

Who is completing this response?

We are asking these questions so that we can contact you if we have queries about the responses. We will not use your contact details for any other purpose. This information given in questions 2 and 3 will be detached from the data before analysis.

2. What is your name?
3. If we need to contact you for clarification of any answers what email address should we use?
4. What is your role in the church, association or college? (*dropdown menu of choices*)
5. With whom have you consulted ahead of responding to this consultation? Please tick all that apply.
 - No one, this is my perspective of the church
 - Conversation with the minister
 - Conversation with the Leadership Team/Diaconate/Eldership
 - Church and/or Church Meeting, informally
 - Church Meeting, formally
 - Other (please specify)

About your church

This is to ensure representation from the diversity of Baptist Union churches. This data will not be linked to the rest of the consultation.

6. Please give the name of your church, association or college.
7. Please enter your reference number.
(You'll find this in the email inviting you to take part in this Consultation.)
8. Please give the postcode of the church building, if you have one.
9. Which Regional Association do you belong to?
10. Is your church a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)
11. Please tick all your Ecumenical Partner Denominations
 - Not applicable - we are not an LEP
 - Church of England
 - Methodist
 - United Reformed Church
 - Other (please specify)
12. Does your church have an accredited Baptist minister? Please tick one box
 - We have, or are seeking, an accredited minister(s)
 - Our minister is from one of our LEP partner denominations
 - Our minister(s) are not accredited with the Baptist Union
 - We do not have a minister

The following questions are being asked to ensure representation from diverse churches. We understand that this may be difficult to gauge. Please give your best estimate, to the nearest 10 or 20%.

13. What % of your weekly attendance are in each age group?

- Children 0-11
- Young People 11-18
- Young Adults 18-30
- Other Adults 30-65
- Seniors 65+

14. What % of your weekly attendance are of each gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

15. What % of your weekly attendance are of each ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Other

Same-sex marriage and the accreditation of ministers

In this section we invite you to give the view of your church, association or college on the specific question - should the bracketed section be retained or removed from Appendix 3, Section 4.3:

'Sexual Misconduct which brings the church and ministry into disrepute. NB This specifically includes sexual intercourse and other genital sexual activity outside of marriage (as defined exclusively as between a man and a woman).'

You will be invited to move a 'slider' to the position that best represents the view of your church. If there is a range of views in your church making it difficult to select a single position on the slider, please use the text boxes on the following pages to explain. **To see how these questions are presented in the online survey, please review the 'walkthrough' video for churches at www.baptist.org.uk/faq**

16. How strongly does your church think/feel that a minister should be accredited by the Baptist Union of Great Britain if they are in a same-sex marriage?

Absolutely not, they cannot be Neutral Definitely, yes, they can be

17. If the Ministerial Rules were changed, could your church continue to belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain alongside churches who think differently about this matter?

Absolutely not Neutral Definitely, yes

Same-sex marriage and the accreditation of ministers

Our current Ministerial Recognition Rules are clear that any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage is deemed gross misconduct. The specific clause (Appendix 3, Section 4.3) says:

'Sexual Misconduct which brings the church and ministry into disrepute. NB This specifically includes sexual intercourse and other genital sexual activity outside of marriage (as defined exclusively as between a man and a woman).'

Some members have requested that the last section in brackets is removed, which would mean that a minister who is in a same-sex marriage would no longer be committing gross misconduct and lose their accreditation. The removal of the words in the brackets would change the current definition of marriage in the Ministerial Recognition Rules.

In this section, we invite you to tell us the effect on your church's pastoral (within the church) and missional (outside the church) life.

You will be invited to move a 'slider' to the position that best represents the view of your church and give further explanation if you would like to.

18. In your context, if BUGB were to decide to **retain** the section in brackets, what effect would this have on the **pastoral life** of your church?

Very negative

Very positive

19. In your context, if BUGB were to decide to **remove** the section in brackets, what effect would this have on the **pastoral life** of your church?

Very negative

Very positive

20. What effect do you feel it would have on the **pastoral life** of your congregation?

21. In your context, if BUGB were to decide to **retain** the section in brackets, what effect would this have on the **missional life** of your church?

Very negative

Very positive

22. In your context, if BUGB were to decide to **remove** the section in brackets, what effect would this have on the **missional life** of your church?

Very negative

Very positive

23. What effect do you feel it would have on the **missional life** of your congregation?

Church engagement with matters relating to human sexuality

24. Has your church, association or college engaged with matters relating to human sexuality within the last five years?

Yes

No

If the answer to Q 24 is 'yes'

25. How has your church, association or college engaged with matters relating to human sexuality in the last five years?

Sermon series

Facilitated conversation

Invited speakers

Church meetings

Regional Association days

Other (please specify)

26. Alongside the Bible, are there any resources you found particularly helpful?
Please use no more than around 100 words.

If the answer to Q 24 is 'no'

25. Please indicate why have you not engaged with matters of human sexuality in the last five years? Tick all that apply.

We have a clear position on these matters

It would be pastorally unhelpful at this time

There are more important things to be concerned about

We didn't have the time to do this

We haven't found helpful resources to do this

The congregation isn't interested

Other (please specify)

26. How likely are you likely to engage with this in the next two years?

Not at all

Definitely

27. What style or type of resources would you find helpful?

28. Is there anything else you would like us to hear about your church's views on these matters?