

What We Believe and How We Live

A Statement of the Brothers and Sisters of Jesus' Church
at Rocky Cape in Tasmania

2006

We believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead, ascending into heaven where he sits on the right hand of God the Father, and from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the community of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

God and Man

We believe God made us, with the earth, the heavens, and all living things, perfect. But we lost our perfection through disobeying him. Now, unless we believe in his Son, Jesus, whom he sent to teach us and redeem us through his death on the cross—unless we follow him, and join ourselves to his body of believers on earth—we are useless to God, and he will destroy us in hell.¹

The Kingdom of God

Through repentance and forsaking our sins, through faith, through the Spirit of God falling on us and giving us new life with Jesus who rose from the dead, we may enter the narrow door into his Kingdom.² We may become heirs with him of eternal life, and receive the promise of reigning with him—after the restoration of all things—in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.³

We recognise God's kingdom in all created things, in all that lives or grows or moves throughout the universe. The borders of God's Kingdom are the extent of his rule. Here on earth we see his kingdom (the Heavenly Kingdom) established in its first stages of peace, justice, and mercy as well.⁴ Wherever men and women that believe in Jesus and follow him, old people, young people, and little children live in peace and equality one

¹ Revelation 20:11-15

² Matthew 7:13-14

³ 2 Timothy 2:12, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 5:10

⁴ Luke 17:20-21

with another—wherever they give themselves for others as Jesus gave himself for them—his Kingdom comes. But we believe it will come in unspeakably greater power and glory when Jesus himself will come again.⁵ We give ourselves and all we have to the proclamation of the good news of his Kingdom, and expect to live, work, and worship with Jesus in its heavenly love and light forever.⁶

We love our captain, our hero, Jesus for overcoming Satan and giving us eternal life. We want to fight with him, following him in every move, letting him fill us with his Spirit so we may overcome.⁷ We stand with all that take a stand and fight for Jesus and his Kingdom on earth (our battle not being one of flesh and blood, but of the Spirit).⁸

Baptism

We declare our surrender to Jesus and his Kingdom through verbal testimony,⁹ through water baptism,¹⁰ and through persevering in our walk with him, day after day, until this life is over.¹¹

How baptism is administered (with what mode), or by whom, is not important to us. We accept baptism on confession of faith as a valid baptism, providing the convert was truly repentant, believed in Jesus, and made his vows at baptism with a sincere heart.

Baptism, we believe, involves immediate responsibility and membership in the local church doing the baptising.¹² That responsibility and membership remain as long as the member remains in that locality. If, for any legitimate reason, he must relocate, we must release him and allow him to become part of another local church. All baptised members of the Lord's body choose to form part and function in visible church communities.¹³

We believe water baptism should occur promptly after it is requested—leaving only enough time for the church to approve the candidates and to make sure they understand what being a Christian and a church member involves.¹⁴

We baptise no one that does not stand in basic agreement with our congregation—ready to partake in our communion (in bread and wine) and willing to give himself to the brothers and sisters in our life together.

Communion

If we have fellowship with Jesus we have fellowship one with another. We celebrate that in our weekly breaking of bread and drinking wine together in remembrance of

⁵ Acts 3:21

⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 2 Peter 3:13

⁷ Romans 8:31-39

⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 6:12

⁹ Romans 10:10

¹⁰ Mark 16:16

¹¹ Luke 9:23, Matthew 10:22

¹² 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:14-16

¹⁴ Acts 2:38-39

him. This leads us into community of goods—sharing our natural things just like we share what we believe and hope for.

