

Judaism and the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church

200 years of love, friendship, respect and support for the Jewish people, and confidence in God's promises to Israel

The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church is a 200-year-old global Christian fellowship of around 55,000 people. Historically we share a deep connection with the Jewish faith, and today we hold strong religious and moral ties to them, including a belief in one Creator, respect for Scripture, strong family life and a commitment to community service. We stand with Israel and support its right to exist in peace and security. The people of Israel must be able to live free from terror and violence. More widely, Jewish people everywhere must be free to live openly and practise their faith without fear or persecution. We affirm these principles unequivocally and without reservation.

Our shared principles provide a natural foundation for friendship and cooperation between our Church and the Jewish community.

Overview

We stand with the Jewish people. We believe, on the authority of Scripture, that the Jewish people are God's chosen people, and that Covenant is unbreakable.

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Genesis 12:3 · Scripture quotations from the J.N. Darby translation

Judaism is the cradle of Christianity. Our ministry has long affirmed this. As Mr J. Taylor said:

"Let us not forget that Judaism externally is the cradle of Christianity; it is worked out from Judaism. Judaism has not been destroyed, it cannot be destroyed."

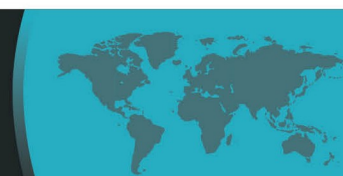
J. Taylor · October 1943

There is more that unites us than divides us. As conservative Christians, we recognise real differences between our communities, most importantly our belief in the New Testament and in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. We respect our differences.

We harbour no hostility towards Jewish people. When our ministry uses the expression "the Jews", it reflects language found in the Bible. It is not intended, and should never be understood, as antisemitic, or as assigning responsibility for the crucifixion to the Jewish people as a whole, past or present. Our Church rejects that interpretation. The Jews as a people are not responsible for the specific sins committed by specific people at a specific time and place in history, and there is no indictment against every Jewish person. We will continue to use this expression in its biblical context within our churches and will make that context and its intended meaning clear.

Our words have been deliberately taken out of context by a recent newspaper article seeking to divide us. We are deeply hurt by this article, in which quotes have been taken out of context. As people of faith, we see a spiritual dimension to it: an attempt to drive a wedge between Christian and Jewish people who have much in common. We ask our Jewish friends to see it for what it is. And we ask them to consider the love for the Jewish people and confidence in God's promises to Israel which has run through the ministry of every generation of our Church. This is detailed later in this document.

This is an attack on faith itself. We share a deeper concern: faith in God, and the values that have shaped the Western World, are under growing pressure. We did not seek this contest, but we will stand for God, for Christian belief, and for the freedom of every faith community, Jewish and Christian alike, to live by its convictions.



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About the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church

Members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church are committed to living according to the teachings of the Bible and the example of Jesus Christ.

Our Church places a strong emphasis on devotion to God, the authority of Scripture, family life, personal integrity and service to the wider community.

Our members seek to apply their Christian faith in practical ways through their family life, work, education and relationships with others.

A shared religious heritage

Our faith has its roots in Judaism.

Jesus Christ, His disciples and the earliest Christian communities were Jewish. Through the Old Testament, foundational Christian teachings are drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. The epistle to the Romans, setting out the foundations of Christianity, has more than 40 quotations from the Tanakh, the Old Testament. All the epistles of the New Testament were written by Jewish people, and they often quote the Hebrew Scriptures.

We share with the Jewish people a deep reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures and for the patriarchs, prophets and kings whose lives they record. Their faith and faithfulness are held up as examples throughout our ministry.

Our Church has the deepest respect for this Jewish heritage, which continues to lie at the root of our faith.

This respect for the Jewish people and their Scriptures has been taught by each senior leader of our Church through the generations, beginning with our first senior leader, Mr J.N. Darby. The authority of the teachings of these men that have gone before - J.N. Darby and onwards is totally upheld and not in any way abrogated or violated by the current leadership and the brethren as such globally.

Old Testament figures we honour together

These lives are part of the Scripture we hold in common. In our ministry they are also valued as types, or pictures, that point forward to the Messiah. That reading belongs to the theological difference we acknowledge, but the figures themselves, and the faith they showed, are a heritage we fully share.

