

PREAMBLE

The Mennonite Church, begun in Switzerland in 1525, was a part of the Reformation which attempted to restore the New Testament church. We conceive the church to be a body of regenerated believers, a fellowship of holy pilgrims baptized upon confession of faith in Christ. As committed believers we seek to follow the way of Christian love and nonresistance, and to live separate from the evil of the world. We earnestly endeavor to make Christian disciples of all the nations.

In its beliefs the Mennonite Church is bound ultimately to the Holy Scriptures, not to any human formulation of doctrine. We regard this present confession as a restatement of the Eighteen Articles adopted at Dordrecht in the Netherlands in 1632 and of the other statements adopted by our church. In this expression of our faith we sincerely accept the lordship of Jesus Christ and the full authority of the written Word of God, the Bible, and seek to promote the unity of the brotherhood, to safeguard sound doctrine and life, and to serve as a testimony to others.

ARTICLE 1. GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

We believe in almighty God, the eternal Spirit who is infinite in His attributes of holiness, love, righteousness, truth, power, goodness, and mercy. This one and only God has revealed Himself as existing eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE FATHER

We believe that God is the Creator of all things, a God of providence, and the Author of our salvation through Christ. Although He is too great to be comprehended by the human mind, through Christ we can truly know Him. In redeeming love He entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, later with the people of Israel, and has now made through Christ an eternal covenant in which He offers to the human race the forgiveness of sins and the blessings of divine sonship to those who will repent and believe. 6

THE SON

We believe in Jesus Christ the divine Son of God, who was with the Father from all eternity, who for our salvation took upon Himself human nature, and who by His redemptive death and resurrection conquered the forces of sin and Satan and atoned for the sins of mankind. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and in God's redemptive purpose was crucified. He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now as Lord and Christ at the right hand of the Father intercedes for the saints. He is the Lord and Saviour of all Christian believers, and the coming judge of the living and the dead. We believe in His full deity and full humanity according to the Scriptures.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who was sent by the Father and the Son to bring to individuals the redemption of Christ. We believe in His personality as set forth in the Scriptures: that He loves, searches, testifies, guides, empowers, and intercedes for the saints. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Matthew 22:37; John 1:18; 3:16; Romans 8:1-17; II Corinthians 13:14; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 11:6. †

ARTICLE 2. DIVINE REVELATION

We believe that the God of creation and redemption has revealed Himself and His will for men in the Holy Scriptures, and supremely and finally in His incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's purpose in this revelation is the salvation of all men. Although God's power and deity are revealed in His creation, so that the nations are without excuse, this knowledge of Him cannot save men, for it cannot make Christ known. God revealed Himself in saving word and deed to Israel as recorded in the Old Testament; He fulfilled this revelation of Himself in the word and deed of Christ as recorded in the New Testament. We believe that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, that men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. We accept the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God, and through the Holy Spirit as the infallible Guide to lead men to faith in Christ and to guide them in the life of Christian discipleship. † Scriptures cited after each article are representative, but not exhaustive .

We believe that the Old Testament and the New Testament together constitute the Word of God, that the Old Covenant was preparatory, that its institutions were temporary in character, and that the New Covenant in Christ is the fulfillment of the Old. We believe that the Old Testament writings are inspired and profitable, and as the divine word of promise are to be interpreted in conjunction with the divine act of fulfillment recorded in the New. Christian doctrine and practice are based upon the whole Word of God, the word of promise of the Old Covenant as fulfilled in the New.

The message of the Bible points to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to Him that the Scriptures of the Old Testament bear witness, and He is the One whom the Scriptures of the New Testament proclaim. He is the key to the proper understanding of the entire Bible.

Psalm 19; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:1-16; 20:31; Romans 1:19, 20; II Timothy 3:15, 16; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 8:6, 7; I John 1:1-5.

ARTICLE 3. GOD'S CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

We believe that in the beginning God created all things by His Son, and that all existence is therefore finite and dependent upon God, the Source and End of all things visible and invisible. He created man in His own image, which set man apart from the animal creation. In free will, moral character, superior intellect, and spiritual nature, man bore the image of his Creator. In His providence God is concerned with the lives of His children, and in everything works for their eternal good. He hears and answers their prayers. By Jesus Christ He upholds the entire creation. He is Sovereign over all things, but He is not the author of sin. He has endowed man with the power of self-determination, and He holds him responsible for his moral choices.

Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; Psalm 139:7-12; Matthew 10:29; John 1:3; Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:16, 17; James 5:16.

