



An open letter to BCOQ churches re Council/Board Directives

27 February, 2004

Members of the Congregation
c/o your Senior Pastor & Chair of Deacons

Dear Baptist Christian Friends:

We, the members of the Steering Committee of the Gathering of Baptists, would like to raise a serious concern with you about how our Convention is dealing with the issue of same-sex marriage. We recognize that this issue is of great concern to most Christians and that many oppose same-gender union. However, as we are part of autonomous Baptist churches, we are concerned that contentious issues with divisive potential be dealt with in a spirit of prayerful study and reflection. How we arrive at our conclusions is just as important as the conclusion itself.

In our opinion the BCOQ leadership has rushed to judgment in this matter without any appropriate consultation and without due regard for local church autonomy. Our leadership has also shown a lack of regard for the principle of "soul liberty"—which encourages individual Baptists to interpret the scriptures as led by the Spirit—by issuing a directive (command) prohibiting licensed ministers from performing same-gender marriages accompanied by punitive threats if not obeyed. Their actions also insensitively introduce a potentially divisive issue into local churches by asking each to endorse their arbitrary action without concern for the possible division it may bring to congregations that may need resources to process such an issue adequately. This ban and request for endorsement has the effect of making one's view on same sex marriage a test of orthodoxy, requiring all to subscribe to a certain view of the authority of scripture.

... 2

We are encouraging churches to ask the BCOQ Board to rescind Council's "directive" and to begin an honest and open process of discussion and consultation with pastors and churches that examines the issue carefully, prayerfully and responsibly from all aspects. This should be a process that honors historic and biblical Baptist practices of local church autonomy and freedom to interpret scripture as led by the Spirit of God.

If you share our concerns please write to the BCOQ Board and be prepared to address this issue at the June Assembly.

We also are prepared to recommend or provide resources to your church. These would be balanced and respectful of people's positions across the spectrum of belief. Please contact us if you would like more information or clarification or support. There is more information available on our website at www.gatheringbaptists.ca.

Sincerely,

Roy Hobbs
A-M Stever
his partner
Douglas J. Perry
Margaret A. Bell

Merle Caldwell
Daphne L. Hunt
Guy Caldwell
C. M.

Gathering Steering Committee Members