

**Avalon Baptist Peace Church  
Motion Response  
NSW / ACT Assembly  
November 8th, 2025**

**Sally Longley - Senior Pastor**

**There is a better way!**

Brothers and sisters in Christ –

During these times of great polarisation, furious religion and social disgust, when Christians feel justified in casting aside those with whom they disagree, one would have hoped this Baptist Assoc could show the world **there is better way**.

A gay person very dear to us who is currently engaged to be married has been told by two different churches that she is not welcome to participate fully in their fellowship. Her response to us?: I love God, but I hate the church!

Surely cancel culture is **not** part of our Baptist ethos and practice?

Perhaps there is parable for us today: Imagine a person sitting on the steps of a church, weeping. Jesus sees her, and goes and sits next to her and asks, “Why are you weeping?” She replies, “They won’t let me into the church”. Jesus responds gently, “Don’t worry, they are not letting me in either”.

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**There is a better way!**

Scripture was used to justify slavery up until 1865. Christians needed to review their understanding of scripture – and this, **not** in order to

*conform to societal pressure*, but rather the opposite: **to conform to the better way of Jesus.**

My sisters and brothers in Christ, to vote us out of affiliation today is not merely an administrative procedure; it is a severing of bonds forged in the Gospel, a declaration that a secondary conviction has eclipsed our shared core faith. I urge this Gathering to pause, reflect on our Baptist principles, and reject this motion of exclusion.

Our first appeal must rest on the foundational truth: the essence of the Gospel. Our shared confession is Christ's deity, His atoning death and resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. These are the **essentials** upon which our fellowship rests. In the rich tradition of Jesus followers, we have long held to the maxim: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

The definition of marriage, while a deeply important ethical and theological issue, is a matter upon which prayerful, Bible-believing Baptists have reached divergent conclusions. It is a **secondary matter**. To make this a litmus test for belonging, violates the Baptist covenant principle of local church autonomy and the individual freedom of conscience. Our denomination has always valued the right of the local congregation to discern the will of Christ without coercion from a central body. To require doctrinal uniformity on this issue breaks faith with our history. This is not being 'Baptistic'!

The choice is still yours: if you vote yes to disaffiliation, you are conforming to the current destructive context of aggressive polarization. You are simply mirroring current trends of the world, where disagreement leads to rejection and separation, and dialogue is replaced by denunciation: this is a world which seeks to define itself by who it excludes.

**There is a better way!** The Church of Jesus Christ is called to be the absolute opposite of this destructive spirit. We are called to be a body

united not by perfect agreement, but by supernatural love and radical forgiveness. Are we going to tell a watching community that our disagreements are more powerful than our unity in the Risen Lord.

The Association has: “We are greater together” on its call waiting recording. That is absolutely right! So why vote against it? Division always weakens mission. As an association dedicated to bringing the Good News to all people, our credibility rests on how we love those within our own walls. If we cannot hold fellowship with fellow disciples who genuinely believe in the foundational tenets of our faith, yet differ on the complexities of marriage and other issues, how can we convincingly invite a broken world into the unity of Christ?

I ask you to choose charity over cancellation, liberty over uniformity, and the greater work of the Gospel over organizational purification. *Vote no* to cancelling us. **There is a better way! It is the way of Christ.**

#### **Brad Dalton - Secretary and Deacon**

I address you today as a faithful Christian of nearly five decades, one who deeply values our shared covenant and the unity of the Church. My personal journey led me from disillusionment over the institutional church's failure to embrace full inclusion, to finding profound grace at Avalon Baptist Peace Church, a Baptist church community committed to a true, Christ-like welcome — and a welcome that fully embraces the unifying power of diversity and inclusion. The profound irony is that the very denomination we have recently decided to embrace, seeking in it a future for inclusive faith, now seeks to exclude both me, my wife, family and Avalon Baptist because of that conviction.

I implore you, as shepherds of God's flock, to consider the profound spiritual damage caused by exclusion. When we divide over "disputable matters," we violate the very purpose for which we were called: Romans 15:7 says **“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ also welcomed you, for the glory of God”**. This very simple command makes mutual acceptance a non-negotiable act of worship.

To cast out our congregation based on our commitment to this extravagant welcome is to strike at the very heart of our shared identity. The Scriptures teach that we are **“all one in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:28), a unity that transcends all human categories. By choosing institutional conformity over the costly grace of inclusion, you risk fracturing the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:26) and hindering the Gospel’s message of unconditional love.

I pray you will choose the path of inclusion, honouring the diversity of faith and practice that the Holy Spirit has already blessed within our churches. When prayerfully considering how to vote today, I urge you to simply ask yourselves: **“What would Jesus do?”**

### **Bruce Davies – Treasurer and Deacon**

Good afternoon, everyone,

It’s often said that around 40% of people in our broader community have a family member who has “come out” as gay. From my own experience—across both Christian and non-religious circles—I’ve found that figure to be quite accurate.

At our AGM in May this year, between 33 and 35% of us voted against the disaffiliation of Canberra and Hamilton Baptist churches. That’s a significant number. It suggests that even in this room today, many of us are personally connected to someone who is LGBTQ+.

And yet, I find it deeply saddening that it only takes a 50.01% majority to disaffiliate a church from our association. That such a slim margin can sever a congregation from our fellowship—often over matters of inclusion and conscience—should give us pause.

Let me share two stories. Both are about gay Christians. Both sought to follow Jesus. But their journeys took very different turns.

**Story one** is of a practicing gay Christian who found a church that not only welcomed them but affirmed them. They were embraced as a full

member of the body of Christ, with opportunities to serve, lead, and grow. Today, they are flourishing—faithful, joyful, and fruitful in their walk with Jesus.

**Story two** is more painful. A young man, deeply involved in his church—leading youth groups, even serving in overseas missions—came out in his mid-twenties. The response from his church, friends, and family was rejection. Though he held onto his faith, the emotional and spiritual conflict became overwhelming. He drifted away, and in the struggle to reconcile his identity with his faith, he turned to alcohol and drugs. His story is still unfolding. I don't know how it will end.

These are not just stories. They are lives. They are people we know and love.

And finally, I must say this plainly: research has shown that so-called “conversion therapy” does not work. Worse, it causes deep and lasting harm to LGBTQ+ Christians. We cannot ignore this.

As a community of faith, we are called to embody the love of Christ. Let us be a people who choose compassion over condemnation, welcome over exclusion, and grace over judgment.

Thank you.