

# Baptist Assembly MR Rules Consultation Listening Space Report

The Baptist Assembly took place in June 2023.  
This report was written following the Assembly in July 2023.

## 1 Introduction

This Baptist Assembly Report is a summary of what we heard in the Consultation Listening Space (CLS) and the Youth Consultation Listening Space (YCLS) during the Baptist Assembly 2023. The spaces gave people attending the Assembly, including some of the young people, the opportunity to participate in the MR Rules Consultation in a variety of ways. They had the opportunity to be heard, to say what they thought and felt, to share their hearts.

Participation in the CLS and the YCLS was optional, in response to a general invitation. Therefore, those who chose to participate self-selected. What we heard and have summarised in this report is not necessarily representative of those attending the wider Baptist Assembly. Nor is it necessarily representative of the Baptists Together churches across the denomination.

Our task in this part of the Consultation Report is to 'report' what we heard in the CLS and in the YCLS at the Assembly. We have done this by summarising what we heard in conversations and through the other means of participation offered in these spaces. This summary of what we heard in its variety and complexity, is drawn together as carefully, accurately and authentically as possible. In our summary we do not interpret, draw conclusions or make recommendations. We have identified broad themes from what we heard and have used these themes to present the summary of the listening to you.

## 2 The MR Rules Consultation Listening Spaces

There were two elements to the MR Rules Consultation Listening Space at the Baptist Assembly. A listening space for anyone attending the Assembly and a Youth Consultation Listening Space available in the youth area, for those aged 14+ who had parental consent to participate. The Consultation Research Team had five facilitators. There was always a minimum of two facilitators in the listening space, with the full team present at busy times. The main youth facilitator spent the day in the youth area. He was joined by two other facilitators to co-facilitate a morning and an afternoon workshop.

The CLS was opposite the main hall, it was visible and accessible to all. The CLS was open from 8.45am (before the first main hall event) to 9.30pm on Saturday and on Sunday, from 9.00 – 10.30am.

## 3 Who participated?

In total, 259 people visited the CLS. By 9.30pm on Saturday just over 200 people had visited the CLS, nearly 60 people visiting in the 1.5 hours on Sunday morning. The facilitation team noticed that a number of people visited the CLS more than once. Some people told us that they needed to explore

the CLS and reflect on it before returning later to participate in the consultation. We were not able to accurately record the number of people who visited the CLS more than once.

### 3.1 How people participated

- Between 80 and 100 people spoke to members of the team, sometimes quite briefly, mostly at considerable length,
- 48 people wrote to the Council (these will be delivered to the Council for their March meeting),
- 18 people contributed to the virtual Word Cloud,
- 17 people wrote prayers for the prayer wall (these will also be delivered to the Council for their March meeting),
- 16 people created some visual expression of what they wanted to say, in the Art Space,
- 15 people created pages in the scrapbooks.
- 4 people made use of the laptops to access the Churches' or Ministers' Surveys or the Human Sexuality pages of the Baptist Union website.

You can see pictures of the MR Rules Consultation Listening Space, the virtual Word Clouds and some of the artwork in the main report.

## 4 Some of the feelings we heard

An important part of listening in a consultation is to listen for feelings. The facilitators listened to feelings expressed in the conversations, in the prayers, scrapbooks, letters and art work. It was clear in the listening that the MR Rules question and the wider subject of human sexuality and the church, are matters that people care greatly about. This is reflected in the intensity of some of the feelings we heard.

Although there are recurring feelings expressed, it is important to be aware that they could be felt for different reasons. For example grief might be expressed because of a personal situation, a concern for their church, or because of hurt they have seen others experience.

It is also worth noticing that feelings often had different meaning and intensity dependent upon the role and experiences of different people speaking with the Facilitators. For example, ministers often carried feelings about and for their church congregations, ministers' spouses often carried feelings for their minister spouse, some people carried feelings because of the experience of members of their family, etc.

All this is to say that the feeling landscape is complex. The presentation of feelings heard by the facilitators is to highlight the feelings, whilst retaining the awareness of this complexity and the understanding that the same feeling can be experienced for different reasons.

### 4.1 Feelings that we heard:

Vulnerable, trust, uncertainty, tired, thankfulness, confusion, anger, threatened, tension, fear, sorrow, grief, agony, relief, betrayed, disappointed, frustrated, conflicted, bewildered, anguish, anxiety, ignored, optimism, excluded, rejected, pain, love, embarrassment, gladness, shame, sadness, disheartened, heartbroken, disillusioned.

