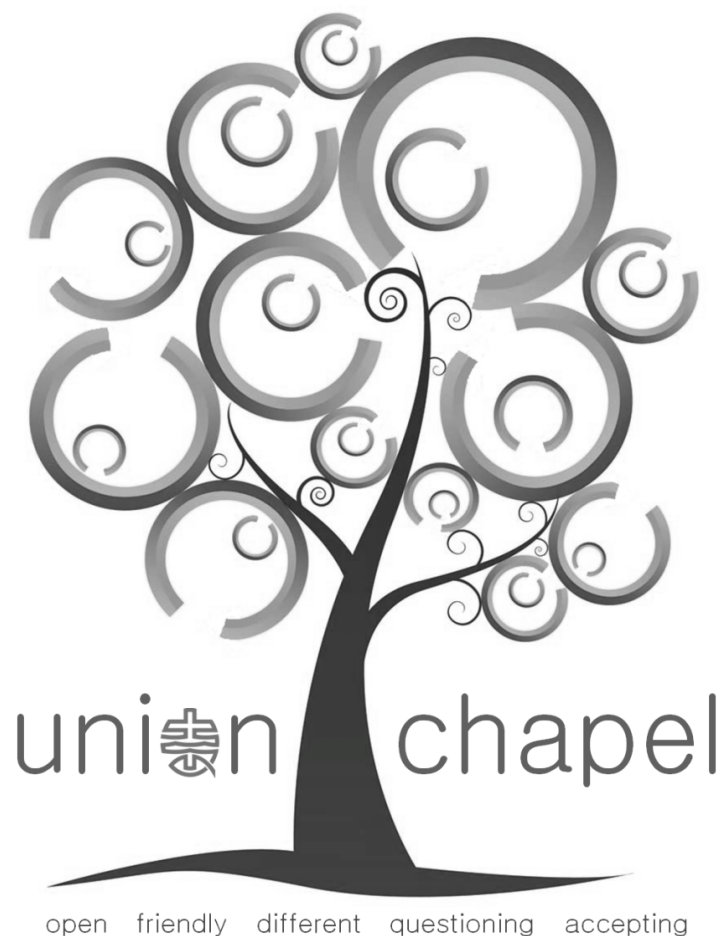


# Christward

The magazine of



November – December 2023

## **~ BU Consultation on Changes to the Rules Governing Ministerial Recognition ~**

*At the October Church Meeting Andy presented our responses to the BU Consultation Survey on changes to the Rules Governing Ministerial Recognition and Gwyneth presented our Additional Comments to the questionnaire. Given below are our Additional Comments.*

The Baptist Union of Great Britain (which Union Chapel belongs to) is currently conducting a survey to ascertain the attitudes of churches towards gay and lesbian ministers who have partners. Accredited Baptist ministers have to comply with the Baptist Union's Ministerial Recognition Rules, and must not commit gross misconduct as defined in those Rules. A number of examples of gross misconduct are given in the Rules, including fraud, domestic abuse, and conviction of a criminal offence, and also:

*Sexual misconduct (ie actions which are of a sexual nature or are sexually motivated) which brings the church and ministry into disrepute. NB This specifically includes sexual intercourse and other genital sexual activity outside of marriage (as defined exclusively as between a man and a woman). A note to the Rules states: Homosexual orientation (whether male or female) is not of itself a reason for exclusion from ministry, but homosexual genital practice is to be regarded as gross misconduct.*

A request has been made to the Baptist Union to remove the words in brackets ie those which define marriage as being *exclusively as between a man and a woman*, which were introduced into the rules in 2007. If these words are removed it would mean that a minister could enter into a same-sex marriage without committing gross misconduct.

A complex consultation questionnaire has been issued to all the churches in the Union. After discussions at Church Meetings and circulation of our proposed responses to church members, Andy

Howes has submitted our replies to the Baptist Union. After 27 questions, there was a final section for other comments. This is what we said, which serves as a summary of our other answers:

*Jesus said that he came so that everyone might have abundant life. We respond in the light of this.*

*The stated aim of s4.3 of Appendix 3 is to avoid bringing the church and the ministry into disrepute. In our experience, what brings the church into disrepute with many people of goodwill is that it appears to want to deny abundant life to any who are not cisgender heterosexual, and that the church refuses to celebrate loving and faithful relationships which enhance the lives of those in them and all who care about them. This is a source of great personal pain to many, as they themselves or their friends and loved ones feel excluded by churches, places which proclaim that God is Love.*

*The Ministerial Recognition Rules accept that homosexual orientation is not a reason for exclusion from ministry; to then deny a minister the right to full expression of their intrinsic and God-given nature is in our view not compatible with the inclusiveness and compassion of Jesus.*

