

## Milton Baptist Church

### Ethos, Beliefs and Values Statement

Our vision as members of Milton Baptist Church is to continue as a strong, united, Christ-centred, Spirit-filled, Bible-based family which exists so that those in the wider communities with which we make contact will be blessed to the glory of God and become disciples themselves.

Following a recent Full Spectrum Review which provided a unique and challenging opportunity to review our church organisation from a 360-degree perspective, the leadership team have discerned the following six Godly Beliefs

- MBC is a family where people feel loved, cared for, can thrive, and have a sense of belonging
- MBC leadership believe that by prioritising to communicate with God and the church family, the church will become strong and united.
- At MBC, all are welcomed to the table of the King of all Kings where all are blessed to serve.
- At MBC we do everything in love.
- Jesus is our pilot, and we follow His leadership.
- We choose to give God the very best in all we do as we commit to growing in unity as a family affirming the value of each person's gifts.

We believe that we should apply these Godly Beliefs in everything that we do as a church community/family, irrespective of age, gender, and background and we aim to edify, support, and provide fellowship to all our church fellowship.

Our mission statement “**Love God, love each other and love Weston**” together with our Godly beliefs is the formation of our Ethos and can be achieved by:

Living out a lifestyle of love, truth, justice, mercy, and forgiveness, according to Jesus' teaching.

Being inspired and challenged by Jesus' message and life and following His Great Commission by serving each other. Our ethos is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and in his love and therefore so are our relationships with each other. This also motivates us to serve others as apprentices of Jesus.

Working together in **FAITH**. Our faith in Jesus Christ directs and influences both our internal relationships and our work with those whom Milton Baptist Church seeks to serve. We also believe that we should work together with the other Baptist Churches in our town to benefit from each other's gifts and infrastructure at a pastoral, leadership, and fellowship level. This process is underway with joint projects e.g. Alpha courses (<https://www.milton-baptist.org.uk/alpha>) and our Renew 193 Wellbeing Center (see our shared Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100090926762124>) and <https://www.renewwellbeing.org.uk>).

Therefore, all the ministries and activities that we undertake are simply an outworking of our faith: our 'doing' derives directly from our 'being' and our mission to "Love God, Love each other and Love Weston. Everything that we do should fit this progression by Loving God during Sunday Services and personal quiet times; Loving each other during home group meeting in the week, which should lead naturally to Loving Weston and beyond through work in the community.

God calls us into relationship with him, with each other and with the wider community. The call is to worship, to fellowship and to service. These elements appear unchanging. The wonder of his love for us – and the power of his grace to transform lives and communities remains throughout the generations.

Society is constantly changing, and Covid-19 has forced a whole new set of circumstances that constrain and influence us. Alongside this, we serve an unchanging God and need to hold on to his constants that have guided through the ages, whilst pressing into the new thing He wants us to do.

The church is aware of contemporary issues that affect people at Weston, our country, and the world. We will seek God's guidance looking at his words and be guided by the Spirit of how to position ourselves and how to view (in love) these issues especially when there are conflicting views and attitudes.

Jesus speaks clearly of the priorities we are to establish in our lives. God wants nothing less than first place – above family, friends, work, career, reputation, and wealth.

The church is aware that members of the congregation go through difficult times. The church will remember those who are going through relational, employment, financial and health difficulties.

Reading and preaching the bible, regular prayers and petitions are the cornerstone of how to respond to individual and collective difficulties.

God in three persons models "community" and we are called to be part of a community set apart for the purposes of God.

Jesus commands us to "go" – bringing his power and presence into the wider society.

Covid-19 – we think Covid-19 may have been an opportunity from God to actually stop and listen to Him. Something maybe we weren't doing before. We think God taught us what is really important in life and was a chance from God to reset.

The internet and social media are changing the way people relate to and engage with each other. There are many positive aspects of this that can be used for good. At the same time, there are too many examples of how it is misused for evil. There appears to be something of the Tower of Babel about it; man's creation that can unite, but like the Tower, may bring miscommunication and a breakdown of relationships. It is also evident that reliance on

technology excludes some groups of people – some of the sick, aged, the poor and the needy. Technology can be a strong secondary means of communication, but to centre a strategy on it is to exclude some of those God calls us to care for.

Society in the UK has adopted a stance that is essentially self-centred – running contrary to the example and teaching of Jesus. This is reinforced by marketing messages and too often by the behaviours of those with worldly power and authority. There will be a temptation to mimic these behaviours in the way the church sets its expectations and models Christian lifestyle. If the way of Christ is counter-cultural then this different message needs to be at the core of the church's behaviours and ethics and to not allow politics to affect our stance on Biblical principles, whilst still loving each other.

### **Purpose**

Setting out God's purpose for the church is not lightly undertaken. Paul expressed it in Ephesians using the words: "to him (God) be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

In working this through there may be two models that can be helpful. The first is the triangle of "Up, In and Out" that underpins the Love God, Love Each Other, Love Weston strapline. The second is describing some people's progression through Belonging, Believing and Behaving.

Weaving these thoughts into a set of actions must also take account of the biblical instruction not to neglect to meet together, and Jesus' call to "come" and instruction to "go".

Following the Webnet Reimagine course and our experience with Renew 193 we believe that God is leading to:

- Simplify
- face things head-on – be brave and bold
- press into God's plan – the sense that we are on the cusp of new things following our obedience in facing up to past issues and allowing ourselves to be transparent.

### **Core Plan**

1. Establish and strengthen the "Up" element of the triangle in a form that reinforces something to which people can belong. This needs to be something people can attend and engage with if it is to enable those without tech access to engage with the church in worship. Enable access to this through other media and at other times whilst maintaining the message that meeting together in person is a priority. This focus on including corporate worship feeds the "In" element of the triangle and empowers the "Out".
2. Recognise that caring for the church family is a full and proper part of the role of the church and is everybody's responsibility. The church aims to use able and willing members of the congregation to help in practical areas when possible.