We cannot celebrate communion unless we stand in spiritual and material unity one with another—unless all those partaking have proven with their words and lives that they belong to Christ and to everyone else that takes part in it.¹⁵ Communion in bread and wine is a celebration of community in Christ—the sign of his Kingdom.¹⁶ If we partake in it unworthily, in disunity, or with the unconverted, we eat and drink damnation to our souls.¹⁷

The Word

We recognise Jesus Christ as the Word of God—the eternal “Logos,” the Word made flesh, the Living Word sharper than any double-edged sword.¹⁸ He is the Word that appeared to John in human form, riding on a white horse, his garment dipped in blood.¹⁹

This Word (the Spirit of Jesus) is “the true light that gives light to every man,”²⁰ the grace of God that speaks far beyond the written or spoken Gospel’s reach.²¹ It is the inner Word “shining in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”²²—the morning star rising in our hearts without which all scripture (including the Bible) is merely a “dead letter that kills.”²³

We recognise the collection of scriptures in common use among Western Christians to be an accurate and God-inspired account of Jesus’ life and teaching, of the apostles’ doctrine, of the history of Israel and creation.²⁴ In these scriptures we find the basis for what we know about God, and we use them as a guide in everything we do or teach. But the scriptures are to us what the manger was to the child Jesus born in Bethlehem—merely the frame in which the true light and life (the Living Word) rests. For this reason we refuse to get side-tracked by arguments about the exact wording of translations or which version of the scriptures to use. Rather, we focus on Jesus and on what he taught, and thank him for the work done by competent translators through the ages to bring his message to us in precise readable modern form.

We aim to present the Gospel to all that hear us, especially to our children, in today’s language they best understand.

Teaching

We trust Jesus as our perfect example and honour him as our King. Everything Jesus and his apostles taught or did, we also want to teach and do. Everything they rejected, we reject.²⁵

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:17, 21

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:16

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

¹⁸ John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 4:12

¹⁹ Revelation 19:13

²⁰ John 1:9

²¹ Titus 2:11

²² 2 Corinthians 4:6

²³ 2 Peter 1:19; 2 Corinthians 3:6

²⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16

²⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:15

The teaching of Jesus and his apostles (contained in the New Testament) is our final word of action. Wherever it can be pointed out to us that we have disregarded it, or twisted the words of the New Testament to suit our way of life, we repent. We commit ourselves to changing whatever is necessary, whatever it may cost, to obey and follow Christ our king.²⁶

Salvation

We want to continue, all our lives, in a spirit of repentance—praising God for saving us from sin and bringing us into the Kingdom of his Son,²⁷ while recognising our humanity (with its weakness and shortcoming) and our responsibility for it.²⁸ We believe it is possible to live above sin, to stand perfect before God through the work of Christ, but we also believe we can fall, and that we must watch and pray continually to remain safe in him.²⁹

We believe Jesus is the light of the world, enlightening all men that come into the world.³⁰ We believe his Spirit speaks to all men in all places, calling them to him (even though they may not know or recognise him).³¹ But only those that answer his call will be saved. Only the ones that seek will find him.³²

Apostles and evangelists, sent out by the church, need to help seekers find their way. But we cannot make people seek God. That is the Spirit's work.³³

We believe all children, since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell into sin, are born with a sinful nature.³⁴ We believe that children born to unbelieving parents may carry an even greater burden of spiritual uncleanness.³⁵ But we believe God begins to hold them responsible for this, only after they personally commit sin (after they reach years of understanding and deliberately go against God and their conscience). God will not hold the innocent guilty, or judge children for their parents' sin.³⁶

The Holy Spirit

We recognise the Spirit of Jesus (the Holy Spirit) as God. We expect all our members to bear the fruit of the Spirit, and to seek his gifts.³⁷ We recognise the gifts of healing, of prophecy, of speaking in tongues, and others mentioned in the New Testament as evidence of God's work among us. But we do not recognise anyone or anything as "spiritual" that stands in contradiction to New Testament order.

