

# Confession of Faith

## Introduction

The Mennonite Brethren Church is rooted in the evangelical Anabaptist sixteenth-century Reformation, a movement that sought to recapture the faith and life of the New Testament church. The Mennonite Brethren Church was born as a renewal movement in Russia on 1860. World mission efforts and widespread migrations have produced a movement that circles the globe. The Mennonite Brethren Church emphasized the centrality of biblical authority, articulating confessions of faith in order to connect scriptural teaching with contemporary discipleship. With Menno Simons, we hold central the biblical statement, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The 2014 US Mennonite Brethren (USMB) Confession of Faith contains wording of Article 13 which has been revised from the 1999 North American version of the Confession of Faith. The 1999 North American confession is a complete revision of earlier Mennonite Brethren confessions of faith. The 1902 confession, adopted in Russia and North America, was revised in 1975. The 1999 confession was written and adopted by the North American Mennonite Brethren Church for use in the United States and Canada. The framers of the 1999 confession gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Following a decade-long process of writing, consulting Mennonite Brethren congregations and sister national conferences and revising, the 1999 confession gained final approval at the General Conference meetings in Wichita, Kansas in July of that year. That version was jointly owned by both the Canadian Conference of MB Churches and the US Conference of MB Churches following the dissolution of the General Conference in 2000.

At the 2010 USMB Convention in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, the USMB Board of Faith and Life was given the task of reviewing and revising Article 13 of the 1999 Confession of Faith in order to bring it into compliance with our current understanding of the Bible and how we live that out. After months of consulting with individuals, churches, districts and the Canadian Conference of MB Churches, followed by multiple revisions and acceptance by the International Community of Mennonite Brethren, the USMB Board of Faith and Life proposed the current wording of Article 13 at the USMB Convention in Santa Clara, California in July 2014 where delegates approved the article as it appears here.

The Bible is our written authority. As Anabaptists, we believe that authoritative interpretation of the Bible is the result of corporate reflection under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This confession is the result of such a process and not only describes how the US Mennonite Brethren Church interprets the Bible for our context, but is also an authoritative guide for biblical interpretation, theological identity and ethical practice.

The reader should be alert to the following literary conventions adopted for this confession. Scripture references are listed at the conclusion of each article. These references are not meant to be exhaustive nor do they serve primarily as proof-texts for the articles. Pronouns referring to God are uniformly upper case to remind the reader that the use of the masculine pronoun is a convention of human language. God is neither male nor female; human male and female are created in the image of God. A more complete commentary and pastoral application of the Confession is available from Kindred Productions. A liturgical version of the Confession, *Confessing Together*, is also commended for use in congregational worship.

*(Revised and updated from the 1999 Confession of Faith Introduction)*

## **Article 1: God**

We believe in the one, true, living God, Creator of heaven and earth. God is almighty in power, perfect in wisdom, righteous in judgment, overflowing in steadfast love. God is the Sovereign who rules over all things visible and invisible, the Shepherd who rescues the lost and helpless. God is a refuge and fortress for those in need. God is a consuming fire, perfect in holiness, yet slow to anger and abounding in tender mercy. God comforts like a loving mother, trains and disciplines like a caring father, and persists in covenant love like a faithful husband. We confess God as eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **God the Father**

God the Father is the source of all life. In Him we live and move and have our being. The Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and hears the prayers of all who call on Him. In the fullness of time, the Father sent the Son for the salvation of the world. Through Jesus Christ the Father adopts all who respond in faith to the gospel, forgiving those who repent of their sin and entering into a new covenant with them. God gives the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to all His children. God's creative and redemptive love sustains this world until the end of the age.

### **God the Son**

The Son, through whom all things were created and who holds all things together, is the image

of the invisible God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, Jesus took on human nature to redeem this fallen world. He revealed the fullness of God through his obedient and sinless life. Through word and deed Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, bringing good news to the poor, release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind. Christ triumphed over sin through His death and resurrection, and was exalted as Lord of creation and the church. The Savior of the world invites all to be reconciled to God, offering peace to those far and near, and calling them to follow Him in the way of the cross. Until the Lord Jesus returns in glory, He intercedes for believers, acts as their advocate, and calls them to be His witnesses.