ARTICLE 4. MAN AND HIS SIN

We believe that God created man sinless and holy, and subjected man to a moral test as a means of bringing him to full spiritual maturity. Man yielded, however, to the temptation of Satan and by willful disobedience to God failed to maintain that holy condition in which he had been created. This sin brought depravity and death to the race. Although men are sinners by nature because of Adam's fall, they are not guilty of his sin. Those who perish eternally do so only because of their own sin. The most grievous sin is the stubborn refusal to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. As a fallen creature man is self-centered, self-willed, rebellious toward God, unwilling to yield to Christ, unable to break with sin, and under divine judgment.

We believe that children are born with a nature which will manifest itself as sinful as they mature. When they come to know themselves to be responsible to God, they must repent and believe in Christ in order to be saved. Before the age when children are accountable to God, their sins are atoned for through the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus Himself assured us that children are in the kingdom of God.

Genesis 1:27, 31; 3:1-19; Matthew 18:1-14; Luke 18:16; Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-3; I Timothy 4:10.

ARTICLE 5. CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR FROM SIN

We believe that there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. The purpose of the incarnation of God's eternal Son was to redeem men from sin and death, to destroy the power and works of the devil, and to reconcile men to God. As a prophet, the Lord Jesus not only proclaimed God's Word; He was in His very person the Word of God. As a priest, He Himself was the sacrifice for sin, and now makes intercession with the Father for the saints. As our risen Lord and King He is vested with all authority in heaven and on earth.

In His life the Lord Jesus demonstrated perfectly the will of God. Although tempted in all points as we are, yet He never sinned. Through the shedding of His blood He inaugurated the New Covenant, broke the power of sin for those who exercise faith in Him, and triumphed over Satan. By His resurrection from the dead, Christ accomplished the full justification of those who believe in Him. By faith each believer is united with the risen and glorified Christ, the Lord of glory.

Luke 19:10; John 1:1; Acts 2:33; Romans 5:11; II Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:15; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 4:15; 7:11.

ARTICLE 6. SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

We believe that men are saved, not by character, law, good works, or ceremonies, but by the grace of God. The merits of the death and resurrection of Christ are adequate for the salvation of all men, are offered to all, and are intended for all. Salvation is appropriated by faith in Christ. From all eternity God knew who would be the believers in Christ, and these persons foreknown as believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Those who repent and believe in Christ as Saviour and Lord receive the gift of righteousness, are born again, and are adopted into the family of God. Saving faith involves the giving of the self to Christ, a full surrender of the will, a confident trust in Him, a joyful obedience to His Word as a faithful disciple, and an attitude of love to all men. It is the privilege of every believer to have the assurance of salvation.

The God who saves is also able to keep each believer unto a happy end in Christ. As long as the believer lives, he stands in need of the forgiveness, cleansing, and grace of Christ.

John 3:16; 10:27-29; Romans 4; Ephesians 2:8-10; I Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:8-10; 5:13; Jude 24.

ARTICLE 7. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe that Christ as Lord and Saviour does His work through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. Through the Holy Spirit those who believe are born again. The supreme ministry of the Spirit is to lead men to Christ and His salvation. As Christians yield to Christ and obey His Word, the Holy Spirit transforms them into the spiritual image of Jesus Christ and enables perseverance in faith and holiness. He empowers them as effective witnesses to Christ and His salvation, fills their hearts with love for all men, and moves them to practice Christian discipleship. The Holy Spirit bestows upon each believer such gifts as He wills for the building up of the body of Christ. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is God's seal of ownership of the Christian believer. He is God's guarantee that He will also redeem the bodies of believers on the day of Christ.

John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 2:1-21; I Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19; 12:11-13; chapters 12 to 14; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30.

ARTICLE 8. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST NATURE

We believe that God's redemptive work in history has led to the establishment of the Christian church. Christ established His church when He poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In preparation for this church He entered into covenant relationships with Abraham and his seed. Today the spiritual "seed of Abraham" are those who have faith in Christ, the people of God, the body of Christ, composed of believers from all races and nations. The church is the fellowship of those who are in the kingdom of Christ, the assembly of those who believe in Him, the brotherhood of the saints. The church is corporately the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, His holy temple. It is the visible body of those who are Christian disciples. Membership in the church is dependent upon a voluntary response to God's offer of salvation in Christ.