Abraham	Father of the Jewish people, whom God called His friend	Darby <i>"And he believed Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him [as] righteousness."</i> Genesis 15:6 KJV <i>"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."</i> Genesis 15:6 Tanakh (JPS 1917) <i>"And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness."</i> Genesis 15:6
Joseph	Faithful through betrayal and exile; God used him to preserve his family and nation	Darby <i>"Ye indeed meant evil against me: God meant it for good, in order that he might do as [it is] this day, to save a great people alive."</i> Genesis 50:20 KJV <i>"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."</i> Genesis 50:20 Tanakh (JPS 1917) <i>"And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."</i> Genesis 50:20
Moses	Led Israel out of Egypt, received the Law, and stood in the breach for his people	Darby <i>"And there arose no prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah had known face to face."</i> Deuteronomy 34:10 KJV <i>"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."</i> Deuteronomy 34:10 Tanakh (JPS 1917) <i>"And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."</i> Deuteronomy 34:10



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David	Shepherd, psalmist and king, with whose house God made His covenant	Darby "... Jehovah has sought him a man after his own heart, and Jehovah has appointed him ruler over his people ..." 1 Samuel 13:14 KJV "... the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people ..." 1 Samuel 13:14 Tanakh (JPS 1917) "... the LORD hath sought him a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath appointed him to be prince over His people ..." 1 Samuel 13:14
Daniel	Kept faith through the exile and never forgot Jerusalem	Darby "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:10 KJV "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:10 Tanakh (JPS 1917) "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house—now his windows were open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem—and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:11
Esther	Risked her life to deliver the Jewish people	Darby "And who knows whether thou art [not] come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14 KJV "... who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14 Tanakh (JPS 1917) "... who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

Darby = J.N. Darby translation; KJV = King James Version; Tanakh (JPS 1917) = The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text, Jewish Publication Society, 1917. Verse numbers follow each version.

Our shared beliefs and values

Today, we share common beliefs and values with Judaism, which are reflected in many aspects of our daily lives. Our ties are spiritual as well as practical: many of our members work alongside Jewish professionals and businesses.

Faith and Scripture

Both Judaism and our Church place faith in God and engagement with Scripture at the centre of religious life. A large percentage of our Bible meetings are based on a study of the Old Testament Scriptures and their application to our lives.

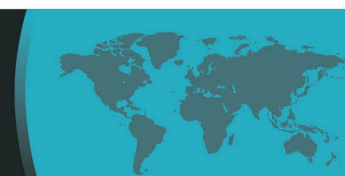
Similar to the role of the Tanakh and Talmud in guiding the lives of Jews, our Church follows the Bible translation of John Nelson Darby, a translation from the original languages widely recognised for its accuracy.

Family and community

Family is highly valued in our traditions. Both our communities seek to strengthen family life through respecting parents and elders and passing values and traditions from one generation to the next. Most members are born into our fellowship, and the overwhelming majority choose to stay throughout their lives.

Care and compassion

Helping those who are vulnerable and acting with kindness are important expressions of our faiths. The charitable arm of our Church, the [Rapid Relief Team](#), serves as one of the ways in which our members express these shared values of care and compassion, and its support is given to people of every faith. Meanwhile, there are countless examples of charities inspired by Jewish values providing invaluable support to communities across the country.



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Integrity and responsibility

Both religions encourage individuals to live with integrity and responsibility to Scripture. Just as the concept of Kedushah invites Jewish people to remain close to the principles of Judaism, our Doctrine of Separation encourages members to minimise distractions that might draw them away from Christ, while still being active in our local communities.

Education and learning

Education is highly valued within both Judaism and our Church. The network of schools attended by families of our Church, [OneSchool Global](#), reflects our commitment to academic excellence, moral responsibility and lifelong learning. There is similarly an excellent network of Jewish schools who set up students to lead successful and purposeful lives.

Our support for Israel and the Jewish people

Our theological heritage

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), founding figure of the Plymouth Brethren, held a view of Judaism and the Jewish people that significantly influenced dispensational premillennialism and, through others who drew on his teaching, modern Christian Zionism. He was one of many voices: Puritan and American writers had expected Israel's restoration long before him.

Dispensational premillennialism	A Christian theological framework that views human history as divided into distinct administrative periods ("dispensations") and teaches that Jesus Christ will return before a literal thousand-year earthly reign.
Restorationism	The belief, based on the Bible, that the Jewish people will return to the land of Israel, without implying that this is to be brought about by human means. This was J.N. Darby's view: he taught that events which look like Israel's restoration are foreshadowings, and that the prophecies will be fulfilled at the Lord's return.
Christian Zionism	The belief that Christians should actively support the restoration of the Jewish people to Israel, and their sovereignty and security in that land.
"Replacement theology" or "supersessionism"	A doctrine stating that the Christian Church has replaced the Jewish people as God's chosen covenant partner. We reject this view.

Israel has not been replaced

Rather than viewing Judaism through the lens of traditional "replacement theology" or "supersessionism"—which argued that the Christian Church permanently replaced Israel in God's plan—Darby insisted that National Israel and the Church are two entirely distinct peoples of God with separate earthly and heavenly destinies.