### **God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit, the Counselor, is the creative power, presence and wisdom of God. The Spirit convicts people of sin, gives them new life, and guides them into all truth. By the Spirit believers are baptized into one body. The indwelling Spirit testifies that they are God's children, distributes gifts for ministry, empowers for witness, and produces the fruit of righteousness. As Comforter, the Holy Spirit helps God's children in their weakness, intercedes for them according to God's will and assures them of eternal life.

*Genesis 1; Exodus 15:2-3; Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Psalm 8; Psalm 23; Psalm 139; Isaiah 55:8-9; Isaiah 66:12-13; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hosea 11:1-4; Matthew 1:18-25; Matthew 5-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 4:18-19; John 1:1-18; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4; Romans 8:1-17; I Corinthians 12:4-7; I Corinthians 13; I Corinthians 15:3-8; II Corinthians 1:22; II Corinthians 5:16-21; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 1:15-2:22; Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; I Timothy 6:15-16; II Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 12:7-11; I Peter 2:21-25; I John 2:2; Revelation 5:5-6, 9-10.*

## **Article 2: Revelation of God**

### **God's Self-Revelation**

We believe that God has made Himself known to all people. God's power and nature have always been evident in creation. The Old Testament reveals God as the one who established a covenant relationship with Israel to make known to all people the eternal plan of salvation. God revealed Himself supremely in Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit continues to make God known to individuals and the church; this revelation is always consistent with the Scriptures.

### **The Written Word of God**

We believe that the entire Bible was inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit

guides the community of faith in the interpretation of Scripture. The person, teaching and life of Jesus Christ bring continuity and clarity to both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament bears witness to Christ, and Christ is the One whom the New Testament proclaims. We accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative guide for faith and practice.

*Genesis 9:1-17; Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 6:2-8; Psalm 19:1-11; Psalm 119; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 1:16-18; John 16:13; Acts 8:34-35; Romans 1:18-21; Hebrews 1:1-2; Colossians 1:15-23; II Timothy 3:14-17; II Peter 1:16-21.*

## **Article 3: Creation and Humanity**

### **Creation**

We believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and they were very good. All of creation expresses God's sovereign will and design, but remains distinct from the Creator. The universe belongs to God, who takes care and delight in sustaining it. Creation declares God's wisdom and power, calling all to worship Him.

### **Humanity**

Humans, the crowning act of creation, were designed to live in fellowship with God and in mutually helpful relationships with each other. God created them male and female in the image of God. The Creator gave them the mandate to rule and care for creation as a sacred trust, and the freedom to obey or disobey him. Through the willful disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world. As a result, human nature is distorted and people are alienated from God and creation. Creation is under the bondage of decay. Humans and all creation long to be set free.

### **The New Creation**

Sin, guilt, and death will not prevail. God will create a new heaven and a new earth in which there will be no evil, suffering, and death. The first signs of this new creation are already present in those who accept God's forgiveness through Christ. In Christ all things are being reconciled and created anew.

*Genesis 1-3; Psalm 8:6; Psalm 19:1-6; Psalm 24:1-2; Psalm 89:11; Psalm 95:5; Psalm 104; Proverbs 8:22-31; Isaiah 40:12-31; Isaiah 44:24; John 1:1-4, 10; John 17:5; Romans 1:19-20; Romans 5:17, 21; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:18-25; I Corinthians 8:6; I Corinthians 15:20-27; II Corinthians 3:18; II Corinthians 4:6; II Corinthians 5:16-19; Galatians 3:28; Galatians 6:15;*

*Ephesians 1:4, 9-10; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:8-11; Revelation 21:1-5; Revelation 22:13.*

## **Article 4: Sin and Evil**

### **Sin and Its Consequences**

We believe that the first humans yielded to the tempter and fell into sin. Since then, all people disobey God and choose to sin, falling short of the glory of God. As a result, sin and evil have gained a hold in the world, disrupting God's purposes for the created order and alienating humans from God and thus from creation, each other and themselves. Human sinfulness results in physical and spiritual death. Because all have sinned, all face eternal separation from God.