²⁶ 1 Peter 2:21

²⁷ Colossians 1:13

²⁸ 1 John 2:1-2

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

³⁰ John 1:9, Titus 2:11

³¹ Romans 1:18-20, and 2:14-15

³² Romans 2:9-11

³³ John 6:44

³⁴ Romans 3:9-18

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 7:14

³⁶ Ezekiel 18:20

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

We expect all believers to bear the same fruit of the Spirit, but we expect the Spirit will give them different gifts—according to their needs, and the needs of the local church to which they belong.³⁸

Leadership

We believe the Spirit calls men into leadership and various positions of service in the church.³⁹ This call, we believe, will be recognised by the Spirit-led body of believers, and handled accordingly.⁴⁰ If a person among us has a particular gift we need to take note of it and help him use it. In this way the Lord may build his church.⁴¹

We believe the Spirit calls certain men to lead the church. We respect them and honour their work.⁴² Every leader is directly accountable to Jesus.⁴³ Never-the-less we believe every leader is also accountable to the church of Jesus (the local church), and to other leaders, just like all the rest of the members are accountable one to another. For this reason we do not have one man making decisions on his own that affect the whole church. Neither do we have one man doing all the teaching or administration. We believe in a plurality of elders.⁴⁴

Work

As a community we seek to divide our work evenly among all members. Not everyone is apt for the same jobs, but everyone needs to contribute in his or her own way.⁴⁵ Every able person needs to work with his own hands to provide for himself and for his own. Families take responsibility for their children, and for the elderly, physically handicapped, or otherwise disabled among them.⁴⁶

In our work and responsibilities given to us, we submit ourselves completely to the decision of the brotherhood.

Celibacy and Marriage

We recognise the ministry of single brothers and sisters among us and honour them.⁴⁷ If they choose to remain single to serve the Lord (or if they lead a celibate life for any other reason, such as in the case of having been widowed, separated, or divorced) we commit ourselves to supporting and caring for them as long as they live. We thank God for them.

Nevertheless we believe that God wants most people to marry and have families.⁴⁸ We openly encourage the married state and commit ourselves to doing what we can to lead

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

³⁹ Ephesians 4:11-13

⁴⁰ Acts 13:2-3

⁴¹ Matthew 16:18

⁴² Hebrews 13:7

⁴³ Hebrews 13:17

⁴⁴ Ephesians 4:11-13, Titus 1:5

⁴⁵ 2 Thessalonians 3:10

⁴⁶ 1 Timothy 5:8

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:2-5

our young people into it.⁴⁹ We encourage them to find suitable partners with the advice of their parents and the church leadership—while assuming full responsibility for the choice they make and promising to stick with it as long as they both shall live.⁵⁰

We do not permit our members to initiate divorce, or to get remarried as long as a divorced partner remains alive.⁵¹ “What God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matthew 19:6).

This same command of Jesus keeps us from breaking apart what God has joined and blessed to put back together what he did not (marital entanglements and adulterous unions before conversion).

If people in unlawful unions wish to join us, we ask them to live a celibate life until the situation changes. If they have children to raise in the meantime, we will help them do it. Depending on the situation, couples in unlawful unions may be accommodated as single guests on visiting our community.

Courtship

We expect our young men and women to conduct their courtship and make plans for marriage in a completely open and honest way—not in secrecy, spending long periods together alone, or in the dark, but among the rest of the brothers and sisters in the light of day.⁵²

That couples planning to get married will need some time to themselves, we understand, but they are to avoid physical contact before marriage, and we encourage them to keep their courtship brief. Once they are fully convinced the Lord wants them to marry, and if they have prepared themselves spiritually to take their place as husband and wife in the home, they should proceed with their parents’ and the church’s support.

