Colchester Road Baptist Church Ipswich

CRBC ETHOS STATEMENT

OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

CRBC is a community of Christians who live to worship God, grow in our understanding and experience of Him, share the good news about Jesus Christ, and work for the common good.

We are a local church within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (also known as Baptists Together), and we affirm the Declaration of Principle that unites our Union. We are also members of the Evangelical Alliance and affirm its Basis of Faith. These affiliations reflect our commitment to historic Christian orthodoxy, evangelical convictions, and Baptist distinctives.

OUR COVENANT TO THE WIDER BAPTIST COMMUNITY

We affirm the *Declaration of Principle* of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), whose Vision and Culture inform our ethos as a Baptist church:

Jesus Christ is our sole and absolute authority in faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Baptism is immersion of believers into the Name of the Triune God.

Every disciple is called to witness to the Gospel and join in the evangelisation of the world.

We aim to be Spirit-led, adventurous, inclusive, and engaged in God's mission.

OUR VISION, MISSION & VALUES

As a Baptist church, we invite people into a deeper relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. We welcome all who come in repentance and faith, desiring to live holy lives. Baptism and church membership are open to those who profess faith in Christ, and each application is prayerfully and carefully considered. Communion is open to all who wish to gather around Jesus' table in remembrance and fellowship.

OUR VISION

We envision a church that:

Trusts God through the truth of Scripture and the leading of His Holy Spirit.

Helps people become devoted followers of Jesus, growing into Spirit-filled maturity.

Demonstrates the love of Christ within our church family and to our local community.

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OUR CORE VALUES

We are committed to being a church that is:

Christ-Centred
- Knowing Jesus, loving Him deeply, and following Him faithfully in all we do.

Biblically Rooted
- Allowing Scripture to shape our beliefs, decisions, and way of life.

Spirit-Led
- Depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance, transformation, and power.

Authentic Community
- Welcoming one another with grace, walking together in truth, and growing in love.

Missional Living
- Sharing the gospel in word and deed, both locally and globally.

Whole-Life Worship
- Honouring God not just on Sundays, but in our homes, workplaces, and relationships.

Intentional Discipleship
- Encouraging one another to grow in faith, character, and calling.

Servant Leadership
- Leading with humility, integrity, and a heart to equip others.

Justice and Mercy
- Standing with the vulnerable and acting with compassion in a broken world.

United in Christ
- We pursue gospel unity across ethnic and cultural differences, recognising the beauty of diversity within the body of Christ.

OUR MISSION

Everything we do is a gateway and pathway to Jesus. We endeavour to be a welcoming community for anyone and everyone who wishes to encounter Him. Each of us aspire to live as a gateway or pathway to Jesus, through our words, actions, and relationships.

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A COMMUNITY OF WELCOME

CRBC holds that all people are loved by God and invited into His Kingdom life.

We aspire to be a church where:

- **Everyone is welcomed** with dignity and compassion.
- **All are invited** to belong and journey together.
- We live **graciously with one another** despite our differences.

We welcome everyone regardless of:

- Age
- Class
- Disability
- Economic status
- Education
- Ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Marital status
- Neurodiversity
- Physical and mental ability
- Political outlook
- Sex and sexual orientation

We welcome people regardless of marital status, affirming singleness as a valid and valued way of life within the body of Christ.

We want to be a church that reflects the ethnic diversity of our community and beyond. We want to continually challenge ourselves to ensure we actively welcome, include, and celebrate people of all racial and cultural backgrounds. We are committed to challenging our own implicit and explicit biases, acknowledging that we all have blind spots, to ensure that our actions and attitudes align with our values of inclusivity and respect for all.

We are committed to creating an environment that enables full participation for individuals with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities for all, whether they experience physical, sensory, or learning disabilities, are neurodivergent, or face mental health challenges.

We recognise that our inclusion exists within the framework of our theological convictions. Leadership and specific rites (e.g. marriage) are subject to doctrinal criteria. We extend a gracious welcome to those who wrestle with our convictions, limitations or openness, trusting the grace of Christ to unite us.

TOGETHER, WE STRIVE TO MAKE OUR CHURCH A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE CAN ENGAGE, CONTRIBUTE, AND THRIVE.

CONVICTION, COMPASSION AND UNITY

While we hold to a shared foundation of biblical convictions and evangelical faith, we recognise that sincere believers may differ on secondary matters of doctrine and practice. As a church affiliated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Evangelical Alliance, we are committed to **gospel unity, generous orthodoxy**, and **gracious conversation**.