*To change the Rules in the way suggested will (regrettably) leave it open to churches who wish to discriminate on the grounds of sexuality to do so. Q17 probes into the feelings of such churches, and whether they could continue to belong with those of a different view, if their position is rejected: "If the Ministerial Rules were changed, could your church continue to belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain alongside churches who think differently about this matter?" Why is there no question equivalent to q17 about how same-sex-marriage-affirming churches will feel if the amendment is rejected?*

*In our view, this consultation does not exist outside of its context – rather, this is most definitely a moment of crisis and opportunity for the BUGB. A decision either way may have negative as well as positive consequences for the unity of the Union. In these circumstances, we humbly join our prayers with all those who look to Jesus: to his life, ministry and unencumbered love.*

## **~Snippets of Hebrew ~**

### **The Plot Thickens**

Usually in ancient times a king had to be careful to ensure no one was plotting to depose him. And this became part of any king's life ever since. But in this particular case it was not the king who was in danger. The King was the one who was plotting. Later, King Solomon observed that there was nothing new under the sun!

In 1 Samuel 18 we read,

And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merav, her will I give to you to wife, only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles. For Saul said to himself, Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

The Hebrew says David should be a "son of valour". But valour is not the only possible meaning of the word Saul used. Other meanings are worthy, upright, virtue or strength. Another question arises, and that is why a son? Well, firstly it might be an idiom. Secondly it might be a friendlier way of expressing something.

One can understand the thinking of the translators, that valour seems to be suitable for what Saul says he wants. But is what Saul says he wants, what he actually wants? Apparently not, since it is his intention to sacrifice David to the Philistines, because he is overcome with jealousy. When Saul says to David "Behold my daughter Merav, the eldest, I will give you her to wife", was this an invitation David could not refuse?

It seems odd that Saul asks David to be a son of valour. To say someone is a son of something could be a way of indicating they have very much that characteristic and have inherited it. In this case it could be a misdirection from Saul to give the impression that Saul and his family would be delighted to have him as a son, by marrying Merav. It might be intended to put David off the scent because Saul has already thrown a javelin at David while he played the harp to soothe him.

Most translations have “be valiant and fight the Lord’s battles”. They translate out the element of him being a son, on the basis that they have captured what the text means. And that may not be necessarily so. As for the characteristic Saul is asking for, perhaps worthy or upright might be what Saul had in mind, as a way of saying David should be faithful to Saul’s daughter and uphold the family virtues, or in Saul’s case, lack of them. Maybe Saul was hoping to elevate David in the eyes of the people as a political move, to give the nation confidence that they had a reliable head of their army.

Saul does not really want a warrior if he wants David to die! Was David to be a son in law to make Saul look good, and when David was killed as Saul hoped, would he get lots of sympathy? Saul was certainly devious, to the point where he would trap David and give him to one of his daughters only to dispose of him. He clearly thought very little of his daughters. So after failing to marry Merav his eldest to David, he was delighted to hear that Michal his second daughter loved David, which would make trapping David even easier. Did Merav get fed up of waiting for David, and ask for someone else. Some daughters are capable of persuading their fathers.

Saul also appeared to be under some pressure to make David his son in law by his second daughter, because his first daughter was given to someone else. It maybe that David had not responded quickly enough for the impatient Merav, because mention of time expiring is part of the story of David becoming betrothed to Saul’s second daughter Michal. And when Saul was told that Michal loved David, Saul was pleased. No such mention of time is involved in the potential betrothal of David to Merav! So much intrigue and so many complications, but enough clues in the text as to the depth of what might be involved.

For more about tactics see the thesis outlined in *The Politician Handbook* by Miss Direct.

*Geoff Walker*

## **~ BMS in Tunisia ~**

*We were glad to see Sophie at Union Chapel recently when she came to talk to us on 9th September while on home assignment. It was also good to be joined by some of our friends from Newall Green for the evening.*

*Sophie wrote this article for the church magazine:*

“I’d like to start with a thank you for your warm welcome and on-going support of the work I do with BMS in Tunisia. Without you, it simply wouldn’t be possible. I’ve now been overseas with a development partner for six years – my current role is HR & Admin focused, but I wear many hats. As I had the opportunity to share with some of you recently, God is at work in Tunisia. People are coming to know Christ, and there is a growing desire to see faith in action across the nation. This is exciting. Also true is the reality that many are facing really challenge and struggle – particularly our brothers and sisters in the local Church. I am consistently amazed and encouraged (and challenged!) by their commitment to and love for Jesus. Despite the hardships, they rest in the truth that the promises of God are bigger than the troubles of this world. I return to Tunisia in a few weeks now, and am looking forward to reconnecting with friends, church and colleagues as I continue to heed God’s call on my life in this way. I’m sure we’ll be in touch soon!”

