

Oakes Baptist Church Ethos Statement

1. Our Christian Identity

Oakes 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, our church covenant and Oakes 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

Oakes 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 Oakes 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. (1 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. The Evangelical Alliance Basis of Faith

The church has chosen to affiliate with the wider community of evangelical churches in the United Kingdom by being a member of the Evangelical Alliance. We understand Evangelical Alliance Basis of Faith is an acceptable summary of the main doctrines of Biblical Christianity. The work of the Alliance will inform our own discernment of God's will for Oakes Baptist Church although Oakes Baptist Church is not bound by all statements made by the Alliance and other members.

We believe in:

The one true God who lives eternally in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.

The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God – fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.

The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.

The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin

The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.

The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.

The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.

The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness

The church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers — given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.

The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

4. Specific 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, Oakes Baptist Church has discerned and agreed to hold to the following theological convictions.

Women in Leadership

Oakes 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. We encourage women to stand for election as trustees and have in the past called a woman as pastor in this church.

Human Sexuality and Marriage

There is a range of views within this church on human sexuality and marriage. At the moment Oakes Baptist Church maintains the traditional Christian understanding of human sexuality and marriage summarised below:

Human beings are created by God in his image male and female.

The only context for the expression of a physical sexual relationship between two people is marriage – a publicly declared, life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman based on self-giving love.

We affirm God's love and concern for all human beings, whatever their sexuality, and so repudiate all attitudes and actions which victimise or diminish people whose affections are directed towards people of the same sex.

We recognise that all people are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people – whatever their sexuality – is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterise Christian responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in future.

Divorce and Remarriage

Oakes Baptist Church holds to the understanding that there are legitimate biblical grounds for divorce (e.g. sexual immorality, abuse and neglect). Under these

circumstances remarriage should not be a barrier to leadership or full participation in the life of the church.

5. Statement of Inclusion

Oakes Baptist Church holds that all people are loved by God and are invited into his Kingdom life.

We are therefore called to become a church community where all are loved and are invited to belong.

We welcome everyone regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, physical and mental ability, neurodiversity, education, class, economic status and political outlook.