

***"A statement released by the Council of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland regarding recent and pending legislative changes.***

## HUMAN LIFE

We affirm that all human life is precious. Every human being has unique dignity, worth, value and meaning. The ultimate foundation of this is the Bible's teaching that we are all made in "the image of God" (Genesis 1:27).

God's word and science agree that life begins at conception (Psalm 51:5). Since God alone is the author of life, we do not have the right to determine whose life has value and whose does not; who should live and who should not. Abortion is a violation of the precious gift of life. Every society genuinely committed to fundamental human rights, especially the right to life, should take very seriously both the moral and physical status of the unborn child and the mental and physical wellbeing of the mother.

We affirm that a mark of a truly progressive society is its commitment to protect its most vulnerable, particularly the unborn child and its mother. Any human law that removes the right to life is an unjust law, a regressive step, and detrimental to society.

## MARRIAGE

We affirm that marriage is not a mere human contract but rather a covenant made before God.

We affirm that God has designed marriage to be a lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife (Genesis 2:24), and to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church. For centuries this definition of marriage has been the foundation of home and society.

Out of love and genuine concern for the well-being of our society we wish to defend the true definition of marriage and urge that freedom of religion and conscience are maintained and protected so that no one is compelled to act against their beliefs.

## RESPONSE

As an all-island Association of Churches we lament the legislative changes in both jurisdictions on this island that conflict with these truths.

In particular, we deplore the most recent legislation imposed on the citizens of Northern Ireland, which we believe to be badly drafted, ill-informed and introduced without adequate public or political consultation.

We encourage our church members and our fellow citizens to engage in the current consultation in a way which affirms life, protects the vulnerable, supports those in crisis and upholds the biblical definition of marriage. We call on our elected representatives to do everything they can to mitigate the effects of this legislation.

Finally, we affirm that the ultimate hope for our society is found in Jesus Christ alone. As we continue to share the life-giving good news of Jesus, we commit ourselves through prayer and humble service to the spiritual, moral and material wellbeing of our society and the glory of God.”

### ***Further information***

The Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland is a group of 116 churches of the Baptist faith and order across the island of Ireland. It was formed in 1895 and celebrates the 125th anniversary in 2020. In total the churches represent a worshipping community of over 15,000 people.