

The West of England Baptist Network an evangelical Christian organisation called to reflect the biblical unity of faith and life, of history and eternity, and of the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

1. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we bear witness to the one living God, revealed through the Bible as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God's plan for the universe is to bring about, through Jesus Christ, a transformed creation wholly governed by God, from which all evil and suffering will be banished and in which God will live with redeemed humanity for ever. The presence and hope of the kingdom of God shape and motivate our mission through evangelism, compassionate service, active pursuit of justice and peace, and care for creation.
2. We bear witness to the following truths of the historic Christian faith as the pillars of our world-view, the motivation for our mission, and the foundation for our commitment:
 - **THE BIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD**
The Bible tells the universal story of creation, fall, redemption and new creation, and thereby shapes our worldview. We receive it as the word of God spoken through human authors, and believe it to be true and trustworthy in all it affirms. We depend upon it as the revelation of God's identity, character, purposes and actions, and submit to it as supremely and uniquely authoritative for our belief and behaviour.
 - **GOD AS CREATOR**
The universe is the good creation of the one living God and reveals God's existence, power and glory. Human beings are created in the image of God, male and female, in order to love, worship and obey God, to relate to one another in love, justice and compassion, and to care for creation.
 - **HUMAN CONDITION**
Humans have sinned by rebelling against God, rejecting God's authority and disobeying God's word and so are alienated from God, one another and the created order. Sin deserves God's judgment and leads to eternal separation from God. The effects of sin and the power of evil have permeated the fabric of cultural, economic, social, political and religious life, causing poverty and damaging the creation.
 - **HUMAN WORTH**
Though distorted by sin, the image of God remains the basis of the uniqueness, dignity, sanctity and equality of all persons without distinction. God loves and cares for all people in their cultural and ethnic diversity and has reached out in grace to save them through Jesus Christ.
 - **JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR**
Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Messiah uniquely appointed by God to bring the blessing of salvation to the world. God took our human nature in Jesus Christ, who taught and modelled the new life of the kingdom of God to which he calls his disciples. In his death on the cross he took upon himself the sin of the world, bearing its full cost and penalty so that we are put right with God through his grace by faith in Christ alone. On the cross Jesus also entered into our suffering, defeated the powers of evil and accomplished the reconciliation of all creation. In his bodily resurrection he defeated death and became the forerunner of redeemed humanity. Through his ascension he is exalted as reigning Lord, and at his return he will execute God's judgment, destroy Satan, evil and death, and establish the universal reign of God.

- **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Bible testifies to the Holy Spirit's activity both in creation and history, empowering action for liberation and justice. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and judgment, leads to faith and repentance and unites believers to Christ, making real in them what Jesus has accomplished. Through Christ, God's Spirit is poured out on all believers enabling them to live in unity and to bear the fruit of holiness, Christ-likeness and practical obedience. The Spirit gives gifts and power to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel, discern truth, pray effectively and prevail over the forces of darkness.

- **THE CHURCH AND GOD'S MISSION**

The church stands in continuity with God's people in the Old Testament, called through Abraham to be a light to the nations, shaped and taught through the law and the prophets to be a community of holiness, compassion and justice, and redeemed through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and is commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in the transforming mission of God within history.

3. God commands us to love him with all our heart and soul and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Therefore we commit ourselves through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and in joyful obedience:

- To live as the community of reconciled sinners in unity, humility and sacrificial Christian love.
- To make known to all nations the gospel of God's grace through his forgiveness in Christ, calling people to faith, repentance and discipleship.
- To demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God, participating through suffering in Christ's triumph over evil.
- To serve the needy with compassion, pursue justice and peace, and care for God's creation.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE

We are united on our shared commitment to the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle. The declaration consists of three short clauses that describe important elements of the Baptist way of being the church. The first focuses on our congregational approach to discerning the mind of Christ for our local leadership appointments, meetings, and strategy; the second on our commitment to the baptism of believers; and the third expresses our aspiration to be a missional movement.

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.