There were tears and people spoke about their tears.

People spoke of lament for the pain being caused and or for the pain that will be caused by the decision.

If the facilitation team picked out one word, what we thought we heard the most, it would be fear. The team's reflection was that the predominant feelings were anger and fear.

## 5 Appreciation of the Consultation Listening Space

And finally, by way of introduction to this section of the Report, here is a summary of what was valued and appreciated about the CLS.

- Generally, people were pleased there is a process of consultation.
- People were glad to be consulted.
- People were pleased with the Consultation Listening Space and the opportunity to participate.
- Again and again people expressed gladness, relief, thankfulness about being consulted and were sometimes quite emotional, to be listened to in the Consultation Listening Space.
- People valued the different ways offered for them to participate in the Consultation Space.
- Some people expressed surprise at the art space and the impact on them personally of participating in this way.
- People who participated in the art space valued the way that it gave them expression of often deep feelings and thoughts that were hard to identify or articulate; that the activity enabled these to emerge.
- People valued the opportunity to write to the Council and generally took time and care as they wrote their letters.
- People valued being taken seriously.
- Some people valued that the consultation has opened up discussions on matters relating to sexuality and marriage.

## 6 Themes from the Consultation Listening Space

We have analysed and synthesised the listening from the Consultation Listening Space into themes. Baptist identity was important to many. It was expected that these would shape the process and inform the way people engaged with it. The Bible was seen as important in different ways to responding to the MR Rules question.

Many of those who participated in the CLS were ministers or Regional Ministers. We have analysed and synthesised what we heard about ministers; about the local church; about resources; and about support for churches and ministers during this consultation process. Some people expressed concern about who might not be being heard in the process.

Inevitably themes are interconnected. In summarising what we heard, we have attempted to avoid repetition. This might mean that some comments, for you, might fit more sensibly elsewhere in the report. Our hope is that this will not hinder your listening to these voices, summarised in the pages that follow.

### 6.1 The importance of Baptist Identity

'Being Baptist' and Baptist identity were key themes running through our listening. People articulated characteristics that are distinctive to the Baptist movement, as they pertained to this conversation. In a variety of ways, we heard about the importance of the autonomy of the local church in decision-making, and related questions about the role of the 'centre' in this MR Rule

decision-making process. Another strong theme that we heard was the importance of making space for difference as core to Baptist identity. How the process can reflect Baptist identity:

- Some people expressed a recognition of the importance of doing theology together, as an expression of Baptist identity and a disappointment that this is not included in the consultation process.
- Some expressed a hope for ways that could enable the local church to be heard in the consultation, which they did not perceive as being available.
- Some valued the Consultation Listening Space and wanted other opportunities for church members to participate and be heard, so that the process demonstrates Baptist identity and ecclesiology.
- Some expressed a concern about how the people in local churches can be heard in the MR Rules Consultation.
- A few people spoke of the importance of Baptist history as a dissenting church and therefore that Baptists today should dissent from the pressures and norms of the culture, seeing human sexuality and gender fluidity as some of the new norms of culture from which the church needs to dissent.

Baptist identity - the autonomy of the local church:

- A significant number of people were concerned that the question about the bracketed section is being asked 'top-down' and that the decision will be made 'at the top' or 'centrally'. They expressed concern that this is not a Baptist way of making decisions.
- A significant number of people stressed the importance of the autonomy of the local church to make decisions and therefore to make this decision.
- A significant number of people wondered why, in light of the importance of the autonomy of the local church, this decision was being made 'centrally'.
- A significant number of people wondered why this decision is not being made by the local church, reading the Bible together and discerning what the Spirit is saying.
- Some suggested that BUGB should let churches who are affirming choose for themselves, as a reflection of Baptist identity.
- Others suggested that the local church should have the autonomy to call accredited ministers of any sexuality.

Baptist identity – holding together in difference:

- We heard, in a variety of ways, how space for difference is 'baked into' Baptist identity.
- Some spoke of the importance to Baptist identity of being a space of welcome and belonging for all, suggesting that the removal of the bracketed section will widen the space of welcome and lead to more belonging.
- Others recognised that the removal of the bracketed section may mean that some would no longer feel BUGB is a place of welcome and belonging; there was regret and sadness about this, it is not what they want.
- A number of people said that the Declaration of Principle is an important way in which Baptists hold together in differences.
- A few people talked about how many of the fastest growing Global Majority Heritage majority churches are affiliated with BUGB, an expression of Baptist hospitality. They expressed concern that if the bracketed section is removed these churches may no longer feel able to be affiliated with BUGB, they may no longer feel welcome.

