

The Transitional Steering Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain has issued the following statement in response to Steve Chalke's article on same sex partnerships on the Oasis [website](#):

The Baptist Union of Great Britain is a union of local churches, associations and colleges who are committed to creating welcoming communities that are accepting of everyone. We reject any form of 'homophobia' or injustice towards any minority group within our society. We believe that the human dignity and worth of every individual in our world should be celebrated and protected, and stems from their being made in the image of God.

As Baptists we emphasise the importance of the local gathered church that has a responsibility to discern the mind of Christ for its life and witness. Our understanding of church is not as a hierarchy or institution, but as a community of Christ. As such, Baptist churches may reflect a breadth of opinion in their interpretation of Scripture in relation to homosexuality. In fact we encourage churches through a variety of resources to become better informed and equipped to honestly and openly discuss this complex and controversial issue; and to continue to offer a welcome to all in our communities, whatever their sexuality.

However, through its Council in 2009, The Baptist Union of Great Britain offered guidance to its ministers in relation to the formal blessing of a Civil Partnership. This reflected the widespread belief amongst many of its member churches, that a wholesale acceptance of active homosexual relationships did not reflect the historic teachings of Scripture, or our inherited beliefs and traditions.

As a people in covenant relationship, we ask our ministers to reflect the mind of the Baptist Union as a whole and not to conduct formal ceremonies of blessing for such relationships. Accredited Baptist Ministers in representing the wider Baptist community and subject to the disciplines of Council's guidance, are more constrained in their practice than a local church.

The Revd Steve Chalke is a respected and well-known Baptist minister whose contribution to

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church life and wider community well-being is to be celebrated. His desire to stimulate wholesome and sensitive debate on this important matter is to be respected.