The primary unit of the church is the local assembly of believers. It is in the congregation that the work of teaching, witnessing, and disciplining is carried on. In order to maintain the unity of the church it is Scriptural and profitable for congregational representatives to meet together in conferences. The concern for the welfare of the whole church calls for Spirit-led conferences to assist local congregations in maintaining Biblical standards of faith, conduct, stewardship, and missions. The decisions of such conferences should be respected by the individual congregations and members.

FUNCTION

It is the function of the church to demonstrate to the world the will of God, to witness to all men of the saving power and intention of God in Christ, and to make disciples of all the nations. The church seeks to lead all men to the obedience of faith. Believers unite in the church for instruction and nurture, for worship, for inclusion in the witnessing and evangelizing body of Christ, for the observance of the ordinances, for Christian fellowship, and for the discipline of

the Word and the Spirit of God. The Spirit leads the church to discover the gifts which He has bestowed upon the members for the building up of the body. The church has the obligation to speak authoritatively on God's will. It shall listen to the Word of God and obey it in the moral and spiritual conflicts of each era of history. The church is called to be a brotherhood under the lordship of Jesus Christ, a loving fellowship of brethren and sisters who are concerned for the total welfare, both spiritual and material, of one another. This concern results in the attempt to help the erring brother find the right path; it includes sharing generously both financial aid and the word of encouragement, and a willingness to give and receive counsel. **DISCIPLINE** We believe that the Lord Jesus has given authority to His church to exercise discipline. The purposes of discipline are to lead each member to full stature in Christ, to restore to full fellowship the members who fall into sin, to clarify for all members the meaning of Christian discipleship, to promote the purity of the church, to warn the weak and immature of the serious character of sin and disobedience to God's Word, and to maintain the good name and witness of the church before the world. In this work the church employs public teaching, private counseling, intercessory prayer, earnest warning and rebuke, and sympathetic encouragement. If disobedience persists, the church may withhold the right to commune until the individual repents. And the church must, with a deep sense of loss, recognize that the one who goes on to full apostasy and spiritual ruin has severed his relation with Christ and His body. The standard in church discipline is the Word of God as interpreted by the brotherhood. The entire congregation should share in the work of discipline and seek earnestly to win the fallen member.

CEREMONIES AND PRACTICES

The Lord Jesus and His apostles instituted ordinances for the church to observe permanently as symbols of Christian truths. The apostolic church literally observed them. Among these are baptism with water, the communion of the Lord's Supper, the washing of the saints' feet, the holy kiss, the laying on of hands in ordination, the veiling of Christian women, the anointing of the sick with oil, and the institution of Christian marriage. When the church observes ordinances as expressions of a heart of faith, divine blessings are received, and a Christian witness is given. Since the Lord Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, the Christian church, following apostolic precedent, observes the first day of each week in memory of the Lord's resurrection.

THE CHURCH AND HEALING

We believe that the church should exercise a ministry of prayer for those who are in need. Prayer for the sick may be accompanied by a symbolic anointing with oil by the elders of the church. In response to the prayer of faith, and in accordance with His will, God heals in various ways, through the use of medicine, and the medical profession or by direct intervention.* When healing does not occur, we believe that God's grace is sufficient. The full redemption of the body will come only at the return of Christ.

Exodus 2:24; 24:8; Matthew 5:13, 14, 23, 24; 18:15-18; 28:19, 20; Acts 15; I Corinthians 3:16, 17; 5:11-13; II Corinthians 2:6-11; 3:2; 12:9; Galatians 3:6-9; 6:1; Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:13; I Timothy 5:20; James 2:14-17; 5:14-16; I Peter 2:9.

ARTICLE 9. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO SOCIETY

We believe that Christ has commissioned the church to go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe His commandments. Jesus entrusted to the church the stewardship of the Gospel and promised the power of the Holy Spirit for the work of evangelism and missions. This ministry of reconciliation is inherent in the very nature of the church. The church is interested not only in the spiritual welfare of men but in their total well-being. Jesus Himself fed the hungry, healed the sick, and had compassion on the poor. The church should likewise minister to those who are in physical or social need and to those who are physically or emotionally ill. The church should witness against racial discrimination, economic injustice, and all forms of human slavery and moral degradation.

Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 6:56; Romans 1:16; 8:23.

