

RECEPTION AND FELLOWSHIP

When the New Testament speaks of being “members” of the church, it is speaking of the universal body of Christ, and every born-again Christian is a member of that body through faith in Christ.

Yet we believe it is important to be able to identify those who are in fellowship in each local assembly. Fellowship in a local church involves both privileges and responsibilities. The elders have a responsibility to care for the spiritual needs of those in fellowship in the assembly (Heb. 13:17), while those in fellowship have responsibilities to the Lord and to others in the assembly: to be there (Heb. 10:24-25); to pray for one another (Jas. 5:16); to edify one another (Eph. 4:32); etc. It is also the responsibility of the elders to guard the assembly from false teaching and confusion (Titus 1:9-11).

Therefore, when the elders see someone’s intentions to regularly fellowship with us, they will arrange to meet with that person to explain our beliefs and practices, and to ensure that the purity of the assembly (doctrinally and morally) and the harmony of the assembly will be maintained.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

When a believer fails to discipline themselves, the church may have to exercise discipline (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:6-7; Matt. 18:15-20). The three major causes of discipline are doctrinal error, immoral behaviour, and divisiveness. The steps of correction include private reproof (Matt. 18:15), private conference (Matt 18:16), public announcement (Matt. 18:17), and public exclusion (Matt 18:17).

THE USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Bible teaches that each member of the church has been given one or more spiritual gifts (e.g. evangelism, teaching, helps, etc., 1 Cor. 12:4-31). These gifts are intended to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:12), not for one’s own personal benefit. Each member of the body of Christ should seek to know their gift(s) and use them for the edification of the church, to the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is our understanding from Scripture that some of the gifts given to the church (such as apostles, prophets, tongues, gifts of healing, and miracles) were foundational and temporal in nature (Heb. 2:4; Eph. 2:20). As in the first century church (1 Cor. 14:26), misunderstanding and misuse of spiritual gifts has led to contention in the church today.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper or breaking of bread is held each Sunday. Through the use of hymns, prayers, and the Word of God, we seek to recall to our mind what we have learned and appreciated about the Lord Jesus, with the result that we give thanks and respond in praise and worship. This time of remembrance culminates in taking the bread and wine as symbols of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.

The two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ in that baptism is a once-off expression of faith and obedience, while the Lord's Supper is a frequently practiced expression of obedience and communion. We therefore think it best for those who participate in the Lord's Supper to have first expressed their obedience through believer's baptism.

DISTINCTIVE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN

While there is no distinction between men and women as to their position in Christ (Gal. 3:28), the New Testament does maintain a distinction as to their respective roles in the local church (1 Cor. 11:2-15; 1 Tim. 2:8-14). The men are expected to lead in public gatherings through prayer and the ministry of the Word, while women are expected to glorify God in public meetings through their submission, demonstrated by their silence and covered heads.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

There is opportunity each Lord's day for believers to participate practically in the finances of the assembly (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8-9). This freewill giving is unto the Lord and is used to pay the expenses of the assembly and to support various ministries (e.g. support of missionaries, purchase of Christian literature, gifts to visiting preachers, etc.). The financial matters of the assembly will be presented annually for the review of the assembly.



This statement of our faith and practices is an attempt to briefly summarise our primary beliefs and to answer some of the key questions raised by those who desire fellowship with us. It is subject to review by the assembly in light of God's unchanging Word.

We ask that those who fellowship with us seek to maintain the unity of the church by not promoting doctrines that conflict with what we believe and practice.

WATERFORD Christian Assembly

Statement of Faith And Practice

Our Core Beliefs

1. THE BIBLE

The Bible is God-breathed, and therefore without error when originally penned. It has been faithfully preserved, and accurately translated and is our final authority in all matters of faith and practice (1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21).

2. ONE GOD

There is one God (Isa. 43:10; 44:6; 1 Tim. 2:5), who has eternally existed (Deut. 33:27). Yet the Bible reveals this One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Heb. 9:14), who are co-equal and co-eternal.

3. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is truly God (John 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16) and truly man (1 Tim. 2:5-6), born of a virgin (Luke 1:35), and sinlessly perfect (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21). He rose bodily from the dead (Luke 24:39; Acts 2:25-33), and ascended to His Father's right hand (Acts 1:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23), where He now ministers as our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16; 9:24).

