

A. STATEMENT OF FAITH

PREAMBLE

This Statement of Faith is a consensus reached after several years of discussion. It should be seen as a confession, showing how the teachings of the Scriptures are currently interpreted and understood by the congregations of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

These are the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith as they have been discerned in the Scriptures. While this statement reflects convictions inherited from the Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of the 16th-century Reformation, the Bible has been regarded as the final authority on what is to be believed.

This statement has been designed to create clarity, to give direction and to provide the basis for fellowship and working together. Because of the confessional nature of this statement, it will be normal to continue to reflect on the accuracy with which it reflects the teachings of the Scriptures.

1. THE BIBLE

We believe that the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired and infallible Word of God. They are the supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:16–21).

2. GOD

We believe in only one God, eternal, infinite and unchanging. He alone is the Creator, the Sustainer and Redeemer. He exists and reveals himself in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All persons in this triunity are fully and equally God (Genesis 1:26; 17:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 90:2; 139:7–12; 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 44:6; 57:15; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 11:25; 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 6:27; 8:41–59; 15:26; 16:13–14; 17:1, 8, 18, 23; Acts 5:3–4; Romans 15:6; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 8:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:8, 12).

2.1. God the Father

We believe in God, the Father of all believers and, in a special sense, the Father of Jesus Christ. He has revealed himself in nature, in the Scriptures and especially in the person of Jesus Christ (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 47:1–9; 139:1–12; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 11:26; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 1:8–9; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:4–6; Titus 3:4–6).

2.2. God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He became man, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He is fully God and fully man, yet without sin.

We believe that Jesus Christ, the divinely appointed Substitute, provided the only atonement for sin by shedding his blood. Through his death he defeated the Devil, enabling people to be set free and to be reconciled to God. He arose from the dead, bringing life and hope. He ascended to the right hand of the Father. There He rules as Lord and lives to intercede for those who come to God by him (Isaiah 7:14; 53:5-6; Matthew 1:20-23; 28:5; Luke 1:35; John 1:1, 14; Romans 1:4; 5:8-10; 6:2-4; 1 Corinthians 15:20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:9-10, 14; 7:25).

2.3. God the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit exists eternally as one of the persons of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Son. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgement to come. He indwells believers and is the guarantee of their salvation. He encourages, comforts and guides them into the truth. He empowers for service and enables believers to live holy lives (Matthew 28:19; John 16:7-8, 13; Acts 1:8; 5:3-4; Romans 8:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 17; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14).

3. THE CREATION

We believe that God created everything as revealed in Scripture (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 38-39; Psalm 8; Mark 10:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Romans 11:33-36; Hebrews 1:1-3).

4. THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

We believe that God created the human race, both male and female, in his own image. We believe, therefore, in the sanctity of all human life, regardless of age, ability or stage of development (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7, 16-17; Exodus 20:13; Psalm 139:13-16).

5. THE FALL OF THE HUMAN RACE

We believe our first parents, in unbelief and disobedience, fell into sin by their free choice. This broke their fellowship with God and brought the whole human race into the same state of sin and separation (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7, 16-17; 3:1-24; John 6:44; Romans 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-10).

6. SATAN

We believe Satan is a personal spirit being. He heads the kingdom of all evil and opposes God and all that is holy, pure and just (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 10:17-21; Ephesians 6:10-18; I Timothy 4:1; Revelation 12).

The destiny of Satan will be the lake of fire, which God prepared for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41; Romans 8:38-39; Galatians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:1-3; 3:10; 6:10-18; Colossians 1:13; 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 12; 20:7-10).

7. SALVATION

We believe people are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The basis of this salvation is Christ's life, his atoning death and his resurrection. Justification, the new birth and the transformed life come about through repentance and faith in Christ. His atonement covers children until they reach the age of accountability (1 Samuel 12:22-23; Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 24:47; John 1:9-13; 3:3-8, 15-18; Acts 4:12; 20:21; Ephesians 2:1-10; James 2:14-24).

We believe it is the privilege of all Christians to know that they have passed from death to life and that God can keep them from falling. Faith and obedience are essential in maintaining this assurance and growth in grace (John 8:31-32; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:5-11; 1 John 3:14; 5:13).

