LIVING OUR BELIEFS
The current way of life of the Plymouth Brethren

Plymouth Brethren
Christian Church
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Eternal Salvation

Every soul needs salvation from God’s judgment that is to come, for all people have sinned. Salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ who can save both from the guilt and the power of sin.

We believe that all who call on His name confessing their sins, and who have faith in His blood, are saved eternally. God gave His Son to die for us. Jesus became the Substitute for every offence and for everything in the sinner that is offensive to God. On this basis, He is able to grant repentance, forgiveness and eternal life to sinners who believe on Him and He gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. For a sinner saved by grace and who loves the Saviour, the main object in life is to be a witness for Christ and to fulfil the duty to serve Him here in a world that crucified Him.

The Brethren Church’s doctrine of separation involves souls being drawn away from the world (in a moral sense) – the system of sin and lawlessness under the domination of Satan and becoming attached to Christ as the Son of God and centre of another world. We believe that God, not Satan, is supreme in the human soul. We further believe that people who have accepted the Gospel of God’s grace will be in the majority and it will be through these means that God will fill heaven eternally with myriads of the saved. Brethren have never believed that only Brethren will be in heaven.
Street Preaching

In every city and town where there are Brethren public gospel preaching takes place on most weekdays, in the middle of the day. The aim is not to recruit more members for the Brethren but to present eternal salvation, available to all men by faith in Jesus Christ, through His blood and His work of atonement. Gospel tracts handed out to passers-by include phone numbers, so that a contact is available for anyone seeking help, guidance, reassurance or solace.

In days of earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters men, women and children welcome spiritual guidance in their perplexity and the public benefit of these street preachings is incalculable. Police and other authorities have told us they welcome the restraining influence they provide.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
John 3: 16

“For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved”
Romans 10: 13

“God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth”
1 Timothy 2: 3-4

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season”
2 Timothy 4: 2
The Brethren community engages in many activities as part of a commitment to the public good.

Provision of many meeting halls which are places of public worship, and the publication and distribution of gospel tracts and literature are key foundations on which we build many activities and outreach events. Brethren members are active in their communities and have been found helping in many natural disasters and emergencies. Members raise funds for many local and national charities and, over the years, land has been donated for community recreational use, in various locations. Brethren owned businesses employ many different people from many different nationalities and creeds.

Amongst many charitable activities, Brethren congregations hold open days at our Gospel halls. These events are free to the public and men and women from the church are present to help answer questions or concerns. Hot food and drinks along with a free Bible and gospel booklets are offered to any who attend. Brethren have a UK wide Rapid Response Team on call 24/7 to provide emergency workers at major incidents with hot food and refreshments. This team includes registered first aiders and is also on hand for natural disasters and tragedies with activities that range from sandbagging to the clearance of rubbish and debris. Pictures show charity fund raising by Brethren for UCL Hospital and Medcare, some visitors at a open day in the Midlands and Firemen enjoying refreshments provided free of charge by Brethren.

For God loveth a cheerful giver
2 Corinthians 9:7
The Doctrine of Separation

The principle of separation is practiced by all people, nations and religions in some form or other.

The Bible refers to it in many passages - from Genesis chapter 1, where God divided between light and darkness, right through to Revelation chapter 22, where there are those who are within and those who are without.

The Lord Jesus said as to His disciples “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” John 17:14. The world in this sense refers to the system of sin and lawlessness under the domination of Satan.

As a Church, we wholeheartedly seek to dedicate our lives to this principle. We choose to follow the teachings of Jesus as set out in the Gospels and taught in the Epistles of the New Testament. Refer passages such as Matthew 16:24-26, Mark 10:28-30, 2 Timothy 2:19 and 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 18.

Separation represents a moral distinction between what is right and what is wrong, what is righteous and what is unrighteous. Christians as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are exhorted to “refuse the evil and to choose the good” Isaiah 7:15.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, (and) prepared unto every good work.

Flee also youthful lust: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:19-22

We make a commitment to eat and drink only with those with whom we would celebrate the Lord’s Supper – that is the basis of our fellowship.

This does not mean that we hold ourselves as superior to our fellow men, women and children. We live and work harmoniously alongside them, in the mainstream of society.

Our practice of separation does not preclude interaction in the broader community.

We help our neighbours and they help us. We care for and protect their property and they do ours.

We appreciate the good that we receive from many of our fellow citizens, and welcome the opportunity to fulfill our responsibility in the community. Our attitude is to do good to all, as opportunities arise.
Meetings

Each day, Brethren meet in purpose-built churches, which are used only for Christian worship and not for secular or other activities.

Our meetings are based on Holy Scripture. Selected scriptures from the Bible provide the subject for mutually conversational Bible readings, gospel sermons and addresses based on texts of Scripture. We open and close our meetings with a prayer and the collective singing of a hymn.

Special meetings are often held. These may take the form of ‘fellowship meetings’ or ‘three-day meetings’ (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). On these occasions, attendance is on the basis of invitation and often includes national and worldwide representation. The only material read and discussed in these meetings is the Bible.