We do not marry young men and women without their parents’ consent, unless their parents oppose the union on invalid or unscriptural grounds. Then we go by the voice of this local church. We believe marriage is of God, and to hinder it for anything less than a clearly Scriptural reason, is to oppose the work God wants to do among us.⁵³

Children

Parents take first responsibility in training their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.⁵⁴ Yet all parents in our community recognise that in ourselves we are incomplete. Our children must also become integrated into the lives of others, the work, and social order of something higher and greater than the natural family. For this reason we entrust our children—where necessary—to believing caretakers, teachers, and work supervisors outside our family circles.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Proverbs 18:22

⁵⁰ Matthew 19:4-6

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

⁵² Romans 13:12-14

⁵³ Hebrews 13:4

⁵⁴ Ephesians 6:4

⁵⁵ Ephesians 2:21-22

We believe it our responsibility (not that of the state) to educate our children, choose our school curriculum, and to appoint members of our own congregation as teachers and role models for our children where parents are not able to teach them on their own. We expect all families in our community to support and co-operate in this work of Christian education.

In training our children at home, in school, and throughout the community we use love and appropriate discipline as needed. “He that spares the rod hates his son.”⁵⁶ Parents stand in first place to administer this discipline, but if necessary our children’s’ teachers and work supervisors also stand responsible to correct them.

We believe it important for families to spend time together throughout the day, eating together, working together where possible (fathers with sons and mothers with daughters), and spending their evenings together at home. Our children are a gift from God and we welcome every one the Lord gives us.⁵⁷

Meetings

We break bread on the eve of the Lord’s Day and hold a worship meeting the following morning. We sing together, have several brothers share publicly and leave time in every meeting for testimonies and prayer.⁵⁸

Once a week we hold Bible Study meetings. On the other evenings of the week we expect the congregation to gather for Scripture reading and common prayer. In these meetings we expect the active participation of all that attend, in singing, in leading in prayer, and in sharing what the Lord has laid upon their hearts. Several times a month, the brothers and sisters meet to discuss and handle what affects the community as a whole.

Only our men give instruction in our worship meetings.⁵⁹ We do not mind if our sisters ask questions, share testimonies, pray, or make confessions when we come together informally, but we do not have them teach or exercise authority over the men.⁶⁰

The Law and the Sabbath

Jesus, high priest of an eternal covenant, knew the eternal and perfect law of God—the law that God had in mind from the beginning.⁶¹ This is to what he points all men⁶² and what he writes onto the heart of everyone that seeks and finds him today.⁶³

Moses’ covenant and Moses’ law was only a temporary imperfect application of God’s law.⁶⁴ Suited to the hard hearts of unconverted men and women it was designed only for

⁵⁶ Proverbs 13:24

⁵⁷ Psalm 127:3

⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:29-33

⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:11-12

⁶¹ Matthew 19:8

⁶² Matthew 5:17-48

⁶³ Romans 2:15, 2 Corinthians 3:3

⁶⁴ Hebrews 8:6

the earthly natural kingdom of Israel.⁶⁵ When Jesus brought that kingdom to an end,⁶⁶ Moses' law and covenant ended with it.⁶⁷

Then, in God's perfect kingdom re-established on earth by Jesus—the “rolling rock” of Daniel's prophecy,⁶⁸ the Kingdom of Heaven, a kingdom not of this world, the kingdom within—Jesus replaced Moses covenant and Moses' law with God's infinitely higher and better law.⁶⁹ This law of the Spirit of life, the law of Christ, the law of faith, the perfect law of liberty, the royal law, is what we live by today and what will stand through eternity.⁷⁰ Moses's law was powerless to save,⁷¹ but God's perfect law, written in our hearts, sets us free from the law of sin and death.⁷²

Because Moses' law died with Moses' covenant we do not enforce it—or allow it to be enforced or promoted among us—today. Anyone that lives by Moses' law (taking part in debt-slavery, divorce and remarriage, self-defence and warfare, the death sentence, polygamy, etc.) can in no wise be a follower of Christ or a member of his church community. That the unconverted rulers of this ungodly world must still enforce such laws we take for granted⁷³ but Jesus' followers, citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, have no part in the matter.

