



Baptist Churches

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Divorce and the Ministry

1. At a Special Assembly on 7th April, the September Annual Assembly 1984, and the Union Council Meeting on 29th October 1984, the 'Divorce and the Ministry: Principles and Procedures' were adopted. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Human Sexuality and the Church statement adopted by Assembly on 28 May 2005.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Marriage, according to the biblical pattern is a lifelong and exclusive commitment between a man and a woman, instituted by God for the benefit and enrichment of humankind and calling for mutual love, faithfulness and understanding.
- 2.2 It is a Christian responsibility, incumbent upon individuals, Churches and this Family of Churches, to give high priority to all reasonable means of promoting and strengthening truly Christian marriage and healthy family life, and minimise as far as possible the particular pressures experienced by Pastors in their marriages as a result of their position.
- 2.3 It is also our responsibility to oppose all practices and attitudes which threaten this biblical view of marriage, including the ready resort to divorce which is now prevalent in our society.
- 2.4 The breaking of a marriage relationship is a departure from God's ideal for marriage but, given true repentance, neither the breakdown of the marriage, nor the subsequent divorce, is beyond the reach of God's forgiveness and healing.
- 2.5 Christians should act in accord with the mind of Christ, both by refraining from any conduct likely to endanger a marriage and by showing compassion and understanding to those involved in marriage breakdown, and also by doing all that is possible towards forgiveness and restoration.
- 2.6 Those who serve as leaders in our Churches, especially Pastors, should be of exemplary Christian character and behaviour in all matters, including marriage and family relationships.
- 2.7 It is the duty of responsible Office Bearers of the Baptist Churches of Western Australia and of local Churches to uphold these standards, and to act towards those leaders who depart from such standards, in a manner that emphasises that the Christian life is about repentance, forgiveness, restoration and discipline.

3. Procedures.

- 3.1 The Council is to seek in all applicants evidence of call to accredited ministry and evidence of exemplary Christian character and behaviour in all matters, including marriage and family relationships.
- 3.2 A divorcee (with or without remarriage) or a person who marries a divorcee may be considered for Accreditation.

- 3.3 Before the Council can accept an application for Accreditation, it would need to be firmly convinced of the Applicant's call and suitability to the ministry and to carefully review the situation in the light of the Baptist Union Principles of marriage (i.e. Principles 2.1 to 2.7 above).
- 3.4 The seriousness of such a recommendation would demand that the Council in their deliberations give particular consideration to the following -
 - 3.4.1 The nature and circumstances of the divorce;
 - 3.4.2 The evidence of the Applicant's commitment to the biblical pattern of marriage (as stated in Principle 2.1) over an appropriate period of time (normally five years after divorce);
 - 3.4.3 The welfare of the applicant;
 - 3.4.4 Their likely acceptability for ministry in our Churches; and
 - 3.4.5 The welfare of the Churches.
- 3.5 No decision concerning one Accreditation Candidate will be taken as a precedent for another case.
- 3.6 In the event of marriage breakdown or divorce of a person whose name appears on the List of Accredited Persons in Ministry or of Accreditation Candidates, or who holds public office in the Baptist Churches of Western Australia, Currency of Accreditation will be suspended pending a confidential review of the situation by the Accreditation Team. The Accreditation Team will notify the local church or ministry of the suspension. The implications of non-currency include suspension of the Marriage Celebrant Licence.
- 3.7 The Accreditation Team will conduct the review in accordance with the Accredited Persons in Ministry Policy.
- 3.8 The Accreditation Team will make a confidential review in any instance, where a person whose name appears on the List of Accredited Persons in Ministry or of Accreditation Candidates or a person who holds public office in the Baptist Churches of Western Australia, is alleged, 1 Timothy 5: 19, to have been guilty of conduct plainly inconsistent with the biblical pattern of leadership. The Accreditation Team will present its findings to Council, with any necessary recommendations.
- 3.9 If, and only if, such a review leads the Council to hold the person to be guilty of conduct inconsistent with the biblical pattern of leadership, whether this conduct involved divorce or be of any other kind, action will be taken regarding the removal of such a person from the List of Accredited Persons in Ministry or the List of Accreditation Candidates or the position of public office (as the case may be).
- 3.10 For any review the Council may appoint an appropriate small group to assist it.

Document History and Version Control Record

Document Title:		Divorce and the Ministry	
Source Documents:			
Associated Internal Documents:		BCWA Governance Policy Manual Human Sexuality and the Church Statement	
Associated External Documents:			
Applies to:			
Approved by:		BUWA Council	
Authorised Officer:		Director of Ministries	
Date of Approval:		18 February 2019	
Assigned Review Period:			
Date of Next Review:		February 2020	
Version Number	Version Date	Name/Authorised Officer	Amendment Details
V 1.0	28/05/2005	BUWA Assembly	Creation
V 2.0	18/2/2019	BCWA Council	BUWA Council approved amendments to bring into line with the BCWA Accredited Persons in Ministry Policy