Sunday (Lord’s day) is regarded as a special day, commencing with the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) at 6 am at local churches and thereafter the day is filled with Bible readings and preachings of the Gospel and the Word of God. We also entertain Brethren in our homes for lunches and evening meals.

Church & Gospel Halls

All Brethren halls are separate freehold premises and we do not hire private venues for functions or conferences. Brethren have standard designs for all new church halls worldwide and we comply with local government requirements and local community considerations and concerns.

Our churches are approved by local government as places of worship. Much care and expense is incurred to ensure that sufficient off-street parking is provided and that the environment is cared for, respected and protected.
The Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, is the centre of Brethren life. The Lord’s Supper is central to our lives. It is celebrated each first day of the week by every member of the Plymouth Brethren and it serves to hold our community together in the bond of Christian fellowship and in commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. This simple and private service follows the form given in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28, John 20:19, Acts 20:7 and other Scriptures. It is keenly attended by all our households, and we include our children who receive the sacraments on the basis of the words of Jesus: ‘Take eat; this is my body.” Matthew 26:26-28.

The gospel is preached in our halls up to nine times each Sunday and members of the wider public are welcome to attend. Like all churches, however, we do ask a certain level of decorum in dress and behaviour.

Weekly meetings specifically for prayer are held across the UK. At these occasions, prayers are made for a wide variety of subjects including governments, wars, natural disasters and persons in poverty, oppression, sickness and need. Brethren members are kept updated as to current issues. Thousands of public prayers are made each week in our meeting halls.

All our meetings are based on the Bible and include Bible readings. Persons are free to select a text from the Bible and many other verses are brought into a mutual discussion by the congregation.

Bible Readings

Gospel Preachings

Prayer Meetings

Opening Times

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The preservation and protection of the family unit is fundamental to the Brethren. The conception of children is prized as a blessing from God (Psalm 127, verse 3). Children are loved and cared for as in any enlightened community and corporal punishment is not practised.

Respect for elders, neighbours and the general community, property, animals and the environment (creation) is promoted and upheld as a key principle of life. Constant and repeated instruction in the household and in church meetings reinforces this tenet.

Children stay and live within the family unit until marriage, which usually takes place to another church member when people are in their early to mid twenties. The sanctity of marriage vows is upheld and deeply honoured.

It is unusual for teenage marriages to occur.

Instead, the emphasis is placed on maturity, compatibility, suitability, respect and loyalty. In this way, marriage becomes a satisfying and lasting relationship. Counselling is available as needed.

We see the prime objectives for the household as unity of purpose and progress. The husband is regarded as the chief provider and is looked to for stability and as the breadwinner.

The important role of the wife is to care for the husband and any children. Many wives and mothers are also partners and directors of family businesses and their participation, support and advice is highly regarded.

The role of women in the Church is very important including direct involvement in the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) and selection and announcing each hymn at every gathering. Women are free to ask questions and participate as they see fit at every conversational Bible reading.
Youth

Young people are encouraged to develop relationships based on religion, education, music, exercise, sport, continental and overseas friendships, and lively conversation and discussion. Topics often include world and community events, government and economic developments and many facets of humanity and life in general.

Youth are brought up in a strong family environment. Interaction with peer groups is encouraged and frequent. Young people interact and develop healthy relationships with older generations and there is little segregation of age groups in social activities. Young people’s lives are full. They are made to feel wanted, given meaningful challenges and are rewarded for their accomplishments and achievements. These rewards range from education merit certificates and prizes to European and overseas travel, subsidised tertiary studies, and monetary assistance and incentives for housing and business investment.

Young people are encouraged to keep fit and engage in a healthy lifestyle, including walking, running, swimming and outdoor recreational pursuits as well as reading and research into lifestyle projects. They are often required to accept responsibility and leadership roles. Music plays an important part in their lives. There are numerous musical groups using pianoforte, electric pianos, acoustic and electric guitars and the full range of wind and string instruments. School concerts are held regularly. Due to the strong communal bond and family support incidences of drug use, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other growing concerns amongst UK teenagers, are very rare and statistically negligible among Brethren. While the Brethren do not forbid the consumption of alcohol, we emphasize the importance of responsible use and moderation.
Since the early 1990s, the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church has established its own schools.

Brethren Schools in the UK are financed by Brethren through contributions and fundraising. Each school is registered and accredited by relevant education authorities. The National Curriculum is followed and teaching methods are approved by Government authorities. There are regular inspections with academic results significantly higher than the national average.

All teachers are from outside the Brethren community.

Brethren primary schools are being established throughout the worldwide Church community. Particular care is exercised in the early recognition of special educational needs and teachers trained in these areas are recruited and programmes developed in line with the latest educational methods.

All curricula are directed to satisfy current educational requirements appropriate to the present era, including access to computer based material and computer literacy at all schools. However, careful attention is paid to ensure that material presented is age-appropriate and morally edifying and does not conflict with the Brethren education ethos.