Baptist identity and the start of this process:

- A significant number of people said that the process doesn't start with the letter requesting the change to the MR Rules, but rather with the insertion of the bracketed section, which was done without consultation, in a 'non-Baptist' way.
- Some felt that the lack of consultation about the insertion of the bracketed section makes this current process a partial process.
- Some wanted to understand what prompted the insertion of the bracketed section.
- Others had questions about how the initial decision to insert the bracketed section was made and by whom.

## 6.2 The Consultation and Decision-Making Process

A significant theme of our listening related to the consultation and decision-making process, which included transparency about the process, the framing of the questions itself, the impact of the decision on local churches and the extent to which people most affected by this decision are included in the process.

Perceived hiddenness in the process:

- A significant number of people stressed the importance of trust in this process.
- There was some suspicion about the transparency of the process, what is hidden and/or not being said by those leading the process and by BUGB.
- Some people said they were hearing different things from different people about the process, including, what it is for and when the decision will be made, which meant they did not perceive it as a transparent process.
- Some people said there was a lack of clarity about who is leading the process, it seems hidden, which leads to suspicion.
- A significant number of people requested to see the report from the consultation. For most people who mentioned this it was about trust and about wanting to understand what the Council's decision was based on. For some it was about having spoken into the process, they want to hear their contributions. For a few it was about hearing what others said.
- A perception that the Consultation Space was 'hidden' because it was not in the main arena. This was noted as a contrast to the usual way in which Baptists Together make decisions - through open debate in the main arena. We heard questions and concerns about why this was not the approach for this question. We heard questions about why there is no space for debate.
- There was some concern and frustration that people don't know what the Core Leadership Team and Council think on this question and broader matters relating to human sexuality.

The question itself:

- A significant number of people felt that the Council was asking the wrong question.
- Significant concerns were expressed that the question is framed as 'yes'/'no', therefore the process of responding to it is inevitably divisive.
- Others were concerned that the framing of the question as a binary question doesn't leave space for the nuance of views, it forces people to the extremes.
- A few people expressed concern that the question excludes ministers in same-sex marriages and if the decision is made to retain the bracketed section this will continue to exclude.

- Some felt that the Council needs to ask broader questions about human sexuality, not just questions about marriage.
- Others wanted the Council to encourage deeper exploration and to encourage the exploration of ways to answer the question positively.
- Some concern was expressed that this question is a question about changing the definition of marriage in BUGB, not simply changing the Ministerial Rules.
- Some people expressed frustration because sexuality and marriage are not important issues; that there are more important things to talk about, such as finances, mission and global issues such as climate change.

#### Making the decision well:

- A significant number of people expressed concern about a lack of clarity of the governance of the process, a perceived lack of transparency.
- A significant number of people expressed suspicion that the decision has already been made. Some felt the decision had already been made to remove the bracketed section; others felt that the decision had already been made to retain the bracketed section.
- Some expressed that they felt the process was rushed, without enough time for churches to talk about it.
- Some people expressed a hope that this disagreement could be done in a way that did not divide; that the disagreement could be done well.

#### Other pressures on the Council:

- Some people were concerned that the decision would be based on how best to avoid a split or conflict, rather than on where God is leading.
- Some were keen to encourage the Council to avoid the temptation of taking the path of least resistance.
- Some recognised the missional implications of the decision. They were concerned that this should affect the way the decision is made, rather than the decision itself.
- Some expressed concern and frustration that the question will keep coming back if the Council says 'no' this time.
- Some expressed concern that local churches will be asked to do something that they do not want to do as a consequence of the Council's decision.

### 6.2.1 The importance of hearing different voices in the process

We heard a number of questions and concerns about the breadth and inclusion of the consultation.

#### Church members:

- A number of church members said that they had not heard about the consultation and the question that has prompted it, but were hearing about it for the first time at Assembly.
- A number of people expressed concern about how church members could be included in the consultation and decision-making, how their voices could be heard.

#### People who identify as LGBTIQ+:

- A few people wanted to encourage the Council to listen to the stories of those who are directly affected by this decision.

#### People from Global Majority Heritages:

- A few people expressed concern that the decision is being made by a majority white, male Council, but that the decision will significantly impact on those from GMHs who are often in growing Baptist churches.
- We heard that it was difficult for people from global majority heritages to discuss matters relating to sexuality, as culturally this is not something they would be accustomed or comfortable to do. These comments related to both participation in the Consultation Listening Space and in congregational discussions.

