

# Girl Guides stand firm over Promise despite condemnation from reactionary Christians

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Christian Guide leaders in Harrogate have backed down after initially refusing to introduce the new secular Promise.

The Guide leaders, who are all members of the local United Reformed Church, had told volunteer leader Jem Henderson that they would be sticking with the previous promise which includes the phrase "to love my God". However, following a meeting with Girlguiding UK, the St Paul's Harrogate troop has now agreed to use the new secular promise.

The refusal to implement the new Promise made national headlines after Ms Henderson contacted the NSS seeking support.

The former Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, called on Christian Guide leaders to rebel against what he called "secular totalitarianism", and suggested the organisation could split if it refused to compromise and allow two pledges. Andrea Minichiello Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, joined the small chorus of condemnation, saying: "These women should be commended for standing up to the forced secularisation of the Guiding movement."

Girlguiding UK updated their promise after a public consultation involving nearly 44,000 people from inside and outside the organisation, showed that different wording was needed for the promise to be inclusive of all girls, of all faiths and none.

The updated Promise replaces the phrase 'to love my God' with 'be true to myself and develop my beliefs'.

In one radio interview for BBC 3 Counties, Church of England General Synod member Alison Ruoff suggested God would "remove his blessing from the UK" if the new pledge was introduced.

Prominent church leaders also called for Guides to be [prevented from using Church premises](#).

Despite the controversy, Chief Guide Gill Slocombe said the response to the new Promise had been "overwhelmingly positive" and the complaints it had received from members represented "significantly less than 1%" of their membership.

She confirmed that all members must use the secular Promise after September 1.

Jem Henderson, commented: "All I wanted out of this was for the troops to accept the secular promise. My friends and people around me are very proud of me for standing up for what I believe in."

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