### **Principalities and Powers**

Sin is a power that enslaves humanity. Satan, the adversary, seeks to rule creation and uses sin to corrupt human nature with pride and selfishness. In sin people turn from God, exchanging the truth about God for a lie, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator. Sin opens individuals and groups to the bondage of demonic principalities and powers. These powers also work through political, economic, social and even religious systems to turn people away from holiness, justice and righteousness. Whether in word, deed, thought or attitude, all humans are under the domination of sin and, on their own, are unable to overcome its power.

*Genesis 3; Genesis 6:11-12; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 36:1-4; Psalm 52:1-7; Psalm 58:1-5, 82; Isaiah 53:6; Ezekiel 16:49-50; Amos 2:4-8; Mark 7:20-23; John 8:34, 44; Romans 1:21-32; Romans 3:9-18, 23; Romans 5:12-14; Romans 18-19; Romans 6:23; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 2:1-3; Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 5:8-9; I John 1:8-10; Revelation 12:9.*

## **Article 5: Salvation**

### **God's Initiative**

We believe that God is at work to accomplish deliverance and healing, redemption and restoration in a world dominated by sin. From the beginning, God's purpose has been to create for Himself a people, to dwell among them and to bless them. Creation and all of humanity are without hope of salvation except through God's love and grace. God's love is fully demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **God's Plan**

Throughout history, God has acted mightily to deliver people from bondage and draw them into a covenant relationship. Through the prophets God prepared the way of salvation until finally

God reconciled the world to Himself by the atoning blood of Jesus. As people place their trust in Christ, they are saved by grace through faith, not of their own doing, but as a gift of God. God forgives them, delivers them from sin's bondage, makes them new creatures in Christ, empowers them by the Holy Spirit and seals them for eternal life. When sin and death are finally abolished and the redeemed are gathered in the new heaven and the new earth, God will have completed the plan of salvation.

### **Humanity's Response**

Though Jesus entered a world ruled by sin, He chose not to submit to its allure and broke its domination. Through His obedient life, His death on the cross and His glorious resurrection, Christ triumphed over Satan and the powers of sin and death, opening the way for all people to follow. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, people turn from sin, entrust their lives to God, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and join the family of God. All who receive Christ are born again, and have peace with God, and are called to love one another and live at peace with their neighbor. Those whom God is saving no longer live for themselves for they have been set free from sin and called to newness of life.

*Exodus 6:1-8; Exodus 15:2; Exodus 20:2; Psalm 68:19-20; Isaiah 43:1; Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 10:45; John 1:12; John 3:1-21; John 13:34-35; John 16:8-11; Romans 3:24-26; Romans 5:8; Romans 12-21; Romans 8:18-25; Romans 10:9-10; I Corinthians 1:18; II Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 1:5-10; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 1:13-14; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:12; Hebrews 5:7-9; Hebrews 9:15-28; Hebrews 11:6; I John 4:7-11; Revelation 5:9-10; Revelation 21:1-4.*

## **Article 6: Nature of the Church**

### **Called by God**

We believe the church is the people called by God through Jesus Christ. People who respond in faith are united with the local congregation by the public confession of baptism. Church members commit themselves to follow Christ in a life of discipleship and witness as empowered by the Holy Spirit.

### **Body of Christ**

The church is one body of believers, male and female, from every nation, race and class. The head of this body is Christ. The church, united by the one Spirit, makes Christ visible in the world. The church exists as local bodies of believers and as a worldwide community of faith.

### **Worship**

The church is nourished and renewed as God's people gather regularly to glorify God. The early church gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The worshipping community celebrates God's faithfulness and grace, reaffirms its faithfulness to God, builds up the members of the body, and seeks God's will for its life and mission. As the church observes baptism, and the Lord's Supper, it proclaims the good news of salvation.

### **Fellowship and Accountability**

The church is a covenant community in which members are mutually accountable in matters of faith and life. They love, care, and pray for each other, share each other's joys and burdens, admonish and correct one another. They share material resources as there is need. Local congregations follow the New Testament example by seeking the counsel of the wider church on matters that affect its common witness and mission. Congregations work together in a spirit of love, mutual submission, and interdependence.

The New Testament guides the practice of redemptive church discipline. The church is responsible to correct members who continue to sin. Congregations forgive and restore those who repent, but formally exclude those who disregard discipline.

### **Gifts for Ministry**

Through the Holy Spirit God gives gifts to each member for the well-being of the whole body. These gifts are to be exercised in God's service to build up the church and to minister in the world.