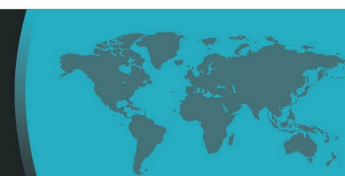
We do not believe that Christianity replaced the Jewish faith. God's promises to his people are inviolate and fixed for time and eternity.

In Romans 9 to 11 the apostle Paul outlines the destinies of Judaism and Christianity, and declares that "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

The distinction between Israel and the Church

Darby argued that the biblical covenants made with Abraham, David, and the Jewish people were unconditional and everlasting.

- **The Church** is a "heavenly" body, a temporary mystery or "parenthesis" in God's historical timeline that began at Pentecost and will end with the Rapture.



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- **Israel (the Jewish people)** is an “earthly” body. Darby read Old Testament prophecy literally. He wrote that if the biblical prophecies concerning the punishments and scattering of the Jews were fulfilled literally, then the prophecies regarding their physical restoration to the Land of Israel must be fulfilled literally as well.

Darby wrote: “In all times, Israel is His people, according to His counsels, and the thoughts of His love. ... Israel as a whole are always His people.” (Collected Writings 4:255)

A history of protecting the Jewish people

J.N. Darby’s teachings: It is noted that these teachings fostered a deep love and protective stance toward Jewish people among his followers. For instance, during World War II, the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a community that included many Darbyist (Brethren) families, risked their lives to rescue thousands of Jews from the Holocaust. Non-Brethren historians have suggested this sympathy for the Jews originated from J.N. Darby’s teaching in the region some decades earlier.

Since the inception of the Plymouth Brethren leaving the Anglican clerical system, John Nelson Darby and the church generally have opposed the charge of deicide which the Roman Catholic Church levelled at the Jews for many centuries. The Second Vatican Council (Nostra Aetate, 1965) repudiated collective Jewish guilt for Jesus’s death, and the portrayal of Jews as rejected or cursed by God.

At weekly Prayer Meetings, Brethren members pray for God’s protection of Israel and the Jewish people.

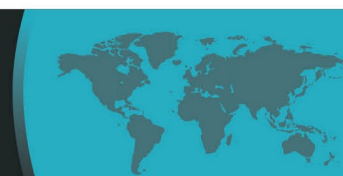
Zionism and the Land of Israel

- John Nelson Darby established from Scripture that the Jewish people would return to the lands given to Abraham, a restoration he taught would be fulfilled at the Lord’s return. His teachings were later drawn on by others and helped shape the Christian Zionist movement, but any influence on American policy was indirect: he died in 1882, before the first Zionist Congress in 1897, and he did not call for political action. Believing that God will restore Israel is different from urging Christians to bring this about through political action.
- Our support is for Biblical Zionism: the hope, found throughout Scripture, of Israel’s restoration. For a scholarly history of Christian Zionism and J.N. Darby’s place in it, see *For Zion’s Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Paternoster, 2007), by a worthy and respected academic, Paul Richard Wilkinson, who is not in any way associated with our church.
- We believe Israel is entitled to the land God promised to Abraham, whose full possession Scripture places at the Lord’s return.

Respecting our theological differences

We must stress that we have the same God as our Jewish brethren, but we believe the New Testament. Namely that the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been to earth, ever was and ever will be God, became incarnate and met the whole sin question as set out in Isaiah 53.

- We acknowledge the same God as the Jews, the Roman Catholic Church and other fundamental Christian churches.
- We consider the entire Old Testament as inspired and God’s Word for humanity.
- We regard the Old Testament as types of what is fulfilled in the New Testament.
- We believe that when the Lord returns at the Appearing He will be accepted by the Jews as the Messiah.
- Where our ministry speaks of the Jewish people not accepting Christ, it refers only to our belief that Jesus is God, which the Jewish faith does not, yet, accept.
- We believe all Jews born into any of the 12 tribes are covered by God’s promises to his people.
- We believe, as the epistle to the Hebrews sets out, that atonement for sins is found in Christ rather than in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Law (Hebrews 10).



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How we read the Gospels

When John records that the chief priests called for the crucifixion (John 19), he is describing particular people at a particular time. His Gospel cannot be called antisemitic when its whole purpose is to worship the King of the Jews. In the same way, Peter, himself a Jew, spoke to those present in Jerusalem of Jesus “whom ye have crucified” (Acts 2:36), not “whom we have crucified”: a word to specific people, not an indictment of a nation for all time.

Find out more

Connected by these shared values and principles, we would be delighted to explore opportunities to strengthen the connections between our communities.

www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org