WE HOLD OUR DIFFERENCES WITH HUMILITY AND LOVE, RECOGNISING THAT FOR SOME, OUR CONVICTIONS MAY FEEL TOO CONSERVATIVE, WHILE FOR OTHERS, OUR WELCOME MAY SEEM TOO INCLUSIVE. YET WE TRUST IN THE GRACE OF CHRIST TO UNITE US, ENSURING THESE TENSIONS DO NOT BECOME BARRIERS TO FELLOWSHIP WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST OR STUMBLING BLOCKS FOR THOSE EXPLORING FAITH.

THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS

Our Statement of Faith aligns with that of the Evangelical Alliance of Great Britain. In keeping with the Baptist principle of local church discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, CRBC holds to the following theological convictions.

MEN AND WOMEN IN MINISTRY

We affirm that God created both women and men in His image, equal in value, dignity, and purpose. We believe that He calls and equips individuals, regardless of gender, for all forms of leadership and ministry within the church, including the role of Lead Minister. This conviction is grounded in our understanding of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.

GENDER IDENTITY AND CHURCH LIFE

We affirm the inherent dignity and worth of every person as made in the image of God. As a church, we welcome all individuals, including those who are transgender or navigating questions of gender identity, into participation in the life of our community: to worship, serve, and grow in faith.

Some people experience gender dysphoria or a deep incongruence between their biological sex and felt gender identity. We acknowledge the distinction between internal experiences and outward expressions of gender identity, which may include changes in name, pronouns, dress, or medical transition. We walk alongside each person with compassion, truth, and grace, offering pastoral care that is biblically grounded and relationally sensitive.

Our theological conviction is that gender identity is a gift from God and is intrinsically linked to biological sex. In light of this belief, leadership and ministerial roles at CRBC are entrusted to individuals whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex. While holding this conviction, we recognise the reality of gender dysphoria and remain committed to responding with pastoral care that reflects both our understanding of Scripture and the love of Christ.

We encourage discipleship that honours God's design for sex and gender as revealed in Scripture, while recognising the complexity of individual journeys.

We welcome those who are committed to living faithfully in accordance with their biological sex, even while experiencing ongoing gender dysphoria. We also recognise that others may be at different stages of transition or de-transition.

WE HOLD THESE CONVICTIONS WITH HUMILITY AND COMPASSION, BEING A CHURCH WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT, GRACE, AND LOVE AS THEY EXPLORE AND DEEPEN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

This restriction on leadership roles is based on our doctrinal convictions and applies Schedule 9 exemptions of the Equality Act 2010.

SEXUALITY AND CHURCH LIFE

At CRBC, we affirm the dignity and value of every person as made in the image of God. We welcome all individuals, regardless of their life experience or sexual orientation, to participate in the life of our church community — to worship, learn, serve, and grow in faith.

We hold to a biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman. In keeping with this conviction:

- We believe that sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman.
- Leadership roles within CRBC are entrusted to those who strive to live in alignment with this biblical vision of marriage and sexuality.
- As part of our theological convictions, CRBC does not conduct or host same-sex marriages or blessings.

These convictions are held with humility and love and reflect our understanding of Scripture and our responsibilities under UK law (Schedule 9 of the Equality Act 2010).

WE ARE COMMITTED TO BEING A COMMUNITY WHERE ALL ARE INVITED TO EXPLORE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF CHRIST, AND GROW IN RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND LEADERSHIP

Marriage and Sexuality We affirm that marriage is a covenantal union between one man and one woman, instituted by God and intended to reflect Christ's love for the Church. We believe that sexual intimacy is a gift to be enjoyed within this covenant, and that Scripture calls all believers to honour God with their bodies, whether single or married.

Cohabitation and Discipleship We recognise that people come to faith from a variety of backgrounds and life situations. While we welcome all into the life of the church, we encourage believers to pursue patterns of life that reflect biblical teaching. This includes moving towards marriage where appropriate and refraining from sexual relationships outside of marriage. We do not affirm cohabitation as a biblical norm, and we aspire to disciple individuals with grace and truth as they grow in obedience to Christ.

Divorce and Healing We acknowledge the deep pain and complexity that often surrounds divorce. While we uphold the sanctity of marriage as a covenant gift from God, we also recognise that Scripture provides legitimate grounds for divorce in certain circumstances, such as sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9), abandonment (1 Corinthians 7:15), and abuse, which contradicts the biblical call to love and protect.