4. SPIRITUAL DEATH AND SPIRITUAL BIRTH

Each member of the human race is sinful, and was therefore born spiritually dead, that is, separated from God (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Eph. 2:1). To enter the kingdom of God, it is therefore essential to be born again (John 1:12-13; 3:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:23, 1 John 5:1).

5. REDEMPTION

Redemption is wholly by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:12-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the one and only payment for sin accepted by God (John 19:30; Heb. 10:10-14, 18) A bloodless sacrifice cannot purge sin (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Salvation is by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5-9). Every true child of God possesses eternal life and is safe for all eternity (John 3:16; 5:24; 10:27-29).

6. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S WILL

Salvation is of the Lord (Eph. 1:4-5). Yet God has sovereignly willed that we freely respond to His offer of salvation. It is not God's will that any should perish (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9), and Christ's atoning sacrifice was un-

limited and sufficient as payment for the penalty of the sin of all of mankind (1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:10). It is through the exercise of man's will that he either receives or rejects the Saviour (John 1:11-12; Mt. 23:37), and therefore either has or does not have eternal life (1 John 5:12-13).

7. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to the Christian life. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are convicted of sin (John 16:8-11) and born again (John 3:6-8; Titus 3:5). The baptism of the Spirit occurs when we trust Christ for salvation and is the act by which we are placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). At the same time we are permanently indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9, 11) and sealed by the Spirit as a guarantee of final salvation (Eph. 1:13-14). The Spirit also empowers us to live godly lives (Gal. 5:16, 22-23), and equips each believer with spiritual gift(s) to serve the church (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

8. RESURRECTION OF THE JUST AND UNJUST

The Bible teaches the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust (Phil. 3:21; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; Rev. 20:12-13), and the everlasting blessedness of the saved (Phil. 1:23; Rev. 22:4-5) and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:4-15).

9. IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST

We anticipate the personal and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 4:14-18; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28). We believe that this event (rapture) will be followed by 7 years of tribulation (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15, 21). At the end of the Great Tribulation, Christ will return to earth (Zech. 14:1-4, 9; Rev. 19:11-21) to reign on earth for a literal 1,000 year period (Rev. 20:1-6).

10. THE CHURCH

The church is a living organism (not an organisation), known as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) of which He alone is the Head (Col. 1:18). All who are born again are part of the universal body of Christ, but should seek fellowship and participation in a local church (Heb. 10:24-25).

Our assembly is not part of any organisation or denomination. Our allegiance is to Christ alone, the Head of the Church; our guidance comes from the Spirit as revealed in Holy Scripture, particularly in the NT epistles and the Acts of the Apostles.

11. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

There are two Christian ordinances, namely baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). Baptism is for believers upon confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:36-38). Baptism (immersion) signifies that the one being baptised has been crucified with Christ to sin, has been buried with Him and is risen with Him to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-6).

The Lord's Supper was instituted by the Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed (Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20), and was commemorated by the early church (1 Cor. 11:23-26) on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). We believe that it is the privilege and duty of every true believer to heed the Lord's request "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

Our Practices

FINAL AUTHORITY

We accept the Bible as the final authority on all matters of doctrine and practice. While our doctrine is based on both Old and New Testaments, our church practices must be determined on the basis of New Testament revelation since the church is a truth revealed only in the New Testament.

THE PURPOSE & PRIORITIES OF THE ASSEMBLY

We are called to worship the Lord, to witness for the Lord, and to work for the Lord. We therefore prioritise the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

We seek to follow the pattern we observe in the New Testament of a plurality of elders being established in each local church (Acts 14:23; 20:17). This provides a safeguard against both pride and false teaching.

The New Testament clearly provides the qualifications of those who God raises up to shepherd the church (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). They will give an account to God for the way in which they cared for the people of God (Heb. 13:17) and should be honoured and obeyed.

The elders are responsible to feed and guard the flock, either through the exercise of their own spiritual gifts or by inviting spiritually gifted men to provide Bible teaching and preaching (Eph. 4:11).