

Ethos Statement



29-JAN-26

Emmanuel Baptist Church Swanage

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Introduction

Overview

What is EBC like as a church? And what does it want to be like, even if it doesn't match up to its aspirations? We have various important, formal documents (which are on our website and listed in an appendix below), but none quite gives the feel of what EBC is or wants to be. So, the purpose of this document is to try to give something of that feel, and to explain where we stand on some of the "hot potato" issues that divide some churches today

Issue Status and History

Status

Policy	Ethos Statement
Number	EBC-11
Primary Responsibility	James Davies, Richard Docherty, Graham Holliday, Alison Snell
Issued	29 th Jan 2026
Status	Issued
Review Period	5 years
Next Review Date	Jan 2031

History

2 nd May 2025	Draft moved to EBC template
18 th November 2025	Revised after discussions with church members
29 th January 2026	Issued after approval by church meeting dated 28 th January

A welcoming church

We want everyone to feel welcome when they arrive at EBC: all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities, those who have been in churches and those who haven't, those who have things together and those whose lives have fallen apart, those with a clear Christian faith and those who are exploring it for the first time.

A transformative church

We welcome all to encounter, firsthand, the transformative effect of the gospel: God not only forgives but brings us into a new community with a pattern of life, centred on Jesus, where clear behaviours, as laid down in the Bible, are encouraged to grow as we walk in the Spirit. We believe that we work best by following our Maker's instructions – even if they are sometimes hard to accept, or against the norms of wider society. No one wanting to become a church member is either expected to be or can be perfect. But we do expect each other to share in a broad acceptance of the pattern of life laid down in the Bible. We do this by seeking the Holy Spirit's empowerment to move the direction of our lives in conformity to such a pattern.

How this works

The list below is not exhaustive - but we hope it creates a clearer framework to understand EBC's position within the wider, global Church:

EBC is a Baptist Church. The two main distinctives of being Baptist are that we teach the importance of a declaration of trust in Jesus made in believer's baptism by immersion, and that we have a congregational style of government (the local membership makes decisions on the church rather than any denominational authority).

However, we warmly welcome into membership those who trust Jesus but have a different understanding of baptism. Effective church governance means welcoming and respecting the insights of our members of all backgrounds and abilities, and of those in fellowship with us but who may not be members (for example, our children). We also see that it is important for us to be in fellowship with other Baptist churches, which we do by membership of both The Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the Old Baptist Union.

EBC is an evangelical church. This means that we accept the authority of the Bible, the centrality of what Jesus did in dying for us on the Cross, and the need for a personal response to the good news that Jesus died for us and loves us individually. However, we recognise that these things are capable of being interpreted in different ways, and do not seek to exclude those who cannot accept every tenet of an evangelical understanding.

EBC is a charismatic church. By this we mean that we welcome opportunities to express spiritual gifts, as long as they build each other up. We respect those among us who do not accept the validity of all such gifts.

EBC is a church in fellowship with Churches Together in Swanage. We have been blessed with good relationships with the other churches in Swanage, and trust those good relationships will continue.

There are a number of specific issues that are currently being debated at length across the world's churches. What follows represents the present position of EBC. We recognize that those who come after us may interpret the teaching of the Bible on some of these issues differently, just as we may well interpret them differently from those who came before us.

Men and women and leadership: While we do not believe that the sexes are the same in every respect, we believe that neither sex is precluded from any leadership position in EBC.

Sex and Gender: We believe that God created us in two sexes, and that our gender should reflect our biological sex. We recognise that some within our fellowship may explore this area personally.

Sexuality and sexual behaviour: We believe the only proper place for sexual activity is within monogamous marriage to someone of the opposite sex. We recognise that all of us struggle with temptation in this area, and many of us need the sympathy and support of our fellow-believers but believe that following the Bible's instructions here is ultimately the only way to a satisfying life.

Marital status: We believe in the gifts of both singleness and marriage, and that marriage is a covenant relationship that should be lifelong, reflecting the faithfulness of God to his people. We recognise that, despite this, marriages

sometimes fail, and that divorce (with or without remarriage) is not necessarily a barrier to full participation in the life of the church.

Appendix

The key documents governing EBC can be found in full on our website. They are:

The Articles of Faith. This is an important document which sets out the core beliefs of EBC.

The Constitution. This is about how EBC works – how it is governed and ordered.

The Church Membership Booklet gives a helpful summary of the value and duties of membership; and

Numerous policies and guides that explain how EBC operates in particular areas (for example employment, data protection, safeguarding etc).