



Statement of Faith

1994 (2017 REVISION)

Evangelical Mennonite Conference

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NOVEMBER 2017: The Statement of Faith Section was updated after a four-year long process of discussion and discernment. The new Statement of Faith retained the same thirteen articles, but each was updated to some degree. Also, the article on the Ordinances was modified by moving the ordinance of footwashing to a practice in the Church Practices Section.

A Statement of Faith Review Team was established by the Board of Leadership and Outreach in 2013 to give guidance to the review process. All EMC churches were invited to engage in the discussion through a series of study guides on the articles of faith, and a ministerial day with workshops in 2016 to review the revisions. The ministerial met in November 2016 to give approval to the revised Statement of Faith, and Conference Council gave final approval in November 2017.

We are grateful for the hard work and perseverance of the Review Team throughout this process. We give thanks to God for guiding the EMC Ministerial and Conference Council in these decisions. We have experienced the unity of the Church as we have grappled with the changes and sought to remain faithful to the Scriptures.

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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 Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the Word of God. Inspired by God and without error in all that it teaches, it is the final authority in matters of belief and conduct.

(Deut. 6:5-6; Josh. 1:8; Neh. 8:5-6; Ps. 119; Zech. 7:12; Matt. 5:18, 24:35; Mark 7:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21).

2. GOD

We believe in only one God, loving, holy, eternal and unchanging. God alone is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and Judge. God exists and reveals himself in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All persons in this Trinity are fully and equally God.

(Gen. 1:1; Deut. 6:4; Pss. 90:2; 96:10; 139:7-12, 147:5; Isa. 40:28, 44:6, 57:15; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:8, 12; 1 John 4:8)

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.

(Pss. 19:1-4, 47:1-9; Mal. 2:10; Matt. 6:9; John 3:16, 14:8-9; Acts 17:28; Rom. 1:20, 8:15; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 4:4-6)

2.2 GOD THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He became human, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He is fully God and fully human, tempted and 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 from the power of sin and to be reconciled to God.

He conquered the power of death by rising 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 until he comes again as King.

(Isa. 7:14, 53:5-6; Matt. 1:20-23, 28:6; John 1:1-4, 14; Acts 1:10-11; Rom. 3:25-26, 5:8-10, 6:6-8, 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:20, 55-57; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:14, 4:15, 7:25)

2.3 GOD THE SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit exists eternally as one of the persons of the Trinity, equal with the Father and the Son. He convicts the world of sin, of God's righteousness, and of coming judgment. The Spirit comes to live within every believer from the time of salvation giving assurance of salvation. He encourages, comforts, intercedes, and guides God's people into the truth. The Spirit empowers and equips believers for kingdom service through the giving of spiritual gifts to each one. He enables believers to grow in holiness and to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

(Gen. 1:1-2; John 16:7-8, 13; Acts 1:8, 5:3-4; Rom. 8:9, 26; 1 Cor. 3:16, 12:4-11; Gal. 4:6, 5:22-23; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:11-13)

3. THE CREATION

We believe that God created the world, as revealed in the Bible, and that nothing exists apart from what God has made.

(Gen. 1-2; Exod. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Job 38-39; Pss. 8, 33:6-9, 136:5-9; Mark 10:6; John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Rom. 11:33-36; Heb. 1:1-3; Jer. 10:12-13; Rev. 4:11)

4. THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN BEINGS

We believe that God created human beings, both male and female, in his own image. Therefore every human life is sacred from conception to death, and must be protected regardless of age, ability or stage of development.

(Gen. 1:26-27, 2:7; Ex. 20:12-17; Ps. 139:13-16; Acts 17:24-29; Gal. 3:28)

5. THE FALL OF THE HUMAN RACE

We believe our first parents, Adam and Eve, through unbelief in God's goodness and disobedience to his command, by their free choice brought themselves and the whole human race into a state of sin and separation from God. This act resulted in death, corrupting our relationship with God, with each other and with the whole creation.

(Gen. 1:26-27, 2:7, 16-17, 3:1-24; John 6:44; Rom. 3:23, 5:12; Eph. 2:1-10)

6. SATAN

We believe that Satan is a real spirit being, not simply the personification of evil. He is a fallen angel who rules over the kingdom of all evil, opposing God and seeking to destroy humankind.