#### Women:

- A number of women spoke of the impact on them personally of some people making the connection between sexuality and women in leadership.
- Some expressed concern that the conversation about sexuality is moving matters relating to women in leadership backwards.
- Some people expressed frustration, saying that if the decision to allow women into leadership had not been made, this conversation about sexuality and marriage would not be happening.

### 6.3 Approaches to the Bible

Many people, with a range of views on matters relating to human sexuality and marriage spoke about the Bible. For some this was connected to the importance to Baptists of the autonomy of the local church to interpret the Bible. Some talked about the importance of 'doing the theology' as part of this consultation and decision-making process. A significant number of people who spoke with us drew on their reading of the Bible to assert their view on the MR Rules question.

#### The role of the Bible in the decision-making process:

- A number of people commented that theologians have done work on these matters, asking how that work can help in this process, how it can inform discussions and the Council's decision.
- A few people commented that Biblical scholars do not agree about what the Bible says about same-sex marriage. Consequently, they urged Baptists Together to hold the difference.
- A few people commented on the ability to hold different views on assisted dying, pacifism/just war, wondering why Baptists Together can't do that on this issue.
- A few people wanted the consultation to talk about theology.
- Some people expressed concerns that the question is framed as pastoral and missional, which might lead to a different answer than if the question was approached theologically.
- Some urged for a biblical view, not a world view.
- A few commented that these matters are complicated, expressing a need to hear from both sides.
- There were a few requests for teaching and input about the different views on matters relating to human sexuality.
- Some people expressed concern that the decision is being led by the heart rather than the Bible.

Comments about the interpretation of the Bible as part of this process:

- A few people pondered what Baptists mean by the 'authority of the Bible'.
- A number of people stressed that the Holy Spirit interprets the Bible.
- A few wondered how it can be truth if different congregations discern different things from the Bible, they can't all be right.
- Some people said that the church needs to be a voice for the biblical.

Drawing on the Bible to support a position:

- A number of people stated that a decision to remove the bracketed section would compromise the Gospel.
- A number of people said that if the decision is made to remove the bracketed section, BUGB would be moving away from the Bible, a few felt that the church would diminish further.
- Some people expressed concern that if people who are lesbian, gay or same-sex attracted don't know that it is sin, they will miss out on forgiveness and transformation.
- Some people expressed a concern that churches will leave BUGB if the bracketed section is removed.
- A few people felt that God would leave the denomination if the bracketed section were removed.
- A significant number of people stated that the Bible is clear that homosexuality is sin.
- A significant number of people stated that the Bible is clear that we must love everybody.
- Many people talked about the importance of Jesus' call to love one another.
- Some people wondered how can we stand in the way of love between two people?
- Some people said that the church should support the covenant of marriage, which should not be prohibited for those in ministerial leadership.

#### 6.4 Support and Resources for Ministers and Churches during the Consultation

Many of the people we listened to spoke about resources and support, sometimes to affirm something they valued, sometimes to request what they needed. Inevitably, the regional teams were a focus in some of these comments, sometimes positively and sometimes when expressing concerns.

Resources:

Various resources were mentioned: Fresh Streams, Yinka Oyekan's seminar, the Sanctuary Course from Renew Wellbeing.

- Fresh Streams was spoken well of, particularly for its balanced approach and creation of safe space.
- Some people expressed suspicion about Yinka Oyekan's seminar, which was perceived to take a particular position and was therefore seen as potentially divisive.
- Some requested an independent space for conversation and learning, in each Association.
- A significant number of people requested resources to help churches talk about sexuality and marriage and about the specific MR Rules question.

The Regional Teams:

- Some ministers felt supported by their regional team, particularly mentioning the provision of Fresh Streams.



- Some ministers wanted clearer leadership, support and guidance from their Regional Ministers.
- Some people stated that normally the regional teams are connected and good at communication, however in this consultation they felt it was different, they felt the regional teams were more distant.
- Some Regional Ministers did not feel supported and were unsure what to do, how to resource and support the ministers and churches in their Association.