God calls people to equip the church for ministry. Leaders are to model Christ in their personal, family, and church life. The church is to discern leaders prayerfully, and to affirm, support, and correct them in a spirit of love.

*Matthew 16:13-20; Matthew 18:15-20; John 13:1-20; John 17:1-26; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 37-47; Acts 11:1-18; Acts 15:1-35; Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 5:1-8; I Corinthians 12-14; II Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 3:26-28; Galatians 6:1-5; Ephesians 1:18-23; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:4-6; Ephesians 11-16; I Thessalonians 5:22- 23; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; I Peter 2:9-12; I Peter 5:1-4.*

## **Article 7: Mission of the Church**

### **The Great Commission and the Great Commandment**

We believe the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people. Christ commands the church to make disciples of all nations by calling people to repent, and by baptizing and

teaching them to obey Jesus. Jesus teaches that disciples are to love God and neighbor by telling the good news and by doing acts of love and compassion.

### **The Witness**

The Holy Spirit empowers every Christian to witness to God's salvation. The church as a body witnesses to God's reign in the world. By its life as a redeemed and separated community the church reveals God's saving purposes to the world.

*Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 22:34-40; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 1:15; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16-18; II Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 3:10-11.*

## **Article 8: Christian Baptism**

### **Confession**

We believe that when people receive God's gift of salvation, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of having been cleansed from sin. It is a covenant with the church to walk in the way of Christ through the power of the Spirit.

### **Meaning**

Baptism by water is a public sign that a person has repented of sins, received forgiveness of sins, died with Christ to sin, been raised to newness of life and received the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of the believer's incorporation into the body of Christ as expressed in the local church. Baptism is also a pledge to serve Christ according to the gifts given to each person.

### **Eligibility**

Baptism is for those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commit themselves to follow Christ in obedience as members of the local church. Baptism is for those who understand its meaning, are able to be accountable to Christ and the church, and voluntarily request it on the basis of their faith response to Jesus Christ.

### **Practice**

We practice water baptism by immersion administered by the local church. Local congregations may receive into membership those who have been baptized by another mode on their confession of faith. Persons who claim baptism as infants and wish to become members of a Mennonite Brethren congregation are to receive baptism on their confession of faith.

*Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:2-6; I Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12-13; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:4-6.*



## **Article 9: Lord's Supper**

### **Meaning**

The church observes the Lord's Supper, as instituted by Christ. The Supper points to Christ, whose body was broken for us and whose blood was shed to assure salvation for believers and to establish the new covenant. In the Supper the church identifies with the life of Christ given for the redemption of humanity and proclaims the Lord's death until He comes. The Supper expresses the fellowship and unity of all believers with Christ. It is a supper of remembrance, celebration and praise which strengthens believers for true discipleship and service.

### **Practice**

In preparation for the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, all believers examine themselves. All those who understand its meaning, confess Jesus Christ as Lord in word and life, are accountable to their congregation and are living in right relationship with God and others are invited to participate in the Lord's Supper. The normal pattern in the New Testament was that baptism preceded participation in the Lord's Supper.

*Matthew 26:26-30; Acts 2:41-42; I Corinthians 10:16-17; I Corinthians 11:23-32.*

## **Article 10: Discipleship**

### **Following Jesus**

We believe that Jesus calls people who have experienced the joy of new birth to follow Him as disciples. By calling His followers to take up the cross, Christ invites them to reject the godless values of the world and offer themselves to God in a life of service. The Holy Spirit, who lives in every Christian, empowers believers to overcome the acts and attitudes of the sinful nature. Filled with love and gratitude, disciples delight to obey God.

### **United in a Distinct Community**

Christians enjoy fellowship with God and other believers. At baptism believers are joined to the local church, commit themselves to build up the body of Christ and witness to the good news of the Christian hope. In community members grow in maturity as they demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, use their spiritual gifts and practice mutual accountability in the disciplines of the Christian life. Christians confess sin, repent and experience God's grace in the life of the Christian community.