On the basis of what was decided by the apostles in Jerusalem⁷⁴ and what Paul wrote⁷⁵ we no longer observe the rite of circumcision, or the festivals that were a shadow of things to come.⁷⁶ We eat or drink whatever people set before us.⁷⁷ Even though we like to rest one day out of seven like God rested after creating the earth, and even though it makes sense for us to do it together, we no longer make rules about keeping the Sabbath, keeping Sunday, or any other day of the year.⁷⁸

Honesty

We insist on absolute honesty in business dealings and in what we say or do. This includes honesty in paying taxes, dues at international borders, and in obtaining government permission for what we construct and operate in our community.⁷⁹

We refuse to swear oaths, either in spoken or written form—this including the pledge of allegiance.⁸⁰

We expect our members to be law abiding citizens in every area where the laws of the land do not conflict with the laws of God.⁸¹

⁶⁵ Colossians 2:20-23

⁶⁶ Matthew 21:43, 2 Corinthians 3:15-18

⁶⁷ Hebrews 8:13, Colossians 2:14

⁶⁸ Daniel 2:44-45

⁶⁹ Matthew 5:1-7:29, Hebrews 8:6

⁷⁰ Romans 3:27, 8:2, Galatians 6:2, James 1:25, 2:8, 12

⁷¹ Romans 8:3

⁷² Romans 8:2

⁷³ Romans 13:3-5

⁷⁴ Acts 15

⁷⁵ Galatians 2:15-16, 3:10-13, 3:24-25, 5:1-6

⁷⁶ Colossians 2:16-17

⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:25-27

⁷⁸ Romans 14:5

⁷⁹ Romans 13:6-7

⁸⁰ Matthew 5:33-37

We honour and pray for our government and co-operate with it wherever our conscience allows.⁸²

Visiting and Joining our Community

We welcome all seekers to visit our community—at least once. Subsequent visits of an extended or indefinite duration should be petitioned for and arranged. We do not welcome teachers of doctrines opposed to what we teach, or visitors that contradict and undermine what we believe. Neither do we feel obligated to receive all that would come to us for strictly intellectual or academic pursuits.

Visitors deciding to stay for longer than one week need to clear the matter with the entire community. If everyone feels comfortable, the visit may continue. Visitors may attend all meetings but do not take part in the breaking of bread until after they have lived among us for a month—and then only with the approval of all other communicant members.

After six months, and up to a year, if visitors wish to stay and live on the communal premises at Rocky Cape, we expect them to relinquish their possessions (except household and personal items) to the fellowship of believers. If they do not feel able to do this, they should decide to live elsewhere before the year is over. Income generated or received while living at the community belongs to the community as a whole.

We expect long-term visitors, like all members of the community, to be completely open and honest about their plans, their finances, and their feelings about life at this place. Honest questions deserve honest answers from everyone involved.

Leaving the Community and Discipline

If a brother or sister, or an entire family, wishes to leave our community we expect them to bring the matter before the fellowship of believers. If we all recognise their reason for leaving as from Lord, we cannot oppose it, and set them free to do so.

We insist on the totally voluntary nature of the Church of Jesus Christ,⁸³ and we do not automatically discipline or separate ourselves from those that decide not to join us or to live elsewhere.

Nevertheless, we take our commitment one to another seriously. After surrendering ourselves to the Lord Jesus with all we have and becoming part of the fellowship of believers at this place, we do not see it as of the Lord to leave one another for trivial reasons, simple matters of preference, or because we lack the energy and dedication to work through whatever issues may arise. If members leave our community to become part of a situation we cannot fully approve of or recommend, we stop short of blessing their departure. Their conduct will determine how much contact we maintain with them, and how we feel about having them return to visit us.