3. The early church recognised the different callings to teaching/preaching and that of administering and supporting the fellowship. We believe that the five fold ministries i.e. The concept that comes from Ephesians 4:11, "It was he who gave some to be (1) apostles, some to be (2) prophets, some to be (3) evangelists, and some to be (4) pastors and (5) teachers", should be applied to the church family. Together with worshipping together, this may enable people to feel a sense of belonging that is often the precursor for believing.
4. Continue to develop, support, equip, and encourage the "out" element of the church's activity – to the local community, nation, and world.
5. Our church leadership team have taken part in Re:imagine, as local churches and Webnet's regional team, we want to see growth in terms of lives transformed by Jesus. Our aim is to work in partnership with the other Baptist Churches in our Town to enhance our ability to reach those individuals who do not know Jesus.
6. We aim to strengthen regular small group gatherings to engender fellowship, bible studies and prayers. This is particularly important for congregations with difficulty in mobility and limited access to church meetings.

### **Milton Baptist Church Statement of Beliefs and Values in relation to Appointing a Minister(s)**

The minister(s) of Milton Baptist Church is / are recognised as having an occupational requirement to be, and continue to be, a practicing Christian.

Based on our beliefs, values and ethos statement at this time, Milton Baptist Church agree and affirm that the person we are seeking to appoint as a minister is required to comply with the doctrines of Christian beliefs and other occupational requirements set out below.

1. Faith and Character of any minister(s) of Milton Baptist Church should:
  - Be developing a life of authentic discipleship (1 Peter 4; Col 3 1-4)
  - Be baptised as a believer (Mathew 28: 18-20)
  - Not have sexual relationships outside of a heterosexual marriage (1 Corinthians 6:13b; 1 Corinthians 7: 1-40; Leviticus 18:22)
  - Not marry a non-Christian (2Corinthians 6:14)
  - Not be using or dependent on illegal drugs or substances and not to misuse, or to be dependent on, alcohol (Ephesians 5:18)
  - Speak only the truth and not to spread gossip (Exodus 23:1; Colossians 3: 8 – 10)
  
2. Church family

A minister (s) of Milton Baptist Church will:

- Become a member of the church and be a regular attendee and worshiper at services (Hebrews 10:25)
- Be appropriately involved in the prayer and small group life of the church.

### 3. Beliefs

Milton Baptist Church has adopted an evangelical approach to the basis of their faith and a minister should share this affirmation.

Milton Baptist Church affirms the Evangelical Alliance Statement on Human Sexuality, entitled, 'Biblical and Pastoral Responses to Homosexuality' and endorsed by Webnet. It can be found in Appendix 1.

A Minister of Milton Baptist Church should be able to affirm their support for the views expressed in this document.

Milton Baptist Church would welcome a man or a woman into a role as a minister based on our Christian beliefs and values. Milton Baptist Church would not appoint a person who would identify themselves as transgender based on our Christian beliefs and values.

Milton Baptist Church would appoint a divorced person based on our Christian beliefs and values.

#### **Appendix 1**

[Biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality - Evangelical Alliance \(eauk.org\)](#)

Accessed 12/10/2022 09:12

The following affirmations summarise the position of the Evangelical Alliance in its 2012 Report Biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality.

#### **AFFIRMATIONS**

We are conscious that different evangelicals might apply certain of these points in different ways, but we believe that, taken together, they reflect an authentic, mainstream evangelical response to homosexuality in general and sexually active same-sex partnerships in particular:

1. We recognise that all of us are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people – whatever our sexuality – is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterise evangelical responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in future.
2. We affirm God's love and concern for all human beings, whatever their sexuality, and so repudiate all attitudes and actions which victimise or diminish people whose affections are directed towards people of the same sex. We are encouraged many Christians now

recognise and deeply regret the hurt caused by past and present failures in their responses to those who experience same-sex attraction.

3. We affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship for life. Marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations and homoerotic sexual practice is incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture. We do not accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.

4. We encourage evangelical congregations to be communities of grace in which those who experience same-sex attraction and seek to live faithfully in accordance with biblical teaching are welcomed and affirmed. Such Christians need churches which are safe spaces where they are able to share and explore their stories with fellow believers for mutual encouragement and support as we help each other grow together into maturity in Christ.

5. We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship and to permit the ordination to ministry of those in such sexual relationships. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.

6. We oppose church services of blessing for civil partnerships and other forms of gay and lesbian relationships as unbiblical and reject any redefinition of marriage to encompass same-sex relationships.

7. We commend and encourage all those who experience same-sex attraction and have committed themselves to chastity by refraining from homoerotic sexual practice. We believe they should be eligible for ordination and leadership within the church, recognising that they can bring invaluable insights and experience to the sphere of Christian pastoral ministry.

8. We welcome and support the work of those individuals and organisations who responsibly seek to help Christians who experience same-sex attraction as in conflict with their commitment to live in accordance with biblical teaching. This help will involve counsel and pastoral support to live a chaste life and, as part of this process, some may seek and experience changes in the strength or direction of their same-sex attractions.

9. We believe both habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance and public promotion of such activity are inconsistent with faithful church membership. While processes of membership and discipline differ from one church context to another, we believe that either of these behaviours warrants consideration for church discipline.

10. We encourage evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active lesbians and gay men. However, they should do so in the expectation that they, like all of us who are living outside God's purposes, will come in due course to see the need to be transformed and live in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness, patience and ongoing pastoral care during this process and after a person renounces same-sex sexual relations.