All school leavers are given career guidance and encouraged to pursue further education. Our registered training organisations also offer an extensive variety of tertiary and post graduate studies.
The Brethren value the extended family and we prefer our ageing members to remain in their own homes for as long as practical.

Where care is required, we try to ensure it is provided in the extended family home, taking advantage of any help provided by national governments. Despite facilities, including nursing home and supervised accommodation, are only accessed when the care required is beyond what can be provided in the home.

The decision to admit aged people to other facilities is taken only with expert medical advice and with full government assessment and supervision. At present the Brethren do not own nursing homes or supported living units but feasibility studies are being undertaken.

Some young people are considering training in nursing and aged care to this end.

Elderly people in the Church are a constant and valued part of the life of the Church and of the Brethren community; there is no retirement in the pursuit of Christianity and the Lord’s work.

The Aged

Housing

It is an objective of the Brethren Church that all Brethren families be enabled to own their own separate dwellings.

Young people entering marriage are assisted through the provision of additional finance and voluntary labour to secure suitable housing in which they can raise a family and to which they can invite other Brethren for entertainment and accommodation.

Brethren adopt an objective of equality as a key principle governing housing selection to prevent status differentiation and to provide a social environment where all Brethren families can entertain each other at home without discrimination or unnecessary distinction. This initiative, which is still in progress, has greatly advanced worldwide during the last 30 years.

Health Care

Brethren members use the NHS extensively and private health protection has also been established recently.

Brethren employers are encouraged to provide medical benefits for employees. The medical profession is respected and there is no formal restriction on any treatment modality. Natural medicine is widely used but in general is subservient to advice and care provided by registered medical practitioners and licensed hospital institutions.

If a person requires an operation or treatment that is not available in the UK, it will be provided overseas, e.g., at the Mayo Clinic, if deemed medically appropriate. In such cases, the community provides financial assistance so no Brethren member need go without the quality of medical treatment required.

Poverty Relief & Welfare Support

There is a strong and generous charitable spirit among Brethren, and this provides a constant source of help for those in need. This benevolence is all embracing and includes financial, social, pastoral, family and health assistance, and may involve guidance, training and ongoing support.

Brethren also support many outside charities, and have generously contributed to worthy causes.

Poverty is rare but all people in needy circumstances have ready access to detailed assistance and care within the Brethren community. One of our priority objectives is to provide every member of the Church with the opportunity to be equal with other members. We do not want class distinctions to cause dysfunction, friction or division between any members of our community.

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In the main, Brethren work together as employers and employees. Many Brethren businesses employ many non-Brethren employees and, overwhelmingly, we conduct business with people who are not part of the Brethren community. That said, we do not tend to mix our secular activities with our religious activities. We accept as a general principle that Brethren in need of work are guaranteed paid employment and most are paid wages above the national average for the relevant work classification. Any shortfall in wages or underpayment that comes to our notice is treated seriously and is recompensed on an independent assessment of the employee’s situation. Diligence and efficiency is encouraged so more time is available for family interests, attending church meetings, pastoral and evangelical service and the Work of the Lord. Public holidays are regarded as special quality times for family recreation and social outings. The Brethren extensively use national parks, recreation grounds and safe swimming areas. Brethren use doctors, naturopaths, physiotherapists, dentists, lawyers, engineers and other professions outside our community. Building and construction work, including residential, commercial and charitable, is mostly contracted outside the Brethren membership, including the design, building and commissioning of churches, gospel halls and schools. Brethren have regular contact with non-Brethren neighbours and fulfil a commitment to live and reside in peace and friendliness with their environment.
Our Contribution to the Economy

Gross turnover of all Brethren businesses in the UK is about £2 billion, providing a great contribution to the UK economy.

Over the past 40 years many Brethren have set up their own businesses. These are typical family owned enterprises employing many from outside the brethren community. This trend greatly accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s due to a desire to reach a closer accommodation with the Scriptures.

There are now about 1,000 Brethren businesses in the UK, employing about 5,000 Brethren and 5,000 non-Brethren employees. The average workforce is less than 20 employees. Mostly Brethren businesses provide occupations that focus on accounting, sales, marketing, warehousing, workplace safety, and technical and management skills.

Brethren businesses retain qualified accountants to prepare financial accounts and income tax returns and it is a mandatory obligation of law-abiding righteousness to pay all taxes. Legitimate deductions, as provided for under the law, are made but no tax avoidance schemes or offshore havens are used. Taxation fraud is regarded seriously and would be a basis for excommunication from the Church.

‘And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily’
Colossians 3:23
Brethren universally maintain beliefs and a lifestyle that is based on the Holy Scriptures and we are genuine in our endeavours to secure a sustainable structure of family life for the enduring happiness of our members however diverse in character, capacity and cultural diversity.

Our hope is that this document will clarify our position.
For further information, visit the Brethren website at:
www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org
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Concluding Note