



Principles and Practices of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers (Torchbearers International)

9.00

The Principles and Practices describe what we have believed since the beginnings of our Fellowship and how we have tried to express our faith in Christ and our desire to follow the commission and calling of our Lord.

As far as these Principles and Practices relate to the basis of truth and reality that is in Christ, we want to abide by them as they stand. In everything else we want to continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord, in obedience to His will, by being transformed into His image.

We do not consider our Fellowship to be anything out of the ordinary; we consider it to be but one of the many ways in which the wonder and joy of discovering Christ and Life in Him will again and again take shape.

This is how we want to live - belonging to Him, serving Him, and allowing Him to work in and through us in this world so that men and women everywhere might be drawn more and more to Him.

At the very beginning of all that culminated in the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers was an overwhelming amazement at the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His love, His dedication to the Father and to us, which brought our salvation. May we never lose Him as the First Love of our life!

Upon first experiencing His love, we knew no other response but to entrust ourselves completely to Him, to be owned by Him, and used by Him for His purposes and glory.

After He who is the Light of the World had become the light of our lives, it became the desire of our hearts to carry this light into all the world so that people everywhere might also understand and enjoy His love for themselves.

This is why we call ourselves "Torchbearers". Having no light of our own, we now enjoy the privilege of bearing the light of Another, our Lord Jesus Christ.



This first **Declaration** as to who we are has never been changed, and we wish it to remain the order of our lives as long as we may exist as the Fellowship of Torchbearers:

Torchbearers are members of a Missionary Fellowship which is international in scope, interdenominational in character, and interorganisational in action.

Torchbearers are prepared to work together with all Christians everywhere. Wherever they might live or work, they are joined to the Body of Christ, His Church.

Torchbearers expect to win souls to Christ because He is working through them and because He came to seek and save the lost.

Torchbearers are available to Christ twenty-four hours a day, with all they have and are.

Torchbearers accept the privilege of sacrificial giving because everything they possess is Christ's.

Torchbearers are debtors to all men everywhere, young and old alike, rich or poor, who have not yet heard that Christ died and rose again to save them.

Torchbearers, whatever their occupation, all consider themselves to be in the full-time service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Torchbearers through faith, prayer and obedience seek to be found active on the job at the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, whose second coming they joyfully expect.

Torchbearers practice the daily reading of the Bible and give thanks always in all things to God, the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Declaration is confirmed by **a personal covenant** through which we seek to respond to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1. Because He loves all human beings and because without Him they are lost, the Lord Jesus gave to His church the Great Commission. As a member of His body on earth I acknowledge my responsibility to witness to all that Jesus is the only Saviour and Lord and with all my words and deeds to seek to win them to Him.*
- 2. I present myself to Him according to Romans 12,1-2, that by His indwelling power I may be acceptable to God in all true holiness of life, to know and to do His perfect will.*



3. *Placing all my faculties at the disposal of the Lord Jesus Christ, I commit my ways to Him that I may be available daily to Him. Knowing that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost, I dedicate myself to this, His task, in the belief that He will be pleased to seek and to save souls through me.*
4. *I want to love all human beings everywhere, regardless of the nation, race, class, religion or denomination to which they may belong. I identify with their needs, their labours and their sufferings. I want to help relieve these needs, to pray for them and to serve them in fellowship and co-operation with all other Christians.*
5. *To the end that God's people may be encouraged and that precious souls may be saved, I gladly covenant to further the aims of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers, through believing prayer, by personal evangelism, by co-operation wherever possible, and with such sacrificial giving as shall be worthy of the extent to which God has blessed me in material things.*

The **purpose and aim** of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers, to which all associations, operations, members and co-workers subscribe, has been summed up in the following statement:

The purpose of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers is to proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all men in accordance with the Holy Scriptures; to lead them to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Saviour, Lord and Life; to promote the Christian faith in accordance with the Holy Scriptures by means of witness, service and fellowship; to arouse, motivate and support mission-oriented living, in word and deed; and to strive to increase the Kingdom of God throughout the world, thereby being bringers of light, "Torchbearers".

The boundless love of the Lord Jesus for all men, irrespective of their backgrounds, made such a deep imprint on those who started the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers that it became one of its salient characteristics. Christians from the most varied denominational backgrounds, ranging from traditional to very young churches, joined forces and began to work together. We felt it both helpful and necessary for our mutual benefit to formulate a basis of faith that would unite and safeguard us.

