

Appendix 1: Previous statements about women's ministry

The Blackley Declaration – January 2007

Recognising our call as God's people to be a witness to God's Kingdom that has both come in Jesus and is still to come in its fullness, we call our churches to further reflection and action on the place of women within the leadership of church life, and especially in what is commonly called 'the ministry'.

We are grateful for all who have led us on this matter in past and present generations, but we remain troubled that having been one of the first denominations to recognise the ordained ministry of women, there is still such a low percentage of women on the BUGB Accredited List of Baptist Ministers.

Whilst there is no formal bar on women's calling as Baptist ministers being recognised within our churches, we believe that the slow rate of change in our actual practice shows that there is cultural resistance.

As people who take seriously the authority of the Bible, we believe this situation exists because we have an inadequate way of understanding and interpreting those Scriptures that are commonly seen as being directly relevant on this matter. We call on our fellow ministers and church leaderships to re-engage with Scripture and with one another, listening carefully to what each has to say.

We must further examine the cultures of which we are a part to be more alert to the sexism we believe exists amongst us. We believe such sexism is part of our fallen nature, from which Christ came to deliver us, and that we are called to repent and behave differently in Christ's Kingdom.

We challenge the attitude that regards this as an issue of relative unimportance in being witnesses to the Gospel. The first calling of God's Church in mission is always to be a community that bears witness to the truth of God's Kingdom in the way it lives, demonstrating that the world is worldly, and that there is an alternative way. We believe that currently in this matter our lived witness points the opposite way to the vision, values and habits of Kingdom life. Further we believe that society can find good reason not to listen to us on other matters if our manner of life is so permeated by cultural sin in this respect. We therefore believe that our lack of attention and unchanging practice in this area is symptomatic of our failure to be a beacon of the hope of the Kingdom in our society.

Therefore we call for the churches of our denomination to give sustained attention to how we understand and live out the Scriptures and the gospel, watching over one another until we see significant movement that indicates a change in the way we live before a watching world.

Mainstream North Leadership Team

Minutes from the Baptist Union Council – March 2010

Women in Leadership

This Council

- a) affirms the historic commitment of the Baptist Union of Great Britain to
 - the full inclusion of women in all areas of leadership in church life,
 - the ordination and accreditation of women to ministry among us.

- b) Celebrates
 - the increasing number of women who are now exercising leadership within BUGB, both as ministers and in other capacities.
 - The service of women in all aspects of missionary work including the work of biblical and theological teaching and church leadership.

- c) Recognises with concern the continuing struggle for full acceptance faced by many women in all areas of leadership, and in particular the difficulties many face in having their call validated and in receiving a call from a church.

- d) Calls upon the Faith and Unity Department and the Ministry Department to work with associations, colleges and churches to identify
 - Steps already being taken to develop ministry in ways that are fully inclusive of women,
 - Opportunities that currently exist for women fully to explore their sense of calling,
 - Obstacles that prevent the acceptance of women for training, ministry and all forms of wider leadership.

- e) Commits to hearing further from the Faith and Unity Executive at its meeting in March 2011, and so to discern ways of addressing barriers to the full participation of women in all forms of leadership within BUGB.

The resolution was passed unanimously with two abstentions.

In response to the 2018 Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving – Women in Baptist Ministry conference, its participants published the following statement for our Baptist family:

In celebration of the centenary of the recognition of women to be Baptist ministers, we commit ourselves into our shared life and take courage to step forward in living out our call. This conference calls on our Baptist family to support women, of all ages and ethnic and social backgrounds, in the following ways:

1. By joining with us to celebrate and support the ministry of women, sharing and teaching with vigour the biblical and theological foundations for their affirmation by successive Baptist Union Councils, and reporting the many ways in which women in ministry at all levels are growing our churches and advancing the mission of God.
2. By making it a priority to identify and utilise women who will mentor, accompany and be role models to women at all stages of exploring a call and of ministry, recognising that all women are different and their experiences vary widely.
3. By providing frequent opportunities for experience such as apprenticeships, placements, shadowing, preaching opportunities, and by intentionally equipping and calling emerging women ministers and leaders.
4. By challenging ourselves to be more aware of questions of justice, to reflect on our assumptions and biases, to ensure fairness within our structures, processes and behaviour, such as exploring a call and National Settlement, and commit together to equity of opportunity and expectation.

Available at www.baptist.org.uk/CSTconference