## **~ News of the Family ~**

We were saddened to hear of the death of **Christine Mwadzi’s** mother in Kenya. Christine, James, Nicole and Jonathan are very much in our minds at this time when they are so far from home.

The Ordination of **Alison Dummer** will take place at the 11.00am Choral Eucharist at Llandaff Cathedral on Sunday 5th November which is live-streamed on the day via the Cathedral's website: [www.llandaffcathedral.org.uk](http://www.llandaffcathedral.org.uk) and then can be found on YouTube.

We are remembering Alison and Marc with love and prayer as they prepare for it.

**~ Make a note in your diaries ~**

***At Birch Community Centre  
on Saturday 25th November***

**Why Shouldn't I Go?**

**A play written and performed by  
Janet Behan (Brendan Behan's niece)**

'A masterpiece' \*\*\*\*\* *The Upcoming*  
A sixty minute theatrical delight' *Reviewsgate*

Three Irish women of a certain age, tell their very individual stories. These stories are not just Irish tales but contain universal truths about women, particularly our habit of succumbing to external pressures against internal better judgment. It is to Behan's credit that she manages to make the injuries of these three women not a one-dimensional shrill cry but a compassionate telling with this intelligent, layered work. Go see.

**Watch a short video of Janet Behan introducing this play here (2mins):** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/why-shouldnt-i-go-a-one-act-play-written-and-performed-by-janet-behan-tickets-648033384297?aff=oddtcreator>

Tickets: £12    **Book tickets here:** <https://bit.ly/45FLbZU>

**Website link:** <https://www.birchcommunitycentre.co.uk/>

## ***2023 Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer***

**Monday 6th November**

This year the theme is “Breath of Life” drawn from Job 33:4: “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

for further details see: <https://www.bwawomen.org/day-of-prayer/>

## ***Centre for Anabaptist Studies Annual Lecture 2023***

**'Why Women Doing Theology Matters for Everyone: Sexual Violence, Tainted Legacies, and the Integrity of Anabaptist Theology'**

**Wednesday, 22nd November 2023 11:00 - 12:30 GMT**

Lecturer: Dr Fran Porter

The lecture will be at Bristol Baptist College and will be live-streamed. For more details including how to register for the live-streaming open the link below. The lecture will also be recorded and available to view online after the event.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/centre-for-anabaptist-studies-annual-lecture-2023-tickets-689882596417>

## ***Encountering the Anabaptists***

A four evening course about Anabaptists as part of the events celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement in 2025 is being run by Dr Stuart Murray Williams at Bristol Baptist College starting on 1st November. For more details open the link below

[https://baptist.org.uk/Articles/670270/Encountering\\_the\\_Anabaptists.aspx](https://baptist.org.uk/Articles/670270/Encountering_the_Anabaptists.aspx)



# **~ Minutes of the Church Meeting held on 15th October, 2023 ~**

**Present:** Andy H (chair), Enid W, Margaret E, Margaret R, Brenda M, Gwen M, Margaret G, David G, Geoff W, Steve R, Gwyneth HR  
Non-members attending: David O, James, Christine

**Apologies:** Carole W, Nicola H, Lorna R, Alan R (with children)

**The Minutes of the August Church Meeting** (circulated before this Meeting) were approved.

**Matters Arising:** Gwyneth HR reported that we are waiting to hear from the Church's solicitors that everything is in order for the assets transfer to the CIO to be dated up and finalised.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Any Other Business:** Sunday programme for November and December; donation for Foodbank

## **Agenda items:**

- 1. Questionnaire from the Baptist Union on Ministerial Recognition Rules concerning clergy in same-sex marriages** – Andy H has prepared responses to questions 1-27 of the form and Gwyneth HR has drafted the “additional comments”. Gwyneth reported that the BU had introduced the wording being discussed into the Rules after civil partnerships became legally recognised, but before same-sex marriages were. Andy H to circulate the proposed responses for comments. Members to respond to Andy by Friday to ensure the deadline for submission to the BU is not missed.
- 2. GM Commoners** – this group have been interested for some years in acquiring the Linton House site for co-operative housing. We have not heard from them since May, when they had a strategic plan but no offers of finance. We have told them that we have our own issues to decide on, which may

affect the site as a whole. It is possible that a change of government may result in more funding becoming available, or that the Commoners could partner with a bigger organisation with community aspirations, but these are just hopes.

Andy H to contact GM Commoners to see if they have made any progress. The Meeting felt it was not right at this time to have a “whole congregation” meeting with the Commoners.