This **Basis of Faith** is accepted by all Torchbearers world-wide, who at the same time enjoy varied styles of form and practice in their faith on account of their historical, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.



The Basis of Faith of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers:

I believe in the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, in equality with the Father, and that by Him, and for Him, the Father created all things.

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ became man through the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary.

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was without sin, and that He, as the Lamb of God without blemish, died willingly in the place of sinners to become the Redeemer of this fallen world. I believe that He is the only Mediator, through whose redeeming Blood and by faith in whom alone we receive the forgiveness of sins.

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen bodily from the dead, that He appeared to His disciples and returned to the Father; that on the day of Pentecost He came in the person of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the hearts of all who had received Him, and thereby established His Body on earth, His Church, the fellowship of all true believers, of which He is the Head.

I believe in God the Holy Spirit, co-equal Member of the Trinity. I believe that He is present in the hearts of all who through faith have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and who thereby are born again, children of God, and are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to deliver just judgement and to bring all things to completion.

I believe that the Bible, in its entirety, is the revelation of God for mankind, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Finally I declare that I myself am converted, in that as a sinner in need of salvation I have already turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and have received Him as my personal Saviour and Lord. I believe that in accordance with His promise He has accepted me and saved me, not according to my merits, but according to His infinite grace, and that He now lives in me by His Holy Spirit, has given me eternal life, and made me a child of God. I confess Him, The Lord Jesus Christ, as My Saviour, Lord and Life before all men.



The first base of activity, which in many ways became the leading example for all the other Torchbearer centres around the world, was Capernwray Hall in the North of England.

It was not just the encouraging, cheerful, Christ-centred message which caused many to turn in faith to Christ, but also the experience and enjoyment of the quality of life of a staff who practised a type of community living simply and genuinely derived from their relationship with the Risen and Living Lord Jesus.

Over the years, as more centres came into being, it became clear that each one was not just a place for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel in all its forms, but also a base for community living and service, in which the simple daily walk with Christ would be manifested as a living example.

When asked to explain the nature of these staff fellowships, or communities of the various Torchbearer centres, to the authorities, the public, or fellow Christians, **we describe ourselves** as follows:

We are a community sharing our life and our ministry not only by practising the Christian life together as a fellowship, but also by dedicating our lives to Christ for missionary and charitable service.

To express our mutual intention in the framework of our national and social existence, we have organised our activities as legally recognised associations, companies, or operations according to the laws of our respective states. Wherever possible we also have expressed that we exist within the framework of legally accepted national churches.

Through all our activities and as Christian communities we serve existing churches and fellowships, especially in the area of missionary, evangelistic, and charitable tasks that demand the co-operation of all Christians.

In our own fellowships of community life we do not dictate the denomination to which anyone should adhere. We encourage active, positive and wholehearted engagement in the local church or fellowship where the individuals have their original spiritual home. If there is no such attachment, we encourage involvement as Christ directs. We practise brotherly respect and lovingly accept the differences which enrich the Body of Christ.

We respect the laws of the states in which we live and serve. We take our responsibilities as citizens seriously and we acknowledge in our enterprises, businesses and undertakings all the legal requirements demanded of us.



However, we need to state that none of us are employers or employees in the normal sense, having voluntarily chosen a life of serving God and our neighbour.

We recognise that there is a need for order and rules, that there is difference of duty that on the one hand demands submission, and on the other hand, the acceptance of greater responsibility.

All the daily and various activities are considered to be part of our worship of God, e.g. mealtimes, prayer times, helping one another in practical ways, counselling, serving guests, accepting outside ministries, preparing meals, maintaining the buildings or the gardens.

It is our special privilege to be available to our many guests when they attend our centres for conferences, houseparties, seminars or Bible schools, or when they want to join our community for a certain limited time in their lives.

All persons are of equal value in the discharge of their particular and varied tasks. Each one is dependent on the faithfulness, love and dedication of the other, whether in the kitchen, office or workshop; whether preparing Bible studies, sermons or outreaches; whether fulfilling their tasks at the centre, at a local church or even in another corner of the globe.

We do not consider that the many necessary tasks are divisible into special spheres of life (e.g. working and private times) but rather, they are the one indivisible and total life by which we want to enjoy, love and serve God.

We are fully aware that we serve the Lord Jesus Christ who, in all matters is both our Lord as well as our model. Like Christ, we want to be given to God with all our hearts and minds to do what has been assigned to us with diligence and love, employing all our gifts and faculties to the best of our knowledge. In this we remember the *Ora et Labora*, the "Pray and Work" of earlier communities who did each of these with the same sense of dedication to God. This we do with joyful and grateful hearts, experiencing Christ at work in us in all things.