ARTICLE 10. THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

We believe that it is the intention of Christ that there should be shepherds in His congregations to feed the flock, to serve as leaders, and to expound the Word of God. Ministers shall administer the ordinances, exercise a Scriptural church discipline in co-operation with the congregation, and function as servants of the church.* Ordination is accompanied by a laying-on of hands, symbolic of the church assigning responsibility and of God imparting strength for the assignment. In addition to the primary office of apostle, in the New Testament church there were such gifts as prophets, evangelists, pastors, and 13 teachers. The early church had regional overseers such as Timothy, and bishops (pastors) and deacons in the local congregations. Upon the pastors lay the responsibility for the leadership and pastoral care of the congregations, and the deacons served as their helpers. In each era of the life of the church, Christ through His Spirit seeks to lead the church to adapt its organization to the needs of time and place. The church is a brotherhood, and its organizational structure should insure the full participation of the members with their spiritual gifts in its life and discipline. It is the duty of the church to give financial support to those whom it asks to serve as evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Matthew 23:8; 28:19; Acts 15:6; 20:28; I Corinthians 5:4, 5; 9:14; Ephesians 4:11, 12; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13; 4:14; II Timothy 4:12; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:2, 3.

ARTICLE 11. CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

We believe in obeying the instruction of the Lord Jesus to baptize believers with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In order to qualify for baptism one must repent, turn to Christ in sincere faith, and accept Him as Lord. We regard water baptism as an ordinance of Christ which symbolizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine cleansing from sin and its guilt, identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, and the commitment to follow Him in a life of faithful discipleship. Since baptism with the Holy Spirit is a pouring out, we generally practice pouring as our mode of water baptism.

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:16-21; 22:16; Romans 6:4-6; I Corinthians 12:13; I Peter 3:21.

ARTICLE 12. THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe in observing the communion of the Lord's Supper as an ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ to symbolize the New Covenant. We recognize the bread and the cup as symbols commemorating Christ's broken body and shed blood, of our spiritual life in Him, and of the spiritual unity and fellowship of the body of Christ. Each believer shall examine himself so as not to partake of the sacred emblems carelessly or while living in sin. The church shall invite to the Lord's Table only those who have peace with God and with their fellow men, and who share the faith of the church. The Lord's Supper shall be observed faithfully until the Lord comes. Luke 22:19, 20; I Corinthians 5:13; 10:16, 17; 11:24, 26.

ARTICLE 13. SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

We believe in the observance of the washing of the saints' feet as an ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus. By His example Christ rebuked the pride and rivalry of the apostles and showed them that Christian discipleship involves obedience to His lordship and loving service. This ordinance reminds us of the brotherhood character of the church, of our mutual duty to serve and admonish one another, and of our need for continuous cleansing in our daily walk. In the New Testament the holy kiss and the right hand of fellowship are also symbols of Christian love in the church of Christ.

Luke 22:24; John 13:1-17; Romans 16:16; Galatians 2:9; I Timothy 5:10.

ARTICLE 14. SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN ORDER

We believe that in their relation to the Lord men and women are equal, for in Christ there is neither male nor female. But in the order of creation God has fitted man and woman for differing functions; man has been given a primary leadership role, while the woman is especially fitted for nurture and service. Being in Christ does not nullify these natural endowments, either in the home or in the church. The New Testament symbols of man's headship are to be his short hair and uncovered head while praying or prophesying, and the symbols of woman's role are her long hair and her veiled head. The acceptance by both men and women of the order of creation in no way limits their rightful freedom, but rather ensures their finding the respective roles in which they can most fruitfully and happily serve.

Genesis 2:18-25; I Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28. 15

ARTICLE 15. MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

We believe that at the beginning of human history God instituted marriage. He ordained that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and that the two shall become one in love and mutual submission. It is God's will that marriage be a holy state, monogamous, and for life. It is also fully acceptable to God to serve Christ unmarried. Marriage was instituted for the happiness of the husband and wife and for the procreation and Christian nurture of children. Christians shall marry only in the Lord, and for the sake of spiritual unity in the home they should become members of the same congregation. The Christian home ought regularly to have family worship, to seek faithfully to live according to the Word of God, and to support loyally the church in its mission. We believe it is appropriate for parents to pledge themselves to the faithful Christian nurture of their children.

Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:24; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 6:1, 4. 16

ARTICLE 16. DISCIPLESHIP AND NONCONFORMITY

We believe that there are two opposing kingdoms to which men give their spiritual allegiance, that of Christ and that of Satan. Those who belong to Satan's kingdom live for sin and self, and refuse the obedience of faith. The kingdom of Christ is composed of those who have been born again and who have entered into a faith union with the Lord Jesus Christ. In them the fruit of the Spirit is in evidence. They recognize the lordship of Christ, and perform all manner of good works. They seek for holiness of heart, life, and speech, and refuse any unequal yoke with unbelievers. They manifest only love toward those of other races, cultures, and economic levels. They regard their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts. They therefore avoid such things as harmful drugs, beverage alcohol, and tobacco. We believe that their adornment should be a beauty of spirit, expressed in attire that is modest, economical, simple, and becoming to those professing Christian faith. They should seek to be Christian in their stewardship of money and possessions. Their recreational life should be consistent with the Christian walk. Through the Spirit they should put off the old man and put on the new.

Matthew 7:13, 14; Luke 9:23-26; Romans 12:1, 2; I Corinthians 6:12, 19; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 4:20-32; Colossians 1:13; I Timothy 2:9, 10; I Peter 3:3, 4. 17

ARTICLE 17. CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY

We believe that it is a major Christian obligation to be strictly truthful and transparent in life and doctrine, with no secrecy or hypocrisy. The Lord Jesus Christ has forbidden to His followers the use of any and all oaths, because of the finite limitations of human beings, and the obligation always to speak the truth. In legal matters we therefore simply affirm the truth. We are opposed to membership in secret societies or lodges, because such membership would involve an unequal yoke with unbelievers, and because these organizations employ hierarchical titles, require oaths, stand for organized secrecy, and may offer salvation on grounds other than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that it is in the church that we should find love, fellowship, and security.

Matthew 5:33-37; 23:7-10, 16-22; John 18:20; Acts 4:12; II Corinthians 6:14-7:1; James 5:12.

ARTICLE 18. LOVE AND NONRESISTANCE

We believe that it is the will of God for His children to follow Christian love in all human relationships. Such a life of love excludes retaliation and revenge. God pours His love into the hearts of Christians so that they desire the welfare of all men. The supreme example of nonresistance is the Lord Jesus Himself. The teaching of Jesus not to resist him who is evil requires the renunciation by His disciples of all violence in human relations. Only love must be shown to all men. We believe that this applies to every area of life: to personal injustice, to situations in which people commonly resort to litigation, to industrial strife, and to international tensions and wars. As nonresistant Christians we cannot serve in any office which employs the use of force. Nor can we participate in military service, or in military training, or in the voluntary financial support of war. But we must aggressively, at the risk of life itself, do whatever we can for the alleviation of human distress and suffering.

Matthew 5:38-48; John 18:36; Romans 5:5; 12:18-21; I Corinthians 6:1-8; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; James 2:8; 1 Peter 2:23; 4:1. 20

ARTICLE 19. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

We believe that the state is ordained of God to maintain law and order. We seek to obey the New Testament commands to render honor to the authorities, to pay our taxes, to obey all laws which do not conflict with the higher law of God, and to pray for our rulers. The church should also witness to the authorities of God's redeeming love in Christ, and of His sovereignty over all men. In law enforcement the state does not and cannot operate on the nonresistant principles of Christ's kingdom. Therefore, nonresistant Christians cannot undertake any service in the state or in society which would violate the principles of love and holiness as taught by Christ and His inspired apostles.

Acts 4:19; 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 1:20-22; 5:23; I Timothy 2:1, 2.

ARTICLE 20. THE FINAL CONSUMMATION

We believe that in addition to the physical order with which our senses are related, there also exists an eternal spiritual order, the realm of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the angels, and of the church triumphant. We believe that at death the righteous enter at once into conscious joy and fellowship with Christ, while the wicked are in a state of conscious suffering. The church militant lives and witnesses in this present evil world, a world in which apostasy from God is to become even more pronounced. The church also looks forward with hope to the day of the Lord, to the personal return of Christ, and the glorious future of the kingdom of God. In His triumphant Second Coming Christ will judge Satan, and usher in the consummation of all things. His coming will introduce the resurrection, the transformation of the living saints, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of His glorious reign. He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, cleanse the world by fire, create new heavens and a new earth, consign unbelievers to eternal punishment, and usher His children into the eternal bliss of the world to come.

Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:34, 41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:22, 23; John 5:22; I Corinthians 15:24, 35-58; II Corinthians 5:1-4; Philippians 1:23; I Thessalonians 4:13- 5:4; I Peter 1:4; II Peter 3:3-13; Revelation 15:3; 21:4; 22:3.

May God enable us all to attain His eternal kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, that with His blessed Son we may enjoy fullness of life for ever and ever. 22