

Monmouth Baptist Church Ethos Statement

1. Our Christian Identity

Monmouth Baptist Church is a local fellowship of Jesus centred, Bible believing Christians, called to share the good news about Jesus Christ. We focus on knowing Jesus better and making Jesus known. Our agreed beliefs and values are the foundation of all we are and do.

2. Our Commitment to the Wider Christian Community

Monmouth Baptist Church is in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). Therefore, we hold to the BUGB's Declaration of Principle. We are also affiliated with the theological grouping of churches historically called Evangelical. So we are in membership with the Evangelical Alliance, reflecting the heritage still shared by most UK Baptists, and we adhere to their basis of beliefs. We also have a Church covenant which echoes the commitment made by early British Baptists to each other in the local church. These are all outlined in our Constitution [here](#).

3. Statement of Biblical Inclusion

Our commitment to what we believe God has revealed in the Bible means that Monmouth Baptist Church seeks to be a place where anyone can come and feel welcome regardless of age, race, background, lifestyle, beliefs, gender, sexuality or anything else. We believe the Good News of Jesus (The Gospel) is for everyone, and we believe that all are invited to meet Jesus at the cross (e.g. Galatians 3:28 and John 6:37). Part of that welcome will be to encourage people to express their questions and doubts and wrestle with the teaching of Scripture, in order to encounter God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We also seek to be honest about the things which make us distinctive as Christians and shape our community life together.

Putting God's Word first, we believe diversity, inclusion and equity are not goals to be pursued for their own sake, but are understood in connection with the Biblical Christian goal of finding unity in Christ. So we embrace the full scope of God's revelation in Scripture concerning the creation of humanity, its brokenness through the Fall, the possibility of redemption in Christ, and the final consummation in heaven when, through Christ, people of all nations, tribes, peoples and languages will be gathered before God's throne in joyous unified worship.

Our commitment to Biblical inclusion means that we seek to overcome any barriers which keep people from the opportunity to consider and respond to Jesus, and from finding their true identity in Him. We long to see everyone included in the salvation which Jesus offers, through repentance and faith, to all who follow Him as Saviour and Lord. And we long for everyone, becoming His disciples, to know life in all its fullness, participating fully in the life of His Kingdom, expressed in our local church.

The following value statements apply limitations, in certain specific circumstances, where Monmouth Baptist Church has discerned a difference between current cultural or political beliefs, and our own understanding of the Christian faith, and what we believe faithful Christian discipleship looks like. This does not, however, diminish the reality of our stated aim to welcome anyone to join with us in hearing about the Good News of Jesus, and learn, with us, how to know Him better. We also prayerfully offer gracious support for all who struggle in different areas of temptation, confusion, or other needs.

Since the values of Monmouth Baptist Church flow from the beliefs and theological convictions held by the church, and 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, the church has discerned and agreed to hold to the following convictions as they relate directly to the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, and which are relevant for the purposes of employment, leadership, or the provision of services.¹

Women in Leadership²

Monmouth Baptist Church holds to the understanding which flows from our beliefs, our reading of Scripture, and the example of Jesus, that all men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth (e.g. Genesis 1:26-27).³ Whilst God created women and men equal in personhood, our understanding of Scripture is that it teaches a complementarity of roles for men and women in marriage and church leadership. We therefore hold that the office of elder, minister or pastor should be held by suitably qualified men (e.g. 1 Timothy 2:11-15).

Teaching in Church, however, is not restricted solely to elders/ministers/pastors. All Christians are involved in teaching and encouraging one another. This includes women who are to exercise teaching gifts in certain contexts within the church (e.g. Titus 2:4) and may well be involved in teaching in various forums.

Sex and Gender⁴

Monmouth Baptist Church holds to the understanding, which flows from our beliefs and reading of Scripture, that God created human beings as male and female (e.g. Genesis 1:26-27). We therefore believe God calls humanity to live according to our gender identity which is inseparable from our biological sex determined at conception. Our gender may not be changed or reassigned.

We are fully committed to helping those who, for various reasons, struggle with their sense of gender identity, to discover God's purposes for them through their identity in Christ. This would be through teaching, prayer and pastoral care.

In Monmouth Baptist Church, someone presenting as male (or female) by virtue

¹These additional theological statements relate to protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These statements are relevant, for example, when the church is seeking to make appointments to certain paid roles within the life of the church which have a legitimate occupational requirement for the Church's theological principles to be applied. The statements may also be relevant for the provisions of our facilities, activities and services.

²Monmouth Baptist Church, as a member of the Baptist Union, exercises its freedom within the Declaration of Principle, to differ from the Baptist Union Council in this matter, recognising that a range of Biblical interpretations can be reached on this subject.

³Phrasing taken from the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) Ethos statements.

⁴The Baptist Union's advice is that currently someone who identifies as gender fluid/non-binary is likely to be protected against discrimination under the law as well as someone who is proposing to undergo or has undergone gender re-assignment. There are likely to be further developments in the area of gender reassignment, which the church will need to keep under review.

of gender reassignment, would be unable to serve in leadership positions in the church.

Sexual Orientation & Same-Sex Marriage

Monmouth Baptist Church holds to the understanding that marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman, and is a picture of the relationship between Christ and his bride the church, and is defined by the Lord Jesus Himself (e.g. Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:5-6 and Ephesians 5:22-33). Sexual intimacy is a gift from God to be enjoyed only within the context of marriage.

Sexual orientation in and of itself is no barrier to full participation in the life of the church. The Baptist Union Council (2016 and 2024) recognise this as the historic Biblical understanding of marriage, which also shapes our Ministerial Rules, and calls our churches to live in the light of it. Therefore Monmouth Baptist Church will seek to uphold Biblical sexual ethics in both our teaching and our practices and demonstrate, within the church, its goodness for humanity. None of our pastors would in good conscience be able to perform, bless or host same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies.

We also recognise that many Christians struggle with sexual temptation (whether same-sex attraction or heterosexual). We will prayerfully foster, within our church, gracious support of one another in such struggles.

Marriage & Divorce

Monmouth Baptist Church holds to the understanding that there are legitimate Biblical grounds for divorce (e.g. sexual immorality, abuse and neglect e.g. Matthew 19:8-12, 1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Under these circumstances, remarriage should not be a barrier to leadership or full participation in the life of the church. Outside of these circumstances, we also believe that in the Gospel God offers grace, healing and a new start for those who repent of sin and turn to Christ. In such circumstances someone may also be eligible to serve in Church leadership roles, if determined by the Church.

This statement was approved by the Church Members' meeting of Monmouth Baptist Church on 10 September 2024.