We gladly accept the fact that our Lord knew and enjoyed times of quiet and rest. He considered the Day of Rest to be a gift to mankind from His heavenly Father, to be enjoyed together with all that is good, acceptable and beautiful.

So as He did, we too openly and gratefully take our days off, holidays and times of rest as gifts from our Father.



Whether married or single, we joyfully accept either calling as being of equal value.

Whatever our position and consequent lifestyle, we completely and gratefully accept that most of the time there can be no strict distinction between our private lives and ministries. Since it is often the private sphere that offers special opportunities for counsel and help in situations of specific need, we give every part of our lives to God, so that He may use us as He sees fit.

Our salaries are not governed by external collective contracts. The income upon which we depend is generated by the various activities, e.g. accommodation of guests and students, charitable institutions, or support from friends and churches.

To the best of our conscience and knowledge we make provision in such a way that each has sufficient, accepting at the same time that modesty and simplicity are part of the life that we have chosen and happily affirm.

Some members of our Torchbearer Fellowship have followed their calling in this manner for many years, others join us for shorter periods of time to experience this way of life for themselves or to invest a period of their lives in serving others.

In the manifold demands upon us we can only remain spiritually fresh and credible if we draw fully upon our resources in Christ.

We emphasise that all members of our community need sufficient time and opportunity for their personal walk with the Lord Jesus, in prayer and meditation, the study of God's Word, attendance at meetings and active membership of a local church. In fact, many in our Fellowships have positions of responsibility in their churches.

What is offered by our own Fellowships is of great importance for enriching and encouraging our relationship to Christ. For this reason we meet regularly for devotion and prayer, remembering especially to pray for all the many tasks at home and opportunities world-wide.

We recognise the importance of keeping each other informed about our activities so that all may share the joys and burdens of our work, also maintaining a strong relationship with all the other operations of the world-wide family of Torchbearers.

Being in a community, composed of members of very different backgrounds, personalities and cultures, we are inevitably vulnerable to tensions and conflicts.

Consequently we have had to learn the on-going lesson that only in strict obedience to all Christ's instructions for the solution of conflicts and sins between fellow believers are we able to find reconciliation, forgiveness, and the freedom to continue.



Should it not prove possible to resolve disputes and disagreements by talking person to person, we call special meetings for open discussion and settlement of problems, misunderstandings, and quarrels.

Because of our familiarity and closeness, or where a case may be particularly serious, we draw on appropriate outside help.

We make every effort to overcome self-will, resentment and pride, and not to allow the flesh to govern us, nor the enemy of God to gain ground in our midst.

We seek to avoid all false triumphalism, acknowledging that it is only by assisting one another by the grace of God that we are able to live and work together.

Since we are a "missionary" Fellowship we have agreed upon certain **rules for life and conduct** by which we express our love and obedience as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are designed to serve us in the exercise of our particular world-wide ministries.

Recognising our world-wide connections and the diverse convictions among those whom we love as brothers and sisters in Christ, and also being aware of the devastating effects of addictions, we abstain from drugs, tobacco and alcohol in our community life at the Torchbearer Centres and in the exercise of all Torchbearer activities.

We maintain a high Christian standard of honourable and appropriate conduct between the sexes. We do not permit those who are not married to each other to stay in the private rooms of the other sex. We avoid anything that could be hurtful, seductive, or misunderstood.

We are fully committed to the integrity and maintenance of marriage as a God-ordained institution for a healthy society, which is also intended to be a picture of Christ's relationship to the church.

For this reason, it is imperative that those who are in positions of headship in our Fellowship should faithfully reflect and respect this high calling. For us, this means that divorce will preclude the holding of the following positions: General Director; Executive Committee Member; membership of the Member's Assembly and designated positions of headship. Exceptional cases can be referred back to the General Director and the Executive Committee for a decision.

We do not withhold our love and fellowship from those who have homosexual inclinations. However we do not consider homosexuality as being natural or acceptable to God. Those who follow homosexual practices cannot work in our Fellowships in any capacity.



We adhere to the highest standards of responsible stewardship in all that relates to finance and property, and strictly avoid conflict of interest. In all areas of financial administration and appropriate use of designated funds, we keep strict control and transparency. Embezzlement, misappropriation of funds or property will lead to immediate disciplinary action.

The diversity of our spiritual and cultural backgrounds demands a high measure of mutual respect and tolerance. However, we resist the propagation of doctrine and practices to extreme positions beyond the centrality of Christ.