(Gen. 3:1-5; Job 1-2; 1 Pet. 5:8-9)

Satan is the father of lies, masquerades as an angel of light, and leads the world astray. However, through faith in Christ and the power of the Spirit we can resist him.

The destiny of Satan will be the eternal lake of fire, which God prepared for him and his angels.

(Matt. 4:1-11, 25:41; Luke 10:17-21; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:14; Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 1:13, 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:14; James 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12, 20:7-10)

7. SALVATION

We believe people are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The basis of this salvation is Christ's life, teaching, his atoning death and his resurrection. Justification, the new birth and the trans-formed life are experienced through repentance and faith in Christ. His atonement is sufficient for all, and all are invited to accept the free gift of salvation.

(Isa. 53:4-6; Matt. 18:1-14; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 24:47; John 1:9-13; 3:3-8, 15-18, 14:6; Acts 4:12, 20:21; Eph. 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 away. Faith and obedience are essential in maintaining this assurance and growth in grace.

(John 8:31-32; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:10-14; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-9; 1 John 3:14, 5:11-13)

8. DISCIPLESHIP

We believe that our relationship to Jesus Christ is to be an unconditional commitment to discipleship. Discipleship is the total life of the believer lived in community and patterned after the life, teaching, death and resurrection of our Lord.

(Matt. 4:16-22, 28:19-20; Mark 8:34-35; Acts 11:26; Rom. 12:1-2, 7-12, 13:8-14; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 1:1-10, 4:32-5:2; Col. 3:1-17; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 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 Christians committed to love and nonviolence, we may not participate in or support anything that will violate this life of peace.

We should do whatever we can to lessen human distress and suffering, even at the risk of our own lives. In all relationships, we should be peace makers and ministers of reconciliation.

(Isa. 53:3-9; Matt. 5-7; Mark 9:50; John 18:36; Rom. 12-13; Eph. 2:14-18; Phil. 2:3-4; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 2:9, 20-23)

10. THE CHURCH

We believe all who have experienced new life in Christ belong to his body, the church, of which he is the head. All who repent of sin and make a commitment to Jesus Christ by faith are baptized into his church by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

(Matt. 16:18, 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8, 2:38-39, 42-47; 1 Cor. 12; Gal. 3:25-29; Eph. 1:19-23, 4:1-6, 11-16; Col. 1:18)

We believe the church is the visible expression of his body. God calls the church ...

- To grow in maturity to be like Christ;
- To care for fellow believers;
- To gather the believers together in fellowship;
- To worship God through Christ;
- To make disciples through teaching God's Word;
- And to share the love of God in word and deed with all people.

(Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 6:1-2; Col. 3:12-17; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 2:4-10; 1 John 3:16-18)

11. THE ORDINANCES

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

We believe Christ instituted two ordinances: water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

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 following a personal

recognition of and repentance from sin, and acceptance of 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.

(Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36-47, 10:47-48, 18:8, 22:16; Rom. 6:1-4; 1 Cor. 12:13, Titus 3:5-6)

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.

The Lord's Supper, also called communion, involves fellowship, self-examination, and thanksgiving. Christians should examine their own relationship to God and to other people before participating in this commemoration.

(Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:17-34; Eph. 2:11-22)

12. THE RESURRECTION

We believe Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead. When he returns, all, believers and unbelievers, will be raised bodily from the dead as well, the believers to the resurrection of life, and the unbelievers to the resurrection of condemnation.

We also believe that those in Christ, at the time of death, enter into the presence of their Lord.

(Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:29-32, Luke 16:19-31, 23:43; John 5:28-29, 20:20, 24-29; Acts 24:15; Rom. 8:19-23, 1 Cor. 15; Phil. 1:19-26; 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Rev. 20:11-15)

13. THE RETURN AND FINAL TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

We believe in the visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. When He returns in glory, He will judge the living and the

dead. Those who died in Christ will be raised to join living believers to reign with Him forever in a new heaven and new earth. The unrighteous will suffer eternal hell in separation from God.

In Christ's final triumph, Satan and his angels will be thrown into the lake of fire prepared for them from the beginning. All rulers, powers and authorities will be brought into subjection, and death, the last enemy, will be destroyed. God will reign supreme. This is the blessed hope of the church.

(Matt. 25:31-46; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:11; Rom. 8:12-15; 1 Cor. 15:24; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20-22)