⁸¹ Romans 13:1-5

⁸² 1 Timothy 2:1-2

⁸³ Romans 14:10-12

If a member leaves in rebellion or sin, breaking his covenant to Jesus and this local church, we consider him “as a heathen man or publican” and refrain from socialising with him until he repents.⁸⁴

Church discipline, we believe, is only for the unrepentant. Even while we hold a person in discipline (not eating or socialising freely with him) we have an obligation to admonish him in the Spirit of Jesus.⁸⁵ If we keep on loving him and treating him kindly but firmly, he may come back to Jesus and his church. That is the only reason for discipline, and as soon as its purpose has been accomplished we remove it completely.

Unity

Every local church, we believe, stands directly responsible to Jesus.⁸⁶ We do not see a Scriptural precedent for any higher level of church authority than that of the local church. We believe, however, that local churches in which the Spirit of Jesus moves, will not think of themselves as “independent” or as an “only church.” Every city in Jesus’ Kingdom, like every household in those cities, and every individual in those households, needs each other.

We celebrate our unity with other local churches by fellowshiping together, by seeking counsel one from another, and by supporting them in their work and outreach wherever possible.

The higher the level of our doctrinal and practical unity, the more intimate and meaningful our fellowship one with another becomes.

Associations

Even though we respect those that profess Christ while living differently than we do—even though we accept and honour what they teach and do—we refuse to enter into close fellowship with those that justify Christians going to war, that refuse to separate themselves from the world in economics, dress, and lifestyle, and that oppose or disparage the way of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁸⁷

We cannot associate with those that live in open disobedience to the Scriptures.⁸⁸

On the other hand, we cannot help but associate with all that follow Jesus and seek him with an honest heart—whether they have much in common with us ethnically, culturally, and socially, or whether they don’t.⁸⁹ It is Jesus that divides us from all that refuse to follow him (our relatives, friends, and former associates included) and unites us with all that do.⁹⁰

The Sick

⁸⁴ Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:4-11

⁸⁵ 2 Thessalonians 3:15

⁸⁶ Ephesians 5:22-24

⁸⁷ Romans 16:17-19

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:33, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

⁸⁹ Ephesians 4:4-6

⁹⁰ Matthew 10:34

We believe God holds our bodies and souls in his hands, and that if we turn sick he alone can heal us. If any among us are sick, we encourage them to call for the elders of the church, so they may anoint them with oil and pray for them to be healed.⁹¹

Even though we credit God alone for our healing we use medical services where necessary. We recognise that God works through medical and surgical means, many times, to heal the sick.

We believe sickness and death came as a result of Adam's disobedience and fall, but to get sick or die does not mean we are personally guilty of sin, today. Neither does it mean our faith is too weak to get healed. It is not God's will that believers should always get healed, or that they should always be kept from diseases, accidents, and death. God may call on us to glorify him through our sickness or permanent disability. If that is what he asks of us, we will accept it patiently and with grace.

We do not recognise the "gift of healing" (miraculous powers to cure) of those that refuse to walk in the way of Jesus and his Kingdom community. Rather, if such people perform miracles, we suspect their power comes from the evil one.⁹²

We reject all forms of witchcraft, non-scientific cures, and any type of alternative medicine that defies natural law.

Peace

Following Christ we seek to return good for evil, to love our enemies, and use no resistance against those that mistreat us or use us spitefully.⁹³

This means we do not go to law with others to settle our disputes. We would rather let others take advantage of us than defend ourselves.⁹⁴

We cannot serve in the armed forces, or identify ourselves with the god of this world by putting on military uniforms, taking military training, or swearing the oath necessary to enlist in the army.

In the case of war and military conscription we would be happy to serve our country in any way other than joining the armed forces.

Equality

We believe that in the local church we should bear one another's burdens and share all things—our joys as well as our sorrows.⁹⁵ We believe what one has we all have, what one suffers we all suffer.⁹⁶ This we express in our life together, and in our community of goods.⁹⁷

⁹¹ James 5:14-16

⁹² Matthew 7:21-23

⁹³ Matthew 5:38-48

⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:1-7

⁹⁵ Galatians 6:2

⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:21-27

⁹⁷ 2 Corinthians 8:13-15, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:32-35

More than this we cannot, as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven—sons and daughters of the King—consider living in any other way. We believe God’s Kingdom, like all human society in the beginning, has always been overtly communal. We recognise money, possessions, all capitalist and ungodly socialist or communist systems, as a result of man’s fall, his wickedness, and greed. We have to do with the world’s economics only insofar as is absolutely necessary for the time being.