In all these things we consider love to be our highest standard, thereby glorifying God and building up one another in the Body of Christ.

It is our highest privilege and joy to preach and teach Christ according to the testimony of the whole Bible: Christ our Crucified, Risen, Living, Indwelling and Coming Lord.

It is our prayer at all times that we should never lose the excitement in the exercise of this our supreme calling.

In view of God's mercy, grace and love we pray that this may never be just the confession of our lips but the reality of our lives so that the presence of our Lord may be realised in all that we are and do at all times.

The **Main Thrust** of what we consider to be the message entrusted to us, as we teach, preach and share our Lord Jesus Christ, has been stated in the words of our Founder, Major W. Ian Thomas. We wish to maintain this as long as we remain the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers.

The Main Thrust

- 1. Truth is as timeless as God Himself; it never changes. It may be forgotten, neglected, perverted, opposed, rejected, counterfeited or displaced, but it never changes. It is not an emphasis, a concept, a party line, nor merely an option - it is an imperative!*
- 2. God created humanity in such a way that the presence of God as Creator within a person as Creature is imperative to his or her humanity. Mankind in normality is to be distinguished from the animal kingdom by a quality of life and behaviour that can have no possible explanation apart from God Himself in a person.*
- 3. This fact is truth. It is not subject to debate or dialogue, it is not an option to be offered, it is a fact to be proclaimed. Truth does not evolve over the years, any more than God evolves or Christ evolved.*



4. *In assuming our humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ as Creator chose to play the role of Creature. As the God who made mankind, He chose to be the kind of humanity that He as God had made. In declaring that He in His humanity without the Father could do nothing, Christ demonstrated the truth that has always been true, that we in our humanity can do nothing without Him; that the Father as God, then, was as indispensable to Christ in His humanity, as Christ as God now, is indispensable to us in our humanity.*
5. *To recognise this and to practice the principle is the nature of true repentance, and without true repentance there can be no true faith. For true repentance compels us to be totally dependent upon the Father. Christ then can do the work in us as the Father then did the work in Him, and we let all God loose in the world, not then just the sky, but God Himself is the limit.*
6. *This gives an entirely new dimension to our understanding of the Gospel and the remedial measure it proclaims. Not just that in the redemptive act Christ died for us, but that in the regenerative purpose of God, Christ rose again from the dead to live His Life in us. Thus, by Apostolic proclamation: 'if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith also is in vain... ye are yet in your sins!' The Resurrection is at the very heart of the Gospel, through which we are born again (1 Cor 15:14-17; 1 Peter 1:3). Any departure from this truth is a corruption of the mind and has its origin in the subtlety of Satan. It is a departure from the 'simplicity which is in Christ'*
7. *Were the time to come when by mutual consent the members of the Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers were to depart from this which is the true substance of our faith, then God would have written over the Fellowship, as over so much else of what purports to be Christendom, the word 'ICHABOD', the 'Glory is departed'. (2 Cor 11:2-3; 1 Samuel 4:21)*
8. *The Lord Jesus Christ established the fact that our spiritual union with Him, as He was in spiritual union with the Father, is the true and ultimate basis of all evangelism, missions, and church planting. 'The world will know and the world will believe', said the Lord Jesus, 'that the Father has sent Me, when they are in Us as I am in Thee, Father, and I am in them as Thou art in Me'. (John 17:21-23 KJV)*



In the fullest sense of this Main Thrust, this is the goal of all our ministry in word and deed:

1. Our purpose is that all men and women come to a complete understanding of the Gospel, which is nothing less and nothing more than the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Since 'in Christ are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge', and since in Christ 'all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form', there is nothing more a man can ever have but Christ alone. (Col. 2,3 and 9)
2. Because every single promise is fulfilled in its fullness in Christ, and because the Lord Jesus Christ is the author of everything that calls itself Christian, He Himself is the centre of our focus of attention in our preaching and teaching, and in all our activities.
3. Since Christ Himself is Life and since He came to give Life in abundance to all who believe in Him, we do not add anything to Him, but rather want to get to know Him better day by day. As we get to know Him who indwells us, we trust Him to display that very Life through us by which He indwells us, in all our being and doing. In following Him and by His grace we trust Him thus to display through us His love and humility, His spirit of mercy and tender care, His faithfulness, meekness, patience and long-suffering, His way of leading by serving, His willingness to forgive and forbear, His mind of dedication, discipline and obedience to the Father's will.

