

Plymouth Brethren
Christian Church



Living our beliefs

The lives of the Plymouth Brethren in a modern world



Foreword

Welcome to an official publication of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, who are also known as Exclusive Brethren, Plymouth Brethren IV or sometimes simply Brethren.

This booklet seeks to provide a straightforward account of Plymouth Brethren beliefs, and the way of life Church members lead to honour these beliefs.

The Brethren are peaceful, respectful, contributing citizens, and are good family people that hold the same faith as every true Christian.

John Nelson Darby broke with the established church in 1827 to hold the Lord's Supper in Dublin. Shortly after, around 1830, he came to Plymouth where the congregation grew rapidly. This large non-denominational Christian congregation hosted many conferences and engaged in the printing and distribution of Christian literature throughout the world.

As time went on, Mr Darby travelled around the world and many congregations known as the Plymouth Brethren were established globally.

More information about the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church is available on our website at plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org.

Eternal Salvation

Every soul needs salvation from God's judgement that is to come, for all people have sinned. Salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ who can save from both 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 objective 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 always believed that not only Brethren will be in heaven.



**‘Preach the word;
be instant in season,
out of season’**

2 Timothy 4:2

**‘God our Saviour, who
will have all men to be
saved and come unto the
knowledge of the truth’**

1 Timothy 2: 3-4

**‘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 whosoever shall
call upon the name of
the Lord, shall be saved’**

Romans 10: 13

Street Preaching

Street preachings every working day
across the country!

In cities and towns where there are Brethren, public gospel preaching takes place on many 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 and women 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, pandemics and other 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.

Rapid Relief Team

Every day in some small way, the Rapid Relief Team (RRT), a charitable arm of the PBCC, lends a helping hand to people in need. Established in 2013, RRT expresses the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church's (PBCC) scriptural principles of care and compassion.

Comprised of more than 14,000 volunteers from the PBCC, RRT offers quality catering assistance to charities, government and emergency services and provides tangible support through RRT designed and coordinated initiatives to those confronting some of humankind's greatest challenges.

From assisting charities, both big and small, to raising funds and awareness, to serving emergency services on the front line and people affected by natural disasters, RRT operates from the heart, and adapts their benevolent support to meet the need at hand. RRT's assistance spans across four key areas of support; emergency and disaster relief, homelessness, youth, and health and disability.

RRT volunteers are mobilised in 14 countries across the globe to serve at a moment's notice where it is needed most, delivering hope to people in Australia, the United Kingdom, USA, South America, the Caribbean, Canada, New Zealand and throughout Europe.

RRT believes in the power of team work, and humbly receives donations from generous businesses and individuals. RRT's Sponsors, together with a league of volunteers, are restoring hope and uplifting lives across the globe.



**‘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 one form or another.

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 to 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. 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 fulfil our responsibility in the community. Our attitude is to do good to all, as opportunities arise.

‘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





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 daily and 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 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.

Churches & Gospel Halls

All Brethren halls are separate freehold premises and we do not normally hire private venues for religious 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 where possible and that the environment is cared for, respected and protected.

Lords Supper (Holy Communion)

The Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, 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 committal 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.’

Gospel Preachings

The gospel is preached in our halls up to nine times each Sunday.

Bible Readings

All of 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.

Prayer Meetings

Weekly meetings specifically for prayer are held in our meeting halls globally. 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 keep updated as to current issues. Thousands of public prayers are made each week in our meeting halls.



‘The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch’

Acts 11:26 Circa AD 45



The Family

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.

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.

Women within the community are equally valued and many are active in supporting the schooling system and the fundraising entities that support the schooling system.

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 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.



OneSchool Global (OSG)

Like many church and faith communities across the world, we have established our own school network – OneSchool Global.

OneSchool Global is one of the world's largest and most comprehensive, truly global schools, with over 9000 students, across 20 countries. OneSchool's global education ecosystem provides an environment in which their staff and students thrive.

OneSchool Global shares a close relationship with the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, with students and their families being members of the Church Community. However, OneSchool Global is a network of independently operated schools, staffed by professional teaching and administrative staff from all walks of life. The church families that attend and volunteer their time at the school share a strong working relationship and sense of school community with the professional staff.

OneSchool Global schools are not religious schools, in that there is no religious teaching or services in the school. The school's values and ethos, however, are aligned to and underpinned by Christian values.

OneSchool Global's vision is to deliver a global education ecosystem that develops life-ready students who 'learn how to learn'. OneSchool develops learners that process information perceptually, analyse data accurately, and evaluate situations intelligently, to fulfil their true potential.

OneSchool Global provides a model for all schools in their utilisation of innovative and progressive digital learning methods. OneSchool's technology and learning environments are cutting edge. The school system is built around technology-rich classrooms, personalisation and self-directed learning.

This technology empowered approach to learning and teaching delivers a consistent global education experience, regardless of the geographical location. On a daily basis, students connect with their teachers and peers nationally and internationally.

Through their in-house teaching training program, the Teacher Academy, OneSchool provides comprehensive professional development to equip teachers for teaching in the digital age. These skills benefit the students of OneSchool Global, but also students more broadly as teachers take these skills into their careers beyond OneSchool Global.



Elderly People

The Brethren value the extended family and we prefer our elderly 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. Respite 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 elderly 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.

Elderly people in the Church are a constant and valued part of the life of the Church and of the Brethren community.

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.





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 amongst the Brethren is rare but all people in needy circumstances have ready access to detailed assistance and care within the Brethren community. One of our primary 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.

Health Care

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 their own country, 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.

Our Contribution to the Economy

The Universal Business Team (UBT) was created in 2009 during the GFC to support small business owners amongst the Brethren. This was needed to protect the livelihoods of thousands of Brethren, their family members and their employees, both community and wider community, that were being impacted by the Global Financial Crisis.

UBT started as a small team of volunteers providing advice and help to support community businesses and has now grown to be a fast-paced enterprise supporting over 3,000 business customers and 50,000 households globally. It has offices in 19 countries and employs around 500 people drawn from both the Brethren and the wider community.

Many Brethren operate small to medium businesses around the world, which contribute to the economy in many ways, having a combined annual revenue exceeding AUD\$10b.

They operate across a range of sectors with a strong representation in construction, building products, engineering products, manufacturing, automotive industries and furniture.

The purpose of UBT is now two-fold. To provide community businesses with world class business advice and support, to ensure they are competitive and profitable, and secondly, to provide financial support for the Brethren school, OneSchool Global (OSG), and the Brethren's global charity, the Rapid Relief Team (RRT).

Additionally UBT manages the network of household supply stores, Campus & Co. There are over 200 Campus & Co. stores globally.

The Brethren business community is unquestionably a dynamic and positive contributor to the economies of the towns, cities and countries wherever they operate worldwide.





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