



open baptist network

OUR COVENANT

We, who covenant together as the Open Baptist Network, gather as Baptist Christians, seeking to be faithful to the call of God in Jesus Christ, to be disciples and servants in the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We come from churches, ministries and contexts shaped by a rich Baptist heritage. With gratitude we affirm the Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain BUGB), and we cherish the Five Core Values for a Gospel People adopted by BUGB in the 1990s, that we might be a prophetic, inclusive, sacrificial, missionary, and worshipping community. (See Appendix)

Covenanting together is the way that Baptist Christians have, since our beginnings, bound ourselves to God and to one another in the freedom and responsibility of the gospel. What follows is the shape of our common life: the commitments we make to God, to each other, and to God's world. We hold these as living promises, to be tested, deepened and renewed in the company of the Spirit and in the practice of community.

We covenant to be Open to God

We will:

- uphold God's Word, spoken through the life and teaching of Jesus and witnessed to in the Scriptures, as authoritative for our life together, always seeking fresh inspiration from it, and where possible reading it together rather than alone;
- seek the mind of Christ in matters of importance through patient communal discernment, trusting that the Spirit speaks through the gathered church;
- recognise in every human being the image of God, and discern God's creative and loving purpose for each person;
- pursue God's Kingdom of justice and peace as the horizon of all our activity, expressed in worship, mission, pastoral care, and public witness;

- make worship central to who we are when we gather, holding times and places of prayer, lament, thanksgiving and praise.

We covenant to be Open to one another

We will:

- be churches and individuals genuinely inclusive in our welcome and our leadership, without regard to differences of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, age, neurodiversity, or social class;
- affirm and celebrate those among us called by God to specific ministries, recognising the freedom and responsibility of each local congregation to discern and call in its own context;
- honour the freedom of conscience of every individual believer and every local church to interpret and live the call of God, without coercion from the state, from any wider ecclesial body, or from this Network itself;
- celebrate freedom and diversity among us as a gift of God and a long-standing Baptist conviction; we will neither paper over our differences nor allow them to fracture our fellowship;
- support one another in prayer, in counsel, in practical encouragement, and, where it is welcomed, in mentoring, peer support and shared reflection on ministry;
- speak up for those among us who are marginalised or treated unjustly and stand alongside them.

We covenant to be Open to God's world

We will:

- develop and share models of Christian mission centred on turning to Christ and discipleship, emphasising the gospel messages of welcome, hospitality and inclusion of all.
- form partnerships with “people of peace” who, like us, seek justice, peace and the flourishing of all;
- engage faithfully in the public square, speaking truth with humility and listening before we speak;
- care for God's creation and order our common life with mindfulness for the planet and for generations to come;

- celebrate our place in the whole Church of Jesus Christ, working ecumenically wherever we can to bear witness to the gospel.

Walking together in accountability

We commit ourselves to accountability as the mutual responsibility of those who have promised to walk together.

We therefore commit:

- to take this covenant seriously as the basis of our shared life in the Network, and to revisit it together regularly so that we keep growing into it;
- to hold one another accountable through honest, prayerful conversation, going first directly to one another in the spirit of Matthew 18, and only then to wider gatherings of the Network, when concerns persist;
- to recognise that membership of this Network is freely entered and freely sustained; should a member, in conscience, no longer be able to hold to this covenant, they are free to step away in peace and with our blessing.

Affirming this covenant

We make these promises not as a final word, but as a living one. We expect to learn, to fail, to forgive and to be forgiven. We expect the Spirit to lead us into a fuller understanding than we now have. We affirm this covenant trusting in the grace of God, and in the goodwill of those who covenant alongside us.

Affirmed by:

Name:

Church / Ministry / Role:

Date:

Signature:



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APPENDIX to the OBN COVENANT

1. Baptist Union of Great Britain Declaration of Principle

The Basis of the Baptist Union is:

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.

2. Five Core Values for a Gospel People (BUGB, 1996)

A Gospel people called to be

- A Prophetic Community

Following Jesus in confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy. Challenging worldly concepts of wealth, power, status and security.

- An Inclusive Community

Following Jesus in transcending barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture. Identifying with those who are rejected, deprived and powerless.

- A Sacrificial Community

Following Jesus in accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice. Seeking to reflect the generous, life-giving, nature of God.

- A Missionary Community

Following Jesus in demonstrating in word and action God's forgiving and healing love. Calling and enabling people to experience the love of God for themselves.

- A Worshipping Community

Following Jesus in engaging in worship and prayer which inspire and undergird all we are and do. Exploring and expressing what it means to live together as the people of God, obeying his Word and following Christ in the whole of daily life.