We express our equality among ourselves in our willingness to wash one another’s feet, like Jesus washed his disciples feet. This may take the form of literally, spontaneously, washing one another’s feet, but even much more, we want to express with our lives the attitude of Jesus behind it.⁹⁸ That, if we follow Jesus, we may exemplify every day, all day long.

Whether it be with the kiss of peace, the right hand of fellowship, or with a friendly embrace, we expect our members to honour one another and greet one another regularly with appropriate gestures of love and fellowship.⁹⁹

Separation

In our houses, our entertainment, our dress, our music, our speech—in every area of life—we want to identify with Jesus and his Kingdom to which we belong.

We have rejected the god of this world, and refuse to identify with him.¹⁰⁰ What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.¹⁰¹ Therefore we want to live modestly in simple houses, all of whose features serve a practical purpose. We want to use simple furniture, eat healthy, simple meals (as much as possible what we can raise ourselves), and dress ourselves modestly.

We reject the fashions of the world in hair styles, impractical clothing, and whatever features of dress (jewellery, ornamentation) that serve for nothing but to draw attention to ourselves.¹⁰²

We expect our women and girls to wear long hair and to keep it covered (for the sake of modesty, as a sign of headship order, and because of the angels) in public.¹⁰³

For the sake of modesty we do not have our sisters wearing trousers. Rather we expect them, and the brothers of our community to dress in a simple inexpensive way.

We expect everyone in our community to use whatever electronic equipment we may own (computers, radios, sound systems, and audio-visual equipment) in a responsible and edifying way. Parents are responsible for how their children make use of these things.

⁹⁸ John 13:14

⁹⁹ Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Peter 5:14, Galatians 2:9)

¹⁰⁰ Romans 12:2

¹⁰¹ Luke 16:15

¹⁰² 1 Timothy 2:9-10

¹⁰³ 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

We do not believe our families and our community should have free or unlimited access to the Internet.

We believe the use of public television to be more harmful than profitable, and reject its use altogether.

Fire arms, if used among us, shall never be stored or considered as weapons of self-defence. Only responsible people shall use them where necessary.

Money

We believe ourselves responsible for all money that passes through our hands. Everything we spend on ourselves that we do not need, we rob from the person that needs it.

We believe we should give, collectively, of our money as needs arise and the Lord provides. However, there are countless ways our members may give of their time, their resources, and their abilities to people both inside and outside our community. We encourage all to give freely to others as we have freely received.¹⁰⁴

We believe we should leave no debt outstanding except the debt to love one another.¹⁰⁵ Therefore we feel responsible to pay all money we borrow on the date agreed, and to return borrowed items as soon as we are done using them. People wishing to join our community should make arrangements to pay off their debts before they become fully integrated in its economy. We do not object to people living among us but working elsewhere if the situation demands it—every case being worked through as it comes.

We do not find it inconsistent with what we believe to accept government assistance in programs designed to help the general populace. We do not believe, however, that we should make use of collecting agencies in any circumstance, or declare bankruptcy. All our members, whether newly arrived or of long standing, need to pay what taxes, bills, or the cost of goods and services they have incurred.¹⁰⁶

None of our members draws government benefits for unemployment or old age pensions. Neither do we place our elderly in homes for the aged. We do not believe it would be right to shirk our duties one to another by depending on outside help.¹⁰⁷

The holding of some insurance policies, where we live, is mandatory. Other arrangements for help in case of fire, accident or drought may be good stewardship of what the Lord has entrusted into our care. But “cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. . . . blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out his roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 10:8, Acts 20:35

