

Equal Marriage decision to be an Ordinary Church Meeting

Spiritually, being a Baptist church, we are congregational in governance: we make the big decisions as Church Members together. Legally, Chester Road Baptist Church is governed by our CIO Constitution. See [Chester Road Baptist.org.uk/Policies](http://ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk/Policies)

We have three types of Church Members' Meeting:

- Annual General Meeting
- Ordinary Church Meetings (4-6 a year)
- Special Church Meetings (if/ when required)

An Ordinary Church Meeting requires a minimum of 25% of Church Members to attend, with decisions by simple majority – whichever gets the most votes carries. A Special Church Meeting requires a minimum of 40% of Church Members to attend, with decisions only carried if they get 75% or more votes. Following a recent audit and 3 resignations, our current membership is 121 0(correct at 6/04/2026,)

A few Church Members have asked if the decision on 12th July to register for equal marriage should be made by Special Church Meeting. As Leadership Team/ Trustees, we've given this serious consideration. At our LT meeting on 05/03/2026, and again on, 02/04/2026, we were unanimous in concluding it should be an Ordinary Church Meeting. We recognise, either way, it is a significant decision; but that is different to the constitutional specifics of a *Special* Church Meeting. Here's why.

1. A Special Church Meeting is not required

Our CIO Constitution states:

13.1.5	A Special Church Members' Meeting shall be convened when necessary to consider the appointment or dismissal of a minister, the dismissal of a Charity Trustee, matters relating to the purchase, sale, lease, mortgage or redevelopment of Church property, the closure of the Church, or matters considered by the Charity Trustees to be of sufficient importance to require the calling of a Special Church Members' Meeting.
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Special Church Meetings are for decisions that bind the hands of future generations. For example:

- Once a Minister is appointed, future generations are committed to them.
- Once a Minister or Trustee is dismissed, they're gone forever.
- Once a property is purchased/ leased, future generations are committed to its upkeep/ financing.
- Once a property is sold, it's gone forever.
- Once the constitution is changed, that Constitution is gone forever.
- Once the church is formally closed, it's closed forever.

Registering for equal marriage does not bind the hands of future generations. At any time, one or more of the 'green lights' could turn 'red'. For example:

- The Baptist Union, as our denomination, could change/ impose a new policy.
- Chester Road could appoint future Ministers that do not consent to marrying same-sex couples.
- Chester Road Members could decide in the future to pause or stop marrying same-sex couples.

Therefore, a Special Church Meeting is not required. This has also been confirmed by the Baptist Union's legal team.

2. A Special Church Meeting is not beneficial

As Leadership Team/ Trustees, we've discussed this at length. At our meetings on 05/03/2026 & 02/04/2026, we were unanimous in concluding, because it is a significant decision, it should be an Ordinary Church Meeting.

We recognise, registering for equal marriage will not be a unanimous decision. As a Baptist church, we hold different views together, and decide together the direction God is leading us in as a community. Therefore, the simplest and fairest option is to decide by simple majority – whichever gets the most votes. This is an Ordinary Church Meeting.

It would seem both wrong and divisive if the *majority* of Church Members were to support a decision, only for this to then be blocked/ vetoed by a *minority*. For example, if it was a Special Church Meeting, 74% of participating Church Members could find they were vetoed by just 26% or 12 Church Members. As a Leadership Team, this does not seem right.

So, we'll decide by simple majority, reflective of or congregational governance and that we are all members together.

Leadership Team