#### Regional Ministers' neutrality:

- A significant number spoke of frustration and suspicion that Regional Ministers seem to have been told not to disclose their views.
- Some spoke about a consequent personal reluctance to share their own views with their Regional Ministers.
- Some spoke about a feeling of unbalanced power as a result of Regional Ministers being silent about what they think on these matters and on this question.
- Some expressed an understanding that Regional Ministers don't want to sway people's views by telling their thoughts and views.
- Some Regional Ministers spoke of how remaining neutral helped them to support all their ministers and churches, regardless of their views or positions.
- Some Regional ministers spoke about how personally difficult it was to convey neutrality, when their relationships with ministers are usually open.

### 6.5 Ministers' experiences

Many of those we listened to in the Consultation Listening Space were ministers, some were spouses of ministers. We heard from some who are affirming and inclusive and from some who hold a conservative reading of the Bible on sexuality and marriage.

Some spoke of the tension of having conservative views personally, whilst responding to pastoral needs within their congregations on matters relating to sexuality and gender, in particular when children and young people in the church identify as LGBTIQ+. Others spoke of having less conservative views than their congregation, and the resulting tension and fear this engendered for them. Others spoke of the pain of providing pastoral care when people come to their church having been hurt or excluded from other churches.

Some ministers spoke of people in their own families who had identified as LGBTIQ+. Some ministers spoke of a personal journey they had embarked on in response to this. Others spoke of their commitment to a reading of the Bible that means their family member needs to repent in order to be saved. Others spoke of the hurt a family member had experienced at church because of their sexuality, and of the pain felt that they no longer went to church.

#### Personal impact on ministers:

- Some ministers spoke of the tension of personally holding a conservative view on marriage and sexuality, whilst giving pastoral support to families and members of their congregation who are living with issues relating to sexuality.
- Some ministers, holding a conservative view on sexuality and marriage, expressed tension and anguish when a family member (usually their child) explores sexuality and/or identifies as LGBTIQ+.

- Some ministers spoke of the cost of hiding personal convictions within the relational dynamics of congregational life and church leadership, because their view is different from that of their congregation.
- Some ministers expressed tension and fear about holding a conservative position, personally, whilst being in a church that welcomes all.
- Some ministers were fearful about sharing their conservative views on these matters, with others in the church and more widely, for fear of being judged, criticised or stigmatised.
- Some ministers spoke of the fear of opening up discussion in the church because they might need to disclose their own view, which is different from that of the congregation.
- Some ministers expressed fear that the church might want them to leave if they found out that their minister's view on these matters was different from that of the congregation. This led some to talk about concerns for the security of their future role and housing, in particular.
- Some ministers spoke about the likelihood that their church would decide to leave BUGB should the bracketed section be removed and a fear personally, for their future role, housing, pension, etc.
- A number of ministers said that they didn't know how to engage their congregation in conversations about this question and wider matters relating to sexuality.
- Some ministers observed that it feels like trying to hold the church together.
- Concern was expressed that if a Minister in Training felt unable or unwilling to sign the Ministerial Rules, they would not be able to be accredited.

#### Pastoral impact:

- Some ministers spoke about concerns and fear for others when churches say homosexuality is not a sin because they will not know they need to be saved.
- A few spoke of a specific concern about this with regards to members of their own family, usually their child. Occasionally, this was concern shaped by a personal experience of healing salvation and a concern that the possibility of such healing and restoration would be missed.
- A few spoke of a concern about how the church and BUGB are caring for and protecting ministers whom this question is about.

#### Division in the church:

- Many spoke of a concern and fear about division in BUGB if the bracketed section is removed.
- Some spoke of a concern about the impact of a decision to remove the bracketed section, confident their church would vote to leave BUGB and concerned about what would happen to the church when its building is held in trust by BUGB.
- Some ministers holding an affirming and inclusive position spoke of upset and grief that some churches might leave BUGB if the bracketed section is removed.
- A few people spoke with grief and sadness about not being able to talk to one another about this because they see BUGB as already divided which is painful.
- Many spoke of a fear about the fracturing of trust and relationships, as a consequence of a decision.

#### LGBTIQA+ ministers:

- A few wondered why ministers should be treated differently from church members, because in Baptist ecclesiology there is no difference.

- A few people stated that sexuality is God-given, saying that it is therefore important to allow ministers to be in same-sex marriages.
- Some spoke of a justice element to the question, reflecting that the church is blessed by LGBTIQA+ people and that LGBTIQA+ ministers should be allowed to marry.
- Some were concerned that the church needs to treat LGBTIQA+ ministers with dignity and respect.

## 6.6 Impact on the local church

As well as hearing about the importance of the local church's autonomy as a key part of Baptist identity, we also heard concerns and fears about the potentially divisive impact of this decision on local churches.

