

## Preface

*This statement of faith and the guiding principles outlined herein are presented here so that it may be read and considered by the whole assembly.*

*This document has received very close scrutiny by the elders and we trust that you will study it with care.*

*In this present age it is both difficult and necessary to hold firmly to those principles of scripture which prescribe the proper manner of operating an assembly.*

*We will not allow any teaching opposed to these views within the assembly or its meetings.*

*We trust that every member of the local church meeting at Tavistock will consider these matters carefully.*

**The Elders**

## Statement of Faith

- 1 The Bible is inspired of God, inerrant in the original documents and of final authority in all matters of faith and practice. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- 2 There is one God, (Deut. 6:4, 1 Tim. 2:5) eternally existent (Deut. 33:27) in three persons (Matt. 28:19) Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14).
- 3 The Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man (1 Tim. 3:16, 2:5-6) born of a virgin (Luke 1:35), sinlessly perfect (Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 2:22, 1 John 3:5, 2 Cor. 5:21). Because of His sacrifice, the sinner finds in Christ a substitute (1 Pet. 2:24) and a representative who forever pleads His blood for our justification (Heb. 7:25). He rose bodily from the dead (Luke 24:39) and ascended to His Father's right hand (Eph. 1:20-23) where He now ministers as our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16, 9:24).

- 4 Each member of the human race is fallen, sinful and lost (Rom. 3:23, 5:12). Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the salvation of man (Tit. 3:5, Rom. 8:9). Redemption is wholly by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:12-14, 1 Pet. 1:18-19) and salvation is by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5-9). Christ's atoning death makes it possible for God to justly offer free salvation to all, but it is the responsibility of each individual to accept or reject this offer (John 1:12, 3:16). Every true child of God possesses eternal life and is saved for all eternity (John 10:27-29, 5:24, 3:16).
- 5 From the moment of conversion each believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who seals him unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30, Rom. 8:9-11). It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the believer can live a godly life (Gal. 5:16, 22-23).
- 6 We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust (Phil. 3:21, John 5:29, 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 (Rev. 20:10-15, Matt. 25:46).
- 7 We believe in the personal and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 4:14-18, Tit. 2:13, Acts 1:11, Heb. 9:28).
- 8 The church as a whole is not an organization but a living organism, known as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). The local church is composed of believers in a locality e.g. Phil. 1:1. They gather in Christ's name as a corporate testimony to the Lordship of Christ (Col. 1:18) and to the oneness of the body of Christ (John 17:21). They gather to commemorate the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26), for worship (John 4:23), prayer (Acts 2:42), and edification (Eph. 4:12, 2 Tim. 4:2). Government and discipline are the responsibility of the local church (Matt. 18:15-17, 1 Cor. 5:1-13).
- 9 In keeping with our belief in the oneness of the body of Christ, the Lord's people, as such, should avoid names other than those which are given them in scripture, such as, "Christians" (Acts 11:26), saints (1 Cor. 1:2), believers (Acts 5:14), brethren (Heb. 2:11) and disciples (Acts

9:1, Acts 10:23). The name "reverend" belongs to God alone and should not be applied to men (Psalm 111:9).

- 10 There are two Christian ordinances, baptism by immersion (Matt. 28:19, Acts 8:35-39) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). Baptism is for believers upon confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37). It signifies that the one being baptized has been crucified with Christ unto 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 commemorated by the early church on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and 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).

## Some Guiding Principles

### Reception and Fellowship

For the scriptural definition of Fellowship in the church see article 8 in our statement of faith.

Believers who wish to be received into fellowship with the assembly are interviewed by two elders. If they have a clear confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal saviour, subscribe to the statement of faith and are godly in walk, they are announced to the assembly at the Lord's Supper meeting one week in advance of reception.

Believers cease to be associated with the assembly fellowship for the reasons stated below.

- A They may move to another district and therefore are transferred by a letter or commendation (Rom. 16:1-2, Acts 18:27).
- B They may be called home to heaven.
- C They may withdraw voluntarily.
- D They may be asked to withdraw as a matter of discipline for moral sin or doctrinal error (1 Cor. 5:7-13, Rom. 16:17-18).

- E They may be absent for prolonged period, in which case active fellowship has ceased.

Believers who wish to be baptized will be interviewed by two or more elders as to their confession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and this being satisfactory, arrangements for baptizing them will proceed without delay.

Baptism and reception into fellowship may be simultaneous, provided that it is announced to the assembly as in the procedure for reception outlined above.

### Church Government

- 1 The assembly shall not be subject to any outside ecclesiastical authority, but to God and His Word alone.
- 2 The congregation of believers in fellowship shall not become part of any sect or denomination. They shall, however, recognize the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21-23) and extend a hearty fellowship to any believer of like precious faith, loving all children of God. *"That in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours."* (1 Cor. 1:2)
- 3 Elders (Bishops) will be responsible to guide the assembly in spiritual matters. Development of an elder comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in that person's life (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit raises him up and his qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:6-9) will be recognized as he performs the work (1 Pet. 5:1-3). The assembly is to acknowledge the evidence of the gift and esteem him for it (1 Thes. 5:12-13). The existing elders should encourage him in the use of his gift and, as it matures, invite him to join them in the oversight of the assembly.
- 4 All business of the assembly, "physical and financial", shall be conducted at a publicly announced monthly business meeting. This meeting is conducted by the adult men of the assembly. All adult brethren in fellowship are welcome.

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## The Objects of an Assembly

The purpose of gathering the believers at the chapel is to follow scriptural injunctions.