### **Demonstrating True Faith**

Jesus teaches that discipleship is the way of self-denial and promises blessing for those who

suffer for righteousness. Disciples are to resist worldly values and systems, the sinful nature and the devil. Disciples give generously and reject materialism which makes a god out of wealth. Disciples treat others with compassion and gentleness and reject violence as a response to injustice. Disciples speak honestly to build others up and reject dishonest, vulgar, and careless talk; they seek to avoid lawsuits to resolve personal grievances, especially with other believers. Disciples maintain sexual purity and marital faithfulness and reject immoral premarital and extramarital relationships and all homosexual practices. To be a disciple means to be true to Jesus in everyday life.

*Psalm 1; Psalm 119; Amos 5:24; Matthew 5-7; Matthew 18:15-20; Mark 8:34-38; John 8:31-32; John 13:34-35; John 15:14-15; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 1:24-32; Romans 8:1-30; Romans 12; I Corinthians 6:9-11; I Corinthians 11:1; I Corinthians 12:1-13; II Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 5:16-26; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-12, 15-16; Ephesians 5:1, 18; Philippians 2:6-8; Colossians 3:1-17; I Thessalonians 4:3-8; I Thessalonians 5:17; I Timothy 1:9-11; I Timothy 2:1-8; I Timothy 4:6-8; II Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 12:1-3; Hebrews 13:4-5; James 1:22-27; James 4:7; I Peter 2:20-25; I Peter 3:15; I Peter 5:8-9; I John 1:3; I John 6-9; I John 2:15-17.*

## **Article 11: Marriage, Singleness and Family**

We believe that marriage and the family are instituted by God. The church blesses both marriage and singleness and encourages families to grow in love.

### **Marriage**

Marriage is a covenant relationship intended to unite a man and a woman for life. At creation God designed marriage for companionship, sexual union and the birth and nurture of children. Sexual intimacy rightfully takes place only within marriage. Marriage is to be characterized by mutual love, faithfulness and submission. A believer should not marry an unbeliever.

The community of faith blesses and nurtures marriage relationships, and makes every effort to bring reconciliation to troubled marriages. Human sinfulness, however, may sometimes lead to divorce, a violation of God's intention for marriage. With truth and compassion the family of God offers hope and healing while continually upholding the biblical ideal of marital faithfulness.

### **Singleness**

Singleness is honored equally with marriage, sometimes even preferred. The church is to bless, respect and fully include those who are single. Those who remain single may find unique opportunities to advance the kingdom of God. God calls all people, single and married, to live

sexually pure lives.

## **Family**

God intends family relationships at all stages of life to be characterized by love. Children are a gift from God. Godly parents instruct and nurture their children in the faith. Parents are to discipline their children wisely and lovingly, not provoking them to anger. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:18-24; Genesis 5:1-2; Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 22:16-17; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Deuteronomy 6:4; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 31; Matthew 5:32; Matthew 10:34-39; Matthew 19:3-12; Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 3:31-35; Mark 7:9-13; Mark 10:6-11; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3; Romans 14:12; I Corinthians 7:8-40; II Corinthians 6:14-15; Ephesians 5:21-33; Ephesians 6:1-4; I Timothy 3:1-13; I Timothy 5:3-16; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7.*

## **Article 12: Society and State**

### **The State as Instituted by God**

We believe that God instituted the state to promote the well-being of all people. Christians cooperate with others in society to defend the weak, care for the poor, and promote justice, righteousness and truth. Believers witness against corruption, discrimination and injustice, exercise social responsibility, pay taxes, and obey all laws that do not conflict with the Word of God.

God has given governments authority to maintain law and order and to punish wrongdoers. Followers of Christ respect and pray for those in authority so that peaceful order may prevail. We deplore the loss of life in the exercise of state-sanctioned violence.

### **Christian Allegiance in Society**

The primary allegiance of all Christians is to Christ's kingdom, not the state or society. Because their citizenship is in heaven, Christians are called to resist the idolatrous temptation to give to the state the devotion that is owed to God. As ambassadors for Christ, Christians act as agents of reconciliation, and seek the well-being of all peoples.

Because Christ forbids the swearing of oaths, we simply affirm the truth in legal transactions. Believers do not participate in secret societies which demand the swearing of oaths or which otherwise conflict with a Christian's allegiance to Christ and the church. At all times believers are called to live as faithful witnesses in the world, rejecting pressures which threaten to compromise Christian integrity.