- Some expressed concern that this is a divisive issue and therefore that talking about it in the local church will take longer than the timing of the consultation.
- Some expressed concern that there are a wide range of views in many congregations and therefore a risk of division within congregations.
- A few said they felt that there are more important things to talk about, such as finances, mission, etc.
- Some articulated that the majority of their congregation were from Global Majority Heritages with a conservative view on these matters. Consequently, they are unwilling to raise the topic of sexuality or the specific MR Rules question, because they understood that culturally their GMH congregation members would not be comfortable talking about sexuality.
- Some were hopeful that their congregational relationships are strong and that they would find a way of staying together, by loving one another, whatever the decision.
- Some expressed concern for congregations without strong, loving relationships and how they will be impacted by the decision.
- Some expressed concern for LGBTIQA+ people who are integral to some congregations and the impact of this conversation on them.
- Some wanted the church to be a welcoming space so that LGBTIQA+ people could find forgiveness and transformation.
- Some were frustrated and concerned that although our society isn't concerned about sexuality and same sex marriage, the church is divided over it.
- Some wondered how to talk about this as a local church, when the wider church is already divided.

## 6.7 Some people who had signed the letter spoke with us

- We heard pain and regret that the letter has led to so much pain and to this process, that wasn't the intention.
- We heard an explanation that they were personally motivated by the love of God and a hope that others would know God's love, because at the moment the message is that they are not loved by God.
- We heard hope that people can have a same-sex relationship and be open about it.
- We heard fear of division and a hope for listening together and not dividing.
- We heard talk of courage to come to the Assembly, because of a feeling of being pushed out and having their voice taken away since the letter was published.
- We heard a belief that the church is better when it works things through together and pain that this is currently 'ugly and vicious', and regret that it shouldn't be like this.

The themes of what the facilitators heard in the Consultation Listening Space has been summarised here. Now we summarise the listening at the Youth Consultation Listening Space.

# Baptist Assembly Youth Consultation

## Listening Space Report

The Consultation Steering Group were keen that the Baptist Assembly MR Rules Consultation include the voices of young people within the Baptist Church. The Youth Consultation Listening Space was run by the Consultation Research Team, within, but distinct from, the wider youth programme.

17 young people attended the youth programme; 9 of whom were 14+ and eligible to participate in the Youth Consultation Listening Space. 8 were given parental permission.

### 7 Context for the Youth Consultation Listening Space.

The theme for the youth work was 'using your voice', which seemed to dovetail nicely with what we were aiming to do – hear the voices of young people in the discussion around human sexuality.

The youth space was one large room away from the main adult spaces. It worked well having a designated area within that, which young people could be invited to access throughout the day.

A member of the Consultation Research Team (CRT) was around all day, joining in the youth activities where appropriate and having informal 1-2-1 conversations. Members of the CRT also facilitated a workshop in order to have more structured discussions.

There was also the opportunity to contribute to a spoken word piece on the theme and to create some art in order to express thoughts or feelings around the topic.

Because fewer than 10 young people participated in the consultation listening space, we have not shared what they said or their art work, to protect their privacy.

### 8 What they talked about

The conversation in the youth listening space related to three questions:

- What are you observing among your peers – both inside and outside the church – about human sexuality?
- What impact are you observing on the church in relation to human sexuality?
- What are your hopes for the church in the future regarding human sexuality?

A number of themes emerged from the young people's discussion and art work.

- How to be heard as a young person in church decisions.
- Matters of justice in the world, such as the climate crisis that were important for the church to engage with.
- Some of the differences between the church and society regarding human sexuality.

## 9 Final thoughts from the youth facilitator.

The young people at the Assembly were very welcoming and tolerated my presence very kindly! I was encouraged by the number of young people we were able to engage with – either on a 1-2-1 basis, or in our facilitated sessions.

One challenge was always going to be trust. It was right to have independent listeners in the space, though it takes time to develop trust, particularly with young people. Joining in with some of the activities in the youth space was an important part of developing the trust and led to some really good conversations reflected here.

We are extremely grateful to the Baptist Council for including the young people in this consultation, and to Clare, who welcomed us into the youth space at the Assembly wonderfully!

Lastly, huge thanks go to the young people themselves for their welcome, fun presence and contributions to the consultation.

## 10 Conclusion

This full report on the MR Rules Consultation Listening Space and the Youth Consultation Listening Space at the Baptist Assembly in June 2023, was written in July 2023. A summary of it is included in the main report. This full report is included in the Appendices, for completion.