

# *The Gathering of Baptists* (incorporated 2004)

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April 24, 2021

The Board of Directors & The Rev. Tim McCoy, Executive Minister,  
Canadian Baptists of Ontario & Quebec, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

**Re: The CBOQ Discernment Process  
on Identity and Beliefs 2020**

***A Request To Rescind the Restrictive Motions of 1988 & 2003***

At its meeting on April 24, 2021, The Gathering of Baptists confirmed that it should respond, again, to the CBOQ Discernment Process, requesting a change of position.

Your October 16, 2019 letter offered that “Phase 5” of the Discernment process will respond to what was heard at the CBOQ Assembly 2020. We heard a call for the autonomy of Baptist congregations, and a clear rejection of the narrow positions of resolutions presented to the Assembly. Our plea is that you present to Assembly 2021 a withdrawal of the restrictive measures adopted in the earlier years of considerations of the issue of marriage.

Millennia of experience has demonstrated the complexity of God’s creation. It includes a variety in its elements. Science has demonstrated many examples: two snowflakes under a microscope exhibit different patterns in their makeup, left-handed and right handed humans are “wired” slightly differently, and gender differences are not simply binary as once thought. There are differing physical, neurological structures. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are realities, not choices, not sinful for being different from one another.

The 2003 ‘resolution’ that “marriage is between one man and one woman for life” is not a reality. It has been decades now that the reality of separation and divorce has been recognized, and some of us can remember the grief The Church created among its people in the 1940s and ‘50s over that issue. Compassion overcame policy, bringing relief and renewed life to countless many.

Acknowledging long-standing Baptist tradition, The Gathering affirms the autonomy of the local church and requests that the Board and the 2021 Assembly reaffirm this fundamental principle of Baptist life and practice. In addition, since Baptists have championed the principles of soul liberty and freedom of conscience, it is essential that individuals and congregations be free to exercise their faith, as they are prayerfully guided by the Holy Spirit of God, the Scriptures, and God-given scientific knowledge.

The Gathering of Baptists is not suggesting that all Baptists, nor all CBOQ churches, must agree with our understanding of the need for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons, but only that the Convention recognise that the Bible has been used in the past to defend slavery, racial segregation, and the marginalisation of women, as part of a long list of the excluded and condemned. Today, most of us see the derogation of whole sectors of humanity in attitudes and structures manifest in slavery, racism, sexism and xenophobia for what they are, as inconsistent with the gospel of God’s love for all. We would add one more to that list.

Rather, we strive to practise and would commend a reading of our holy text in ways that respect the ancient cultures out of which the biblical texts emerged, times and places very different from our own, and thus requiring that we avoid posing modern questions to ancient texts not designed to answer modern questions. We grieve the failure to honour the breadth of interpretation offered by serious biblical scholars of key biblical texts crucial to this issue.

In the name of the revealing Christ,

(The Rev.) Gary D. Caldwell, Secretary

Attached: 88 & 03 Essence

file: GB/Issues/Discernment/2021 Rescind

## Resolutions of BCOQ to be Rescinded Highlights of Concern in the Resolutions

### Assembly 1988

“As Christians we affirm that the **Biblical ideal** for sexual relationships is within a **permanent monogamous heterosexual union**. Marriage is the foundation of both family and society, and this pattern, ordained by God at creation, must be upheld.

**Homosexual sexual expression clearly deviates from this Biblical pattern**, and is strongly **condemned in Scripture**. We therefore assert that **homosexual behaviour is unacceptable in the sight of God, since it is contrary to Scriptural principles of morality and family life**.

.....

AND WHEREAS the legislative bodies of Ontario and Quebec have amended their respective Human Rights Codes to include “sexual orientation” as a prohibited basis of discrimination, and the Federal government has expressed a desire to introduce the same amendment into the Canadian Human Rights Act;

.....

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec **regrets the inclusion of the words “sexual orientation”** in the Human Rights Codes of Ontario and Quebec, and **opposes** their addition to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT we call upon the churches of our Convention to pursue actively ministry to the homosexual person sharing God’s love, **forgiveness and healing**. “

### Assembly 2003

“In view of recent court decisions respecting same-sex marriages in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, and particularly the Ontario Court of Appeal decision handed down on June 10, 2003 legalizing same-sex marriages immediately,

We, the delegates to the 115th Annual Assembly of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec

AFFIRM:

1. The dignity and value of all persons regardless of sexual orientation;
2. That marriage is to be **between one man and one woman for life** to the exclusion of all others;
3. That **sexual intercourse is to be confined to one man and one woman in marriage**; and
4. That all the appropriate rights and benefits should be accorded to all other relationships recognized in law.

.....

We call upon the Federal Government:

- 1. To appeal the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal;**
- 2. To uphold and reaffirm the current legal definition of marriage as that between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others;**