- 1 To maintain a corporate testimony to the Lordship of Christ and to the oneness of the Body of Christ (Col. 1:18, Eph. 4:3-6).
- 2 In order to commemorate the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19, Acts 20:7).
- 3 For mutual edification (Heb. 10:25).
- 4 For prayer (Acts 12:12, 1 Tim. 2:1).
- 5 For Evangelism (Matt. 28:19-20).
- 6 For teaching of the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2).
- 7 For the propagation of missions.
  - A Sending forth missionaries, home and abroad (Acts 13:2-3).
  - B Praying for missionaries and supporting them financially (Col. 4:3, 2 Cor. 9).
  - C Welcoming them back on furloughs (Acts 14:27).

## General Ministry

The public ministry is the responsibility of the elders. A platform committee comprised of the elders and other selected men makes formal arrangements for the details of the public ministry. Speaking is not confined to one man. Instead a number of spiritually gifted men provide a ministry rich in scope and depth.

## The Lord's Supper Meeting

See article 10 in the statement of faith. The Lord's Supper Meeting is held each Sunday. The service is neither elaborate nor ritualistic. This does not mean that it is without spiritual order or pattern. The meeting takes the form of spontaneous expressions of worship in hymns, prayers and the reading and expounding of the scriptures.

The one loaf typifies the Body of Christ (Mark 14:22)

*"Take, eat, this is my body given for you".* It also expresses the unity of the church (1 Cor. 10:17). *"For we being many are one bread and one body".*

The wine typifies Christ's shed blood (Matt. 26:28). *"For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins".*

After the giving of thanks, the loaf is broken and passed from one to another among the believers. Similarly, the wine is passed in cups.

## Financial Matters

An offering is received from believers at the Lord's Supper meeting (1 Cor. 16:2).

Receipts for income tax purposes are provided for those who include their name with their offerings during the course of the year. Receipts are normally issued only once a year (after the end of the calendar year).

## Women's Ministry

After much searching of the scriptures, we believe that women may:

- 1 Minister of their substance (Luke 8:3)
- 2 Be hospitable (Rom. 16:1-2).
- 3 Teach the younger women (Tit. 2:4).
- 4 Be an example by good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10, Tit. 2:3, 1 Pet. 3:3-6).

Those things that a woman may not do are found in the following passages of scripture.

- 1 1 Tim. 2:12 - not teach or usurp authority over the man.
- 2 1 Cor. 14:34-35 - not to ask questions publicly in gatherings of the church as a whole, such as, the Lord's Supper, prayer, ministry and gospel meetings.
- 3 1 Tim. 2:8 - not to pray or speak (or testify) audibly in a gathering of the church as a whole.

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- 4 1 Cor. 11:1-16 - we regard this passage as a scriptural teaching that ladies should wear a head covering at all meetings of the church.

## On The Subject of Tongues

After much prayer, study, and deliberation, we have come to the following conclusions:

- 1 God intended tongues to cease after the infant church period (1 Cor. 13:8,10).
- 2 Tongues were meant as a foundation gift only and as a sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 14:22, Heb. 2:3-4).
- 3 We conclude that there is not scriptural place for the practice, promotion or pursuing of tongues today and would discourage anyone from following this direction.

## Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

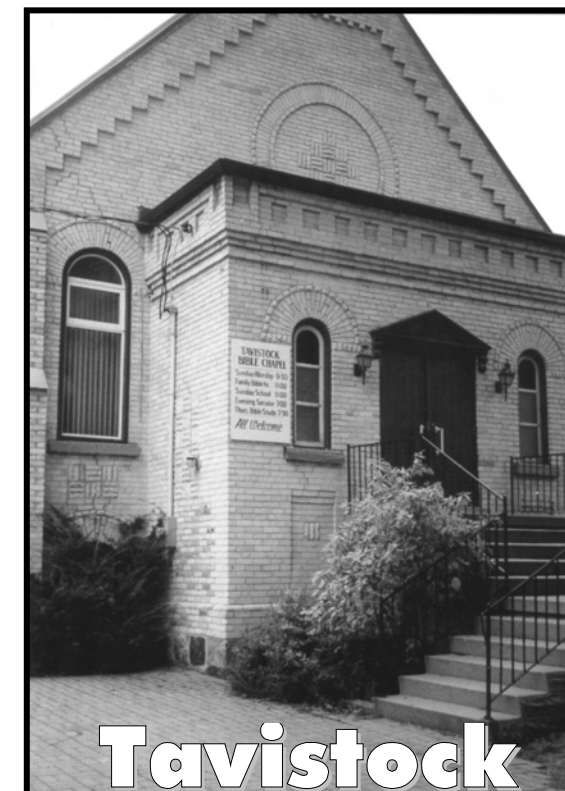
The Scriptures teach that in God's plan, marriage is between a man and a woman. Any union other than that is sin, and any union outside the marriage bond is sin. Marriage is dissoluble only by the death of one's spouse. Christ stated that while, because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts, divorce had been permitted by the Old Testament Law under certain conditions, it was contrary to His plan of creation. He taught that in the marriage union the husband and wife become one flesh. To enter into another union during the lifetime of the other partner is to commit adultery (Lev. 18: 22, Luke 16:18, Matt. 19:3-10).

The Holy Spirit speaking through Paul confirms this as being the teaching of the New Testament Church (Rom. 7:1-3).

In the event of the separation of a married couple, as in the case of desertion or divorce by an unbelieving partner, the believing partner must remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:10-17).

# Statement of Faith

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