

Ethos Statement, Castle Hill Baptist Church, Warwick

1. Our Christian Identity

Castle Hill 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 Castle Hill 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

Castle Hill 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.¹

The Declaration of Principle

The three-part 'Declaration of Principle' forms the basis of understanding for all who belong to the Baptist Union and Castle Hill 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).

¹ See BUGB website for more: <https://baptist.org.uk/Groups/220180/About.aspx>

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3. Our Vision Statement

As a church, we have discerned the following vision statement specifically for our mission and ministry, complemented by the Vision and Culture of The Baptist Union of Great Britain:

To be a beacon of hope in Warwick and beyond...

We are therefore committed to creating a welcoming and safe environment for all to gather to worship, explore and grow up in the Christian faith. The nurturing of children, young people and families is important to us, as well as reaching new people for Christ. In all of this we seek to: *grow followers of Jesus, who make followers, transforming lives with the good news of Jesus.*

4. Statement of Inclusion

Castle Hill 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. This means we will 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 to participation in our life together.

We feed and nurture our life together through Bible reading and teaching, friendship (aka fellowship), worship and the celebration of communion (Acts 2:42).

We seek to hold our differences with humility and generosity, not allowing them to become barriers to those who are finding faith among us. Our shared endeavour is to create an environment where each of us can work out what it means to follow Jesus (Phil 1:12-13), within strong bonds of friendship (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24-25).

5. Statement of Theological Convictions

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, Castle Hill Baptist Church has discerned and agreed to hold to the following theological convictions.

For certain roles in the life of Castle Hill Baptist Church, there is a legitimate occupational requirement for these statements to be applied.

Women in Leadership

Castle Hill 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.

Sex and Gender

Many in Castle Hill Baptist Church acknowledge that while gender reassignment in and of itself is no barrier to participation in the life of the church, on the basis that the Bible teaches God created man and woman, and a person's gender is God given and assigned at birth, this theological position precludes transgender persons from being appointed to leadership positions in the church.

Sexual Orientation & Same-Sex Marriage

Many in Castle Hill Baptist Church hold to the understanding that while sexual orientation in and of itself is no barrier to participation in the life of the church, sexual relationships can only be expressed

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in marriage which is recognised as being between a man and a woman. This theological position precludes those who are not celibate outside of marriage, or those in a same-sex marriage, from being appointed to leadership positions in the life of the church.

Marriage & Divorce

Most people in Castle Hill Baptist Church hold 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.

This Ethos Statement was agreed by the church meeting on **24 May 2024**

This policy will be reviewed after one year

Review date: **May 2025**