

The Exclusive Brethren who separated from the Open Brethren in 1848 and adhere to a rigid code of practice that among other things restricts the contact their members can have with those outside their group. The Open Brethren believe that their individual churches should have freedom in their dealings with others. The two groups remain separate and do not hold joint events.

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Exclusive Brethren was originally the name given the group by the popular press, although today for reasons of consistency, legality, and to differentiate themselves from other groups they now prefer to be called by what they describe as their historic name, the "Plymouth Brethren Christian Church" or "PBCC" for short. To this end, their official global website, www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/ was established in 2012.

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Worldwide there are some 50,000 Exclusive Brethren located in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, North and South America, UK, Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand there are at present at least 6,000 Exclusive Brethren, which is about three times their estimated numbers in 2006, although exact figures are not available. The majority of local Exclusive Brethren live in Wellington's northern corridor.

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They are often seen as a discrete group, or perhaps better described as reclusive and elusive. The group did make the headlines in New Zealand with their controversial role in the 2005 General Election. They ran a campaign opposing the Labour government and funding an anti-government pamphlet drop. This could be because they were attempting to achieve economic conditions for their congregation of mainly business people.

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The Wellington Exclusive Brethren has a growing congregation of over 300 members who at present use temporary premises in Linden as their Church. It fits the description of their typical church with its frosted windows, high security fence and no signage on the premises.

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Exclusive Brethren see the Darby translation of the Bible as the absolute, infallible, inspired word of God. It defines their beliefs, morality and code of conduct. It is their essential companion and authoritative guide. From their earliest childhood, members are read and taught Bible stories from this Bible version. This is the only permitted book within the household as it contains the word of God. Other reading material is supplied in form of pamphlets which are to be bought monthly. These generally contain doctrine, based around Biblical passages (<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Salient33101970-t1-body-d28.html>)

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They follow a rigid code of conduct based strictly on the Bible, with a firm moral framework focused on the family unit. They are encouraged to marry early, avoid contraception and believe in strong family values and relationships. They value the extended family and prefer their ageing members to remain in their own homes. The family uses the Bible as a source of guidance and lessons are taken from it in how to live a family life www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/

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Exclusive Brethren largely shun the "conduits of evil communications" such as television, radio and the internet. This, however, cuts them off from the real world. They also separate themselves from others due to their belief that the world is a place of wickedness and mostly restrict their social activities to interactions with other Exclusive Brethren. They congregate every Sunday in their meeting rooms to

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celebrate the Lord's Supper and to preach the Gospel. Meeting places are surrounded by high fences and locked gates that are locked at all times except for access to meetings. They are also locked during meetings. They also use security guards on occasions. This could be because they fear outsiders coming in to their meetings without permission.

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The Exclusive Brethren seem to show some cult-like characteristics such as totalitarian control of their members' behaviour and autocratic leadership where the leader is regarded as the supreme authority. When a member is "under discipline" they are not allowed to take part in the Lord's Supper and they may be asked to leave the Church. This could be to stop them encouraging others to think about the way things are done in the Exclusive Brethren.

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