

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM LADYWELL BAPTIST CHURCH

I am writing on behalf of Ladywell Baptist Church in Livingston concerning the call for views on the proposed Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill. Our church was established in Livingston 50 years ago and over that time has been comprised of a largenumber of people from all ages, stages and backgrounds. We have sought to serve the community of Ladywell in a variety of practical and spiritual means regardless of culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or religious beliefs. It is our conviction that all people are created in the image of God and for this reason possess intrinsic value as human beings.

While we strive to love, honour and serve all people, we will not always agree with all people. Indeed our disagreements will sometimes be rooted in deeply held convictions central to our faith and fundamental to who we are as a Christian people. This may seem intolerant and perhaps hateful to some, which is why we are concerned with the proposed bill. In its current form it will entrench division, destroy our freedom of speech and of religion and it is our firm view that this will be massively detrimental to our society.

Some keys areas where the Bill will have an impact are as follows: -

As the bill currently stands it makes hate speech almost impossible to define and therefore impossible to deal with in a fair and impartial way. If speech is considered hateful on the basis that a person 'feels' it is hateful who will determine whether an offense has taken place? Indeed who can determine if they themselves are guilty of such hateful speech if the intent of the speaker is not taken into consideration? This is why legislation in the rest of the UK includes reference to the intent of the speaker. It is clearly wrong to incite violence or stir up hatred against another individual or group, but under the proposed bill there would be no way for an individual to know if they were doing so until such time as a allegation has been made. There will be no way to look ensure lawful conduct is being carried out. Laws in our country must surely be clear, objective and impartial if they are to be fairly implemented.

The proposed Bill will not allow for individuals to disagree with those who maintain different views on religion. The Christian faith rooted in the Bible, by its nature, differs from other faiths. The Bible teaches that all people are created in God's image and yet are corrupted by sin. In the Bible Christ maintains an exclusive claim to be the only remedy for this problem of sin and a saviour to all people who would turn from their sin and follow him. The Bible also maintains that all those who follow Christ will view their humanity and morality in line with the Bible's teachings. The Bible is also clear that those who receive Christ as their saviour will dwell with him in heaven for eternity while those who reject Christ as their saviour will spend eternity in hell. These beliefs are fundamental to our faith and yet in no way require us to hate or do violence to others, merely to share our beliefs with love, compassion, faithfulness and gentleness. If the

proposed bill were to become law it would be considered a hate crime for us to preach or teach these beliefs in our own church building or homes.

The proposed Bill will not allow for individuals to disagree with those who maintain different views on gender and sexuality. As previously stated the Bible maintains clear positions on the nature of humanity as made male and female in the image of God. Hand in hand with this is the bible's teaching on sexuality and the nature of marriage as being exclusively between a man and a woman. This Bill will provide no freedom to question or disagree with those who promote same sex marriage, the LGBTQ movement or transgenderism.

In the name of freedom and tolerance this Bill will actually accomplish the opposite and will create an environment where those who shout the loudest and are the most offended will have the law behind them while those who don't won't. The bill will create an unjust and unequal society that is based more on current fashionable beliefs than the impartial rule of law for all resulting in a totalitarian nation and culture which will benefit no one.

Thank you for listening to our views on this matter and please know that we are praying for all in government in Scotland as the leaders God has appointed to guide and govern us as a nation through the upholding and enacting of justice.

Ladywell Baptist Church
25 July 2020