3. **Carbon emissions on Sundays** – Margaret E said she is unhappy about heating a large space for a few people on Sunday. Margaret G said that there can be other use of the building on Sundays which justifies heating. No alternative was proposed at the meeting. This is part of a bigger question about the buildings.
4. **Annual donations to other charities** – after brief discussion it was agreed to donate again to Christian Aid, Northern Baptist College, Home Mission, Baptist Missionary Society and the Hideaway project. In view of inflation it was agreed to increase the donations from last year’s figure of £650 each to £750 each, and also to make a donation of £750 to Fallowfield and Withington Foodbank.

The meeting also agreed that David G can move church investments into longer-term accounts to obtain better interest rates.

5. **Services and meetings in November and December** – the Meeting agreed to continue our discussions about the future of the Church on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in October (29<sup>th</sup>). Sunday activities in November should follow our normal current pattern, including a Church Meeting on the third Sunday (19<sup>th</sup>). In December, we will have a short service followed by carol-singing and mince pies on the 17<sup>th</sup> (no Church Meeting or lunch), then a service of lessons and carols on 24<sup>th</sup>, with a short meeting on Zoom on Christmas Day. There will be an informal meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> to review our conversations on the

future, with a view to making substantive decisions in the New Year.

6. Gwen M requested that the Deacons should look at rotas which seemed to have lapsed, eg for coffee on Sundays.

**The Meeting closed with the Grace at 12.25pm**

## **~ from the Christian Aid Website ~**

### **Christian Aid Middle East Crisis Appeal**

#### **What's happening?**

On the morning of Saturday 7 October, Hamas launched a wave of rocket attacks and stormed into Israel.

1,300 Israelis have been killed and many more injured. Israeli civilians, including women and children, have been forcibly taken.

In Gaza, almost 3,800 Palestinians have been killed and 12,500 have been injured. Airstrikes have caused widespread destruction of homes, schools, healthcare facilities and telecommunication installations.

Hospitals that are already at breaking point are overwhelmed by casualties, while over a million people have been displaced. With Gaza's only power plant running out of fuel, cuts are affecting hospitals, closing food supply to shops and access to water and sanitation services. All schools are closed.

#### **What is Christian Aid doing in response?**

Christian Aid has been working with the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Middle East since the early 1950s, when we provided humanitarian relief to Palestinian refugees.

In Gaza, our medical partner is providing mobile medical and psychological care. This is a local response where there is limited access, and will allow patients who've been discharged early from severely overcrowded hospitals to be treated at home. The mobile health clinic will provide people with access to a doctor, nurse, social worker or physiotherapist. The mobile dressing team will reach people who require wound dressings to be changed, reducing the risk of infection.

In southern Gaza, our partner is responding to those most recently displaced to southern Gaza as a result of the war. They're providing:

- Mattresses
- Medicines (e.g. for people with chronic illnesses)
- Emergency food from a community kitchen for approximately 200 displaced people.

Moving forward, they'll be reaching more than 300 households who are most affected, with a cash grant to support them to meet their needs.

We're actively exploring ways in which we might also support Israeli civilians who've been directly impacted by the violence.

Your donations can make a huge difference to the current conditions of those affected.

*Following atrocities against Israeli civilians last weekend, Israel's military response in Gaza is now creating an escalating humanitarian crisis that threatens more than 2 million people. After 16 years of closures and sporadic conflict, the people in Gaza were already experiencing very high levels of poverty, unemployment, and violence and insecurity.*

- William Bell, Christian Aid's Head of Middle East Policy & Advocacy.

## **Gaza's ongoing humanitarian crisis**

Even before this latest escalation of violence, the humanitarian need in Gaza has been acute for many years due to the 16-year-old

blockade enforced by Israel and Egypt and a lack of effective government in Gaza. Across the occupied Palestinian territories, there is a sense of lawlessness and Palestinians feel hopeless. Gaza's residents are living in incredibly harsh conditions, with soaring unemployment and poverty rates and a reliance on food aid.

Despite this, the international community has failed to step in, hold all sides to account and work to ensure a peace that secures justice, dignity and prosperity for all.

Please donate what you can today

**Note:** Other organisations also working to relieve the situation in Gaza include UNICEF and Oxfam

**~ You are never too young to be .....  
planning your future career ~**

For Fox it is perhaps Archeology as he is given a guided tour of a Stone Age round house in the Trough of Bowland







On second thoughts the accommodation doesn't quite match up with that available at 54 Burnage Lane.

For Josh it is an internship as a Farmer



"chuck this one out it's not ripe"





You would have thought his employers could have provided a larger wheelbarrow

No way! if those are the working overalls you can keep it.




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