In a fallen world, marriages may tragically break down, and in such situations, we commit to respond with grace, truth, and compassion. We offer pastoral support to those who have experienced divorce, affirming that God's love remains steadfast and His grace brings healing, restoration, and the hope of new beginnings.

We also recognise that Scripture allows for remarriage in cases where divorce has occurred on biblical grounds, and we walk alongside individuals prayerfully and pastorally as they discern this step.

Those who are divorced or remarried are welcomed into full fellowship, including consideration for leadership, provided their lives reflect spiritual maturity, relational integrity, and a clear commitment to biblical values. Leadership decisions are made prayerfully and with discernment, recognising both the redemptive work of Christ and the responsibility of those who serve.

Singleness: We recognise that singleness is not merely a transitional stage but can be a faithful and meaningful way of life. Scripture honours those who are single, including Jesus and Paul, and we affirm that single individuals are fully able to live out their calling, serve in leadership, and contribute richly to the life of the church. We commit to support single people in their spiritual growth, relational wellbeing, and vocational discernment.

Leadership and Integrity Those in leadership are called to model lives of integrity, faithfulness, and obedience to Scripture. This includes upholding biblical convictions around marriage and sexuality. Leaders are expected to be either faithfully married or celibate, and to demonstrate relational maturity and accountability. We recognise that leadership is a position of trust, and we commit to appoint leaders who reflect the character and calling of Christ.

THESE CONVICTIONS ARE HELD WITH COMPASSION AND HUMILITY, AND WE WALK ALONGSIDE ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH GRACE, OFFERING SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT AS THEY GROW IN FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP.

ETHNICITY AND CHURCH LIFE

We affirm that all people are made in the image of God and that ethnic diversity is a gift to the church. We reject all forms of racism and discrimination, and we strive to be a community where people of every racial and cultural background are welcomed, valued, and empowered to serve.

We recognise the historical and ongoing impact of racial injustice and commit to listening, learning, and growing in our understanding of how to be a truly inclusive church. We desire to reflect the diversity of God's Kingdom in our worship, leadership, and community life.

As Revelation 7:9–10 paints a glorious picture of great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and worshipping the Lamb, we long for CRBC to be a foretaste of that reality.

OUR DESIRE IS THAT OUR FELLOWSHIP WOULD MIRROR THE FATHER'S HEART FOR A BEAUTIFULLY DIVERSE KINGDOM, WHERE UNITY IN CHRIST TRANSCENDS ALL BARRIERS AND WHERE EVERY VOICE JOINS IN DECLARING HIS PRAISE.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES

BOOKINGS

Bookings and use of CRBC facilities are guided by:

- Alignment with Christian values and the ethos of our church
- The practical impact on our core church activities
- Practical feasibility within our resources and staffing

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

We aim to welcome individuals into church life regardless of stage of faith or lifestyle. We recognise the pastoral tension between the ideal we uphold in Scripture, and the real-life journeys people are on. Our commitment is to walk alongside all with grace and truth.

LIFE EVENTS & RITES (COMMUNION, DEDICATIONS, MARRIAGE, FUNERALS)

These are offered within the framework of our theological convictions. In particular, marriage ceremonies conducted by CRBC are reserved for the covenant union between one man and one woman, in accordance with our understanding of Scripture.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Membership at CRBC is open to all who profess faith in Jesus Christ and embrace our shared witness and values as explained in this document. We welcome individuals into membership as part of a journey of discipleship, community, and service.

Leadership and trusteeship carry additional responsibilities and are entrusted to those who demonstrate spiritual maturity and alignment with our theological and ethical convictions. We expect leaders to live lives that are “beyond reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2), modelling integrity, humility, and faithfulness in both belief and practice.

Additionally, trustees must comply with the legal requirements set out in the Charities Act 2011, which include being at least 16 years old, not being disqualified under the Charities Act, and having the necessary skills and experience to manage the charity effectively.

The restrictions on leadership expressed elsewhere in this document are based on our doctrinal convictions and applies Schedule 9 exemptions of the Equality Act 2010.

VERSION CONTROL

V1.1	First draft and initial discussion
V1.2	A coplot (AI) redraft incorporating Input form Jerry and Andy.
V1.3	Tweak wording prior to Trustee discussion 15/10/2025
V1.4	18/10/25 Reviewed by trustees and edited to incorporate the discussion.
V2.0	21/01/2025 Final minor edits before distribution
V2.1	Further edits after consultation – (BU Declaration & Remarriage clarification)