¹⁰⁵ Romans 13:8

¹⁰⁶ Romans 13:7

¹⁰⁷ 1 Timothy 5:8

¹⁰⁸ Jeremiah 17:5-8

We believe the Lord allows us, his children, to suffer hardship and poverty for our good. Jesus was poor. He worked among the poor and pronounced on them his blessing.¹⁰⁹ But he cursed the rich,¹¹⁰ and said it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.¹¹¹

We do not take material prosperity as a sign of God's blessing and approval, or material want as a sign of his disfavour.

The Future

We believe all things will be restored, in heaven and on earth, when Jesus comes again. That is, all things will be like God intended them to be when he created the earth.¹¹²

How all this will happen, or how end-time events will unfold, has not yet been fully revealed. For this reason we discourage speculation about end-time events, the restoration of Israel, the thousand-year reign, and the "rapture" of the children of God. The "Israel of God"¹¹³ (those who are Jews "not outwardly, according to the flesh, but inwardly by the Spirit"¹¹⁴) are God's chosen people of the New Covenant. Those that believe in and live for Jesus Christ, those that will reign with him, are today's "children of Abraham,"¹¹⁵ and many of those who say they are Jews are in fact "of the synagogue of Satan."¹¹⁶

We believe the only way for a Jewish person to become an heir of the promise, a child of God, or a citizen of his Heavenly Kingdom is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷ All Jews may be saved, but all that reject Jesus, reject God, and forfeit their claims to the promises God made to their ancestors.¹¹⁸

We believe the Messiah's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom involving this planet, the heavens, the universe and all things in it,¹¹⁹ not just an earthly nation (the nation of Israel) built with fighter planes, tanks, bombs, and guns. We believe the Kingdom has already come, but that it will come in unspeakably greater power and peace when all creation is restored and Jesus appears among us to reign on the earth.¹²⁰

Rather than speculate on worldly politics and passing events of the age, we encourage our members to watch and pray because we know not the day or the hour when the Lord shall reappear.¹²¹

We warn our members against a naïvely literal understanding of prophetic Scripture—such as taking the picture of "the bride, the Lamb's wife" in Revelation 21, the "new

¹⁰⁹ Luke 6:20-21

¹¹⁰ Luke 6:24-26

¹¹¹ Matthew 19:23-24

¹¹² Acts 3:19-21

¹¹³ Galatians 6:16

¹¹⁴ Romans 2:28-29

¹¹⁵ Galatians 3:26-29

¹¹⁶ Revelation 2:9

¹¹⁷ Acts 4:12

¹¹⁸ Matthew 21:43-44

¹¹⁹ Daniel 7:9-14, Ephesians 1:18-23

¹²⁰ Isaiah 9:6-7

¹²¹ Matthew 25:13

Jerusalem that came *down out of heaven* from God” to be a literal picture of heaven itself. All Scripture, we believe, must be understood in the light of all other Scriptures.

We believe we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ.¹²² According to what we have done, we will live forever with Christ in a fully restored creation, in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells—or we shall be destroyed with Satan in hell.¹²³

Note on this Statement

As a Christian church at Rocky Cape we commit ourselves to periodically reviewing this statement of what we believe and how we live. If any further light is given to us, if more information becomes necessary on any subject, or if we must change a position in the light of Scripture and the Spirit’s leading, we will do so.

Our final word is the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Apostles as given in the New Testament. Based on that we also honour and accept as our own the statement written by Peter Riedemann, *Rechenschaft unsrer Religion, Lehre, und Glaubens*, at Marburg in Germany, in 1540-41, the *Fünf Artikel* written by Peter Walpot in Moravia in 1545-1547, and the *Brüderliche Vereinigung* drawn up at Schleithem in Switzerland in 1527.

“We are not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17).

¹²² Romans 14:10

¹²³ John 5:28-29