*Exodus 20:13, 16; Leviticus 19:11; Psalm 82:3-4; Jeremiah 29:7; Daniel 2:21; Daniel 3:17-18; Daniel 4:17; Matthew 5:13-16, 33-37; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 17:24-27; Matthew 22:17-21; John 15:19; John 17:14-18; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; I Corinthians 5:9-13; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:6-13; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 3:20; I Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-2; James 5:12; I Peter 2:13-17.*

## **Article 13: Love, Peacemaking and Reconciliation**

### **God's Community of Peace**

We believe that God in Christ reconciles people to Himself and to one another, making peace through the cross. The church is the fellowship of redeemed people living by love. The bond between followers of Jesus transcends all racial, social and national barriers.

### **Christian Peacemaking**

We actively pursue peace and reconciliation in all relationships by following Christ's example and His command to love God, neighbors and even enemies. We strive to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation in families, churches, communities, in our nation, and throughout the world.

As peacemakers we alleviate suffering, reduce strife, promote justice, and work to end violence and war, that others may see a demonstration of Christ's love. As in other Peace Churches many of us choose not to participate in the military, but rather in alternative forms of service.

Because Jesus is Lord, His example and teaching take priority over nationalism and the demands of human authorities.

*Exodus 20:1-17; Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:9, 17-26, 38-48; Romans 12:9-21, 13:8-10; II Corinthians 5:15-20; Ephesians 2:14-18; I Peter 2:19-23*

## **Article 14: The Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that all human life belongs to God. Each person is created in the image of God and ought to be celebrated and nurtured. Because God is creator, the author and giver of life, we oppose all actions and attitudes which devalue human life. The unborn, disabled, poor, aging and dying are particularly vulnerable to such injustices. Christ calls the people of all nations to care for the defenseless.

God values human life highly. Ultimate decisions regarding life and death belong to God.

Therefore, we hold that procedures designed to take life, including abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide, are an affront to God's sovereignty. We esteem the life-sustaining findings of

medical science, but recognize that there are limits to the value of seeking to sustain life indefinitely. In all complex ethical decisions regarding life and death, we seek to offer hope and healing, support and counsel in the context of the Christian community.

*Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Exodus 20:13; Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13-16; Amos 1-2; Matthew 6:25-27; Matthew 25:31-46; John 10:11.*

## **Article 15: Stewardship**

### **God's Creation Mandate**

We believe the universe and everything in it belong to God the Creator. God has entrusted the care of the earth to all people, who are responsible for managing its resources. Good stewardship uses the earth's abundance to meet human need, but resists the unjust exploitation of the earth and its peoples. All God's gifts are to be received with thanksgiving and used responsibly.

### **Responsible Living**

To confess Jesus as Lord transforms values. Jesus warns that we cannot serve both God and wealth. Preoccupation with money and possessions, self-indulgent living and eagerness to accumulate wealth for personal advantage are not in keeping with the teaching of Scripture.

### **Generous Giving**

The Bible teaches cheerful, sacrificial, and proportional giving through the church in grateful response to God's goodness. Christians do not claim any of their possessions as their own, but manage all their resources, including money, time, abilities and influence, in generous ways that give glory to God. They do not despise the poor but practice mutual aid within the church and share what they have with others in need. God's people seek to embrace a lifestyle of simplicity and contentment.

*Genesis 1:28; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 115:16; Proverbs 14:31; Amos 6:4-7; Malachi 3:6-10; Matthew 6:19-34; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 6:38; Luke 12:13-21; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-37; I Corinthians 4:7; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 6:7; Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 6:6-10; I Timothy 17-19; James 2:1-7, 15-16; James 5:1-6; I John 3:16-18; Jude 11.*

## **Article 16: Work, Rest and the Lord's Day**

We believe that God's act of creation is the model for human activity. While sin has corrupted work and rest, redeemed people are called to restore labor and rest to their proper place.

## **Work**

As creatures made in the image of God, Christians imitate the Creator by working faithfully as they are able. They are to use their abilities and resources to glorify God and to serve others. Because they bear the name of Christ, all believers are called to work honestly and diligently and to treat others with respect and dignity.

## **Rest**

As God rested on the seventh day, people are called to observe regular times of rest. Rest is an act of thankfulness for what God has provided. It is an act of trust, reminding humans that it is not their work but God who sustains them. Rest is an act of hope, anticipating the future rest assured by the resurrection of Jesus.