8. DISCIPLESHIP AND NONCONFORMITY

We believe that our relationship to the Saviour is to be an unconditional commitment to discipleship. Discipleship is the total life of the believer patterned after the life and death of our Lord (Matthew 4:16-22; Acts 11:26; 26:28; Romans 5:5; 12:1-2, 7-12; 13:8-14; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 1:1-10; 4:32-5:2; Colossians 3:1-17; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 2:13-24; 4:16).

9. THE LIFE OF PEACE

We believe in the life of peace. We are called to walk in the steps of the Lamb of God, the Prince of Peace. Everything about his life, his teachings and his redemptive death on the cross, summons us to a life of nonviolence.

As nonresistant Christians, we cannot support war, whether as officers, soldiers, combatants or noncombatants, or direct financial contributors.

Instead of taking up arms, we should do whatever we can to lessen human distress and suffering, even at the risk of our own lives. In all circumstances, we should be peacemakers and ministers of reconciliation (Isaiah 53:3-9; Matthew 5-7; 28:18-20; John 18:36; Romans 12-13; Philippians 2:3-4; Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9, 20-23).

10. THE CHURCH

We believe all who have experienced new life in Christ belong to his church. All who repent and make a faith commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord are united to his holy church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Luke

24:47; Acts 1:8; 16:31; 17:30; 20:21; Romans 8:20; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:25; 4:19; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:5; Colossians 1:18; 3:1–4; 1 Peter 3:21).

We believe God calls the church to conform to the image of Christ, to care for its members and to evangelize all people. Those who are a part of the church seek to

- a. live holy lives, considering their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and denying themselves and their lusts (Mark 8:34–35; Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 2:11–14).
- b. avoid entering into binding relationships with unbelievers (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; Ephesians 5:11).
- c. exercise proper stewardship of their abilities, time and possessions (1 Corinthians 16:1–2; 2 Corinthians 8–9).

11. ORDINANCES

An ordinance is a symbolic observance, instituted according to Scripture, which is to be administered in and by the church as a visible sign of spiritual truth.

We believe Christ instituted three ordinances: water baptism, the Lord's Supper and footwashing (Matthew 28:18–20; John 13:1–17; 1 Corinthians 11:20–32).

11.1. Believer's Water Baptism

We believe a Christian should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To qualify for baptism, one must repent of sin and by faith accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Water baptism represents the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion and the washing of regeneration which the believer has experienced. It is an act of obedience which identifies the believer with the church of Christ (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:36–47; 10:47–48; 18:8; 22:16; Romans 6:1–4; Titus 3:5).

11.2. The Lord's Supper

We believe that Christians are to celebrate the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ. The elements – the bread and the cup – symbolize the body of Christ and his shed blood.

With this celebration, Christians call to mind Christ's suffering for the sins of the whole human race and proclaim the Lord's death until he returns to take his followers to himself. It involves fellowship, self-examination, testimony, confession, praise and thanksgiving. Christians should examine their own relationship to God and to other people before participating in this commemoration (Matthew 26:26–29; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:17–34; Ephesians 2:11–22; Hebrews 9:12, 25–28; 1 John 2:1–2).

11.3. Footwashing

We believe in the practice of footwashing. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples he gave the church an example to follow. Footwashing is an expression of humility, love and equality. It symbolizes cleansing from sin and the Christian's commitment to a lifestyle of servanthood. When we accept the washing of our feet by other Christians, we demonstrate that we accept Jesus' ministry to us (John 13:1-20; 1 Timothy 5:10).

12. THE RESURRECTION

We believe Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead. All, believers and unbelievers, will be raised from the dead as well, the believers to the resurrection of life and the unbelievers to the resurrection of condemnation. We also believe that people already enter the eternal state at the time of death. The righteous go into the presence of their Lord and the unrighteous into conscious suffering (Daniel 12:2; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; John 5:28-29; 20:20, 24-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 1:19-26; Revelation 20:11-15).

13. THE RETURN AND FINAL TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

We believe in the personal, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ. This is the blessed hope of believers. Christ's return will be the occasion of the resurrection of the dead and the eternal separation of the just and the unjust. Everything will be brought into the subjection of his authority and rule as his eternal kingdom is realized (Matthew 24:44; 25:31-46; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:19-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 10:37; 2 Peter 3:3-13; Revelation 20-22).

At his return, Christ will judge all people. After the judgement, the righteous will be with God, the unrighteous in hell. Death will be destroyed, and Satan and his angels will be thrown into the lake of fire. Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, after destroying all dominion, authority and power. Then the righteous will reign with Christ forever (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28).