

***Biblical perspectives:*** We see the Bible as instructive for human flourishing and as authoritative for the community of faith. We read the Bible seeking to discern the whole picture of Scripture, believing the biblical imagination issues a call to live out God's ideal for humanity. We continue to study the Scriptures, believing the Holy Spirit forms and re-forms us as we do.

***Theological perspectives:*** We seek to apply our understanding of the gracious and loving character of our God, what it means to be human, the reality of sin and living in a fractured world, and the call on the church to live as a people of hope. We are a community that chooses to live in response to God and be a light to the world, not coercive of anyone else but wanting to articulate a prophetic voice to our wider community. We value the need for nuance and patience in wrestling with theological perspectives on complex issues.

***Historical perspectives:*** We draw on the thinking and traditions of the church throughout its history, in particular those in the Protestant, evangelical, and dissenting traditions. While some of the issues we face in our context are new, we recognise that those who have come before can speak into them helpfully as we humbly listen to their wisdom.

***Baptist perspectives:*** We apply the shared values of our Australian Baptist movement, first seeking to discern the presence and voice of Jesus among us in each situation. We seek to make the gospel of Jesus known in word and deed and recognise the need to do this in ways that are relevant and respectful to each context. We honour liberty of conscience and religious freedom for all. We welcome the participation of our diverse membership, acknowledging that we will not always agree among ourselves on everything, but seeking to maintain relationship with one another in love and fellowship as we continue to discern together.

***Pastoral perspectives:*** We desire to care for and show compassion to all, particularly people who have been hurt, are vulnerable or have been marginalised. We aim to show generosity and hospitality to those with whom we disagree. We recognise that the church has not always done well in this area, we are willing to apologise and commit to doing better, and we seek to listen well to the voices of others. We will use our voice to speak on behalf of others who do not have the same opportunity to speak.

***Relational perspectives:*** In our tone and posture towards others we seek to be willing listeners learning together. Should disagreement arise, we will strive to be gracious and gentle, operating out of love rather than fear, and communicating thoughtfully rather than engaging in depersonalising or battleground language. We aim to work with and alongside others, articulating what we believe as people of faith but recognising that our voice may sometimes be a minority voice. We do not claim a right to determine what must be but seek a place to be heard well as we articulate our perspective on flourishing for the good of the community.



***Biblical perspectives:***

- \* Which biblical texts seem to address this issue directly?
- \* Which other texts touch on this issue indirectly but significantly?
- \* What are the contexts around each of these texts? Do we all have a grasp of how they each sit within the Bible (testament, book, genre, initial audience, place within the wider story)?

***Theological perspectives:***

- \* With regards to the biblical texts discussed, is there a strong consensus of interpretation among us in this discussion or is there a range of views?
- \* Which texts and truths need to be held in tension rather than simply repeating or reinforcing each other?
- \* What is our first hunch of how the Spirit speaks through these texts to us in our situation?

***Historical perspectives:***

- \* How have other believers in different times and places wrestled with this issue and these texts?
- \* Are there things that we know that they didn't? How did their situation differ from ours?
- \* What is admirable or troubling about their response?

***Baptist perspectives:***

- \* What is the wisdom of our sisters and brothers on this matter? To what extent is there a consensus, and if there is a dissenting view is it a tiny minority or a significant minority?
- \* To what extent do different views on this matter threaten fellowship? Are there differences that we must live with and live with well or might they end up necessitating us serving the Lord separately?
- \* Where others have made this choice one way or the other, what has been the outcome?

***Pastoral perspectives:***

- \* In seeking truth on this matter, what does it mean for us to also pursue grace?
- \* Are we sure that in all our communication we are speaking the truth (as we see it) in love?
- \* How is this issue already causing pain? And to whom the most? What effect is it having on the most vulnerable?
- \* If we resolve this issue in one way or another, what pain might be experienced or relieved?

***Relational perspectives:***

- \* What is our 'posture' as we work through this issue? Are our fists and jaws clenched? How are we perceived by others? Can we know and share the peace of Christ in this situation?
- \* How can we discern and take Christ's posture on this?
- \* How can we witness to Christ not only by coming to a 'right answer' but in the way we come to it and the way we offer it to others?