## **The Lord's Day**

Following the New Testament example, believers gather to commemorate the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week. On the Lord's Day, believers joyfully devote themselves to worship, instruction in the Word, prayer, breaking of bread, fellowship and service. They limit their labor to work of necessity and deeds of mercy.

*Genesis 1:26-2:3; Genesis 2:15; Genesis 3:14-19; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 25:1-7; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 95:6-11; Ecclesiastes 3:13; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 24:1-36; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:2; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 2:16-17; Colossians 3:22-4:1; II Thessalonians 3:6-10; Hebrews 4:1- 10; Hebrews 10:23-25; Revelation 1:10.*

## **Article 17: Christianity and Other Faiths**

### **Jesus Is the Only Way**

We believe that the saving grace of God in Jesus is the only means of reconciling humanity with God. Although salvation is available to all, only those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have the assurance of eternal life.

### **God's Universal Witness**

God has not left anyone without a witness to the Creator's goodness and power. Due to human rebellion, people have chosen to suppress the truth. While elements of truth may be found in other religions, Scripture warns against false teaching. Christians treat people of other faiths and philosophies with respect, but lovingly and urgently proclaim Christ as the only way of salvation for all peoples.

## **Sovereignty of God**

God loves the world and does not want anyone to perish. In sovereign grace God may communicate with people in ways that are beyond human comprehension. The Bible teaches that those who reject the gospel are under divine judgment; the eternal destiny of those who have never heard the gospel is in God's hands. Our task is to proclaim Christ as the only way of salvation to all people in all cultures. The Judge of all the earth will do what is just.

*Genesis 18:25; Psalm 19:2-4; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Isaiah 46:1-10; Isaiah 55:8-9; Ezekiel 33:1-20; Jonah 1-4; Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 25:31-46; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 9:51-56; Luke 12:47-48; John 1:12; John 3:16, 36; John 4:8-42; John 12:12-26; John 14:6; Acts 1:8; Acts 4:12; Acts 10:1-8; Acts 34-36; Acts 14:16-17; Acts 17:22-31; Romans 1:18-24; Romans 2:1-16; Romans 10:9-21; Romans 11:33-35; I Corinthians 3:11; I Corinthians 12:3; I Timothy 2:4-5; II Peter 3:9; Revelation 20:15.*

## **Article 18: Christ's Final Triumph**

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ will return visibly and triumphantly at the end of the present age. The church must always be prepared to meet the Lord, living in expectation of His imminent return.

### **The Last Days**

In these last days, between the first and second coming of Christ, the church carries out its mission in the world. Believers often endure suffering and persecution because of their witness to Christ. In spite of opposition by evil powers, the church is assured of the final victory of Christ's kingdom. These last days come to an end with Christ's return.

### **Death**

Since Christ destroyed the power of death by His resurrection, believers need not be afraid of death, the last enemy. Christ's followers go to be with the Lord when they die. When Christ returns they will be raised and receive new bodies. Believers who are alive at Christ's coming will be transformed and will also receive new and glorious bodies, fit for life in God's eternal kingdom.

### **Judgment**

When Christ returns He will destroy all evil powers, including the Antichrist. Satan and all those who have rejected Christ will be condemned to eternal punishment in hell, forever separated from the presence of God. Believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to have their lives examined and their labors rewarded. By God's grace they will enter into the joy of

God's eternal reign.

### **The New Creation**

All God's children will be united with Christ when He appears, and they will reign with Him in glory. Pain, sorrow and death will be abolished, and the redeemed will be gathered into the new heaven and new earth where together with the angels they will worship God forever. God will make all things new, and God will be all in all. This is the blessed hope of all believers.

*Matthew 24:29-31; Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 16:9; Luke 23:43; John 14:1-3; Acts 2:17; Romans 8:18-22; I Corinthians 3:13-15; I Corinthians 15:26; II Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 1:23; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Thessalonians 1:5-12; II Thessalonians 2:1-12; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 9:26-28; I Peter 1:20; I Peter 4:7; I John 2:18; I John 3:2-3; Revelation 19:17-21; Revelation 20:7-15; Revelation 21-22.*