

## **Bromsgrove Baptist Church – Working towards an Ethos Statement**

One element of our expressed vision says:

“We are seeking to demonstrate the love of God for all people through the way in which we live our lives of faith in unity together.” This statement makes it clear that how we live, our lifestyle, is of importance as we seek to express our faith. We recognise that we should be seeking Jesus’ direction for our lifestyles and that we should seek unity together as we do that.

### **The Beliefs of Bromsgrove Baptist Church Discerned**

We believe that God loves everyone regardless of their background and current lifestyle. It is his desire that all people come to a personal recognition that Jesus, God in human form, is their Lord and Saviour. If they do that then they will enter into a grace-filled personal relationship with God himself, which is inevitably life transforming.

For this reason we believe that all people, regardless of their background or current lifestyle, are welcome to respectfully explore the teaching of Jesus and the bible through attendance at our Sunday church services. Responding to Jesus love through gaining faith in Him, expressing this through baptism and then in covenant partnership with the church is open to all. The church will seek to offer love, as it is directed to do, to all people who attend seeking Jesus’ ways.

Bromsgrove Baptist Church believes that God sets out in the Bible the nature of lifestyle that he seeks from his adopted children. Whilst we recognise that across the Christian church as a whole that there is diversity in the understanding and application of the Bible’s teaching, at Bromsgrove Baptist Church we believe that when it comes to sexual relationships that God’s best is for these to be between one woman and one man committed together in marriage. To not have a sexual relationship at all with another person is also a highly commended lifestyle choice. The church recognises that this is however a difficult teaching for those who are single and would prefer not to be so, or for those who are attracted to members of the same sex. Covenant Partners and those attending church are to be encouraged to express if they find challenge in following Jesus’ teaching in this area of life and to seek prayer and support regarding it. As a place of grace-filled love, the church should be a community where lifestyle challenges can be shared safely together.

The approved Governing Document for Bromsgrove Baptist Church already sets out stipulations for those seeking election to the leadership team which include having undergone baptism by full immersion, being able to pass the Charity Commission’s “Fit and Proper Person” test to become a trustee, and displaying necessary character attributes in order to be recommended for election. For the avoidance of doubt, Bromsgrove Baptist Church believes that a lifestyle consistent with God’s best is required for leadership within the life of the church.

God’s best lifestyle is far reaching. We are called not to be greedy, not to lie, not to cheat and not to have evil or lustful thoughts. We should love our neighbours and even our enemies and should love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. All of us fail time and again to live up to God’s best and following saying sorry (“repentance”) then the grace of God based on Jesus sacrificial death allows us to be made fully right with Him once again. It is important however for us each to strive to live God’s best in our conscious choices and not to rely on being “under grace” as a reason for an abandonment of lifestyle discipline. So let us commit to be honest with each other and to encourage each other all the more as we await the final day when Jesus returns to earth to bring the promised fulfilment of His plan.

## **Bromsgrove Baptist Church – Full Ethos Statement (July 2025)**

### **1. Our Christian Identity**

Bromsgrove Baptist Church is a community of Christians who live to worship God, to grow in our understanding and experience of God, to share the good news about Jesus Christ and to work for the common good. It is this Christian identity, our covenant with the Baptist community and Bromsgrove Baptist Church's agreed beliefs and values that are the foundation of all we are and do.

### **2. Our Commitment to the Wider Baptist Community**

Bromsgrove Baptist Church has chosen to covenant with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) and its member churches and organisations. Therefore, BUGB's Declaration of Principle, Vision and Culture all inform our ethos as a Baptist church.

#### **The Declaration of Principle**

The three-part 'Declaration of Principle' forms the basis of understanding for all who belong to the Baptist Union and Bromsgrove Baptist Church affirms this declaration prayerfully and wholeheartedly:

1. 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.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.
3. 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.

#### **Baptist Union of Great Britain Vision and Culture**

BUGB is committed to intentionally developing a culture where we are "Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission". This means we:

- Seek to be a movement of spirit led communities – As those who have encountered the living Christ, to intentionally seek his will and purpose for our local churches and every expression of our shared life. (Galatians 5:22-25)
- Feel like one team – celebrating diversity; valuing, respecting and trusting each other as we work together in partnerships - making sure everyone feels included and listened to. (I Corinthians 12:24b-27)
- Embrace adventure – being serious about discipleship, willing to take risks, pioneer and move out of the comfort zone of familiar ways of doing things. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- Inspire others – with a generosity of spirit, to energise and motivate people to be all that God created them to be. (Ephesians 5:1 & 2)

- Share a hunger for God's coming kingdom – nurturing a 'holy discontent' that arises from our desire to give practical expression to our vision of God's purpose for creation - confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy and challenging worldly attitudes to power, wealth, status and security both within and beyond our Union. (Matthew 6:9 & 10)

### **3. Our Vision Statement**

It is our aim that through all of our church activities, as well as through involvement in our wider communities, that all people will come to learn about and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

#### **Statement of Beliefs**

In recognition of the Baptist principle that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer the laws of Jesus Christ, and following the ethos outlined above, Bromsgrove Baptist Church has discerned and agreed to hold to the following theological convictions. We believe that responding to Jesus love through gaining faith in Him, expressing this through baptism and then in covenant partnership with the church is open to all.

#### Women in Leadership

Bromsgrove Baptist Church holds to the view that God created women and men equal in personhood and that He calls and equally affirms both men and women into a vast array of roles, including all forms of church leadership. The Baptist Union Council has affirmed the ministry of women for over 100 years and is committed to gender equality in ministry.

#### Sex and Gender

Bromsgrove Baptist Church welcomes all members of the transgender community into the full participation of our life together at Bromsgrove Baptist Church.

#### Sexual Orientation & Same-Sex Marriage

Bromsgrove Baptist Church holds to the understanding that while sexual orientation in and of itself is no barrier to participation in the life, baptism and covenant partnership of the church, sexual relationships should only be expressed in marriage which we recognise as being between a man and a woman, assigned at birth. This theological position precludes those who are not celibate outside of marriage or those in a same-sex marriage or relationship from being appointed to leadership positions in the life of the church.\*

#### Marriage & Divorce

Bromsgrove Baptist Church holds to the understanding that neither divorce or remarriage are necessarily barriers to church leadership or full participation in the life of the church.

\*Leadership is defined as teaching, preaching, children and young people leaders and helpers, lifegroup leaders, worship leaders, the diaconate and church minister.

This statement will be reviewed periodically.