

Meadville Mennonite Chapel  
Statement of Faith

Our faith is more than statements of truth that we acknowledge. *Being Christian* means belonging to Christ, a relationship and lifestyle that affect every aspect of our lives. These statements summarize beliefs we hold in common as a group of believers committed to our Lord and to one another.

- I. We believe in one true eternal God who exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God exists as creator and sustainer of all things. Fully divine and fully human, Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died to redeem mankind from their sinful state, arose from the dead and ascended to the Father, where He intercedes for believers and offers them His empowering grace. The Holy Spirit works in the world to convict men of sin and dwells in believers to comfort and guide into all truth.<sup>1</sup>
- II. We believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the entire Bible and it is the Word of God to man. We embrace the Bible, as interpreted by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, as the authority for Christian living.<sup>2</sup>
- III. We believe that Satan was created an angelic being but fell from grace and became the enemy of God and His Creation. He is attempting to promote evil and to deceive and destroy both believers and unbelievers.<sup>3</sup>
- IV. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and depravity by choosing to reject the known will of God. That rebellion against God introduced sin, sorrow, and spiritual and natural death, the ongoing heritage of all men and women.<sup>4</sup>
- V. We believe that any person may be saved by accepting the mercy and grace of God through faith in the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ. Faith and repentance are necessary for salvation, and they produce good works in the life of the believer. Christ maintains the salvation of those who trust and follow Him in obedience. We embrace the historic Anabaptist understanding of Christianity that emphasizes faith, repentance, discipleship, unselfish living, and the application of the Word to daily life.<sup>5</sup>
- VI. We believe that confessing believers shall be baptized with water upon their confession of faith and clear testimony of new life in Christ. Water baptism is an outward confession of an inner reality of cleansing and transformation, as well as a means of making God's grace known to the believer.<sup>6</sup>
- VII. We believe that young children are loved by God and belong to Him in their childhood innocence. As they mature and develop awareness of inherent sin and their need of a Savior, they may be led to repentance and receive baptism into the body of believers upon their confession of faith.<sup>7</sup>
- VIII. We believe that the church is the body of Christ, including saints of all ages and cultures in whom God dwells. The mission of the church is to expand the Kingdom of God, to disciple believers, and to present Christ to the lost. Believers form local committed brotherhoods that encourage, instruct and disciple God's people toward purity and spiritual growth. These congregations are responsible to discern and maintain scriptural standards of faith and practice, appoint leaders, affirm the application of new members, and affirm the participation of those who desire to commune with them. Discipleship

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 1, 3:15; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 46:9; Matt. 1:23; Luke 2:7, 24:1-8, 50-51; John 1:14, 3:15, 10:30, 14:16-18, 15:26, 16:7-14, 16:28; Acts 14:15; Rom. 5:18, 8:32, 11:36; Gal 4:6; Col. 1:12-20, 2:14; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:6, 10:5, 11:6; I John 3:8, 5:7-13.

<sup>2</sup> Joh 5:39-40, 15:12-17; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Jas 1:21-25; 2 Peter 1:15-21.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 14:12-15; Jn 8:44; 2 Cor 11:13-15; 1 Pet 5:8-9; 2 Pet 2:4; 1 Jn 3:8; Rev 12:7-9.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 1:26-27, 3:6, 23; Rom. 5:12, 18.

<sup>5</sup> John 7:38, Acts 2:38-39; Eph. 1:3-14, 4:20-24; Heb. 10:22-25.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 8:16; 9:18; 10:47; 16:33; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Mt 18:2-6, 10-14; Mark 10:13-16; 2 Tim 3:14-15.

considers the condition of the heart and the resultant behavior as a reflection of the heart. If a member living in sin refuses to hear the appeals of the congregation, the body of believers must set such a member outside fellowship for the purity of the church and the redemption of the erring one's soul.<sup>8</sup>

- IX. We believe that the Lord instructed the church to appoint qualified leadership. We choose to ordain a pastoral team from the local congregation with one member designated by the congregation as head pastor or bishop. These ministers are responsible to feed, nurture, and lead the congregation. We respect the counsel of faithful older brothers in the church in guiding the life of the congregation.<sup>9</sup>
- X. We believe that communion—as a remembrance of Jesus' broken body and shed blood and a celebration of the common union we share in Christ—is to be enjoyed by those believers who testify of a clear conscience before God and who are willing to submit themselves to the counsel of the brotherhood. Testimony shall be given in a public setting prior to communion.<sup>10</sup>
- XI. We believe that washing the feet of fellow believers is an example of Christ to imitate, as he also commanded, as a sign of true humility and a reminder of the washing that Christ offers us through His blood, making our souls pure.<sup>11</sup>
- XII. We believe the scriptures call for anointing the sick with oil in faith that God can and does heal. In His wisdom He may choose to bring healing through natural or supernatural means, or not at all. Those who are ill are encouraged to request anointing and prayer for divine healing.<sup>12</sup>
- XIII. We believe as Christ received us, we are to receive one another as brothers and sisters in the family of God. We express our love for each other in many ways, including hospitality, mutual aid, serving, washing one another's feet, sharing our lives with one another, and greetings of peace such as the holy kiss or an embrace.<sup>13</sup>
- XIV. We believe that God created men and women with equal value and dignity, together reflecting the complete image of God. The genders are unique, complementary in function, each with gifts to develop and offer within the church. The New Testament teaches that men should provide servant leadership, teaching and preaching in the mixed assembly, and involving the entire congregation in decision-making. Both men and women edify each other through praying and prophesying, congregational worship and fellowship, and training of the next generation.
- XV. We believe that those who trust in Christ have been transplanted from the Kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God, making them strangers and pilgrims in this world. They do not pattern themselves after the unredeemed ideals, values, attitudes, and practices of the lost world. Instead they live in the world as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup>
- XVI. We believe that believers who die are present with Christ and that unbelievers consciously suffer in a place of torment. Upon Christ's return both righteous and wicked persons will experience a bodily resurrection, the righteous to the resurrection of life and the unrighteous to the resurrection of damnation. We believe heaven is a place of eternal bliss in the presence of God and hell is a place of eternal torment and separation from God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I Cor. 12; I Pet. 2:9; Eph. 2:19-21; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 28:20; II Cor. 6:16; I Cor. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. 4:10-12; I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Titus 2:1-2; II Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 4:14-16; Acts 6:3-6; 1 Thes. 5:12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; I Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-34.

<sup>11</sup> John 13:4-17; I Tim. 5:10.

<sup>12</sup> James 5:14-18; Mark 6:13, 16:18

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 4:4-6; Rom. 15:7, 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Gal. 2:9; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14

<sup>14</sup> Col 1:12-14; Phil 2:14-15; Titus 2:11-14; I Pet 2:1-12; Heb 11:13-16; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jn 17:14-19.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 22:30, 31; Dan. 12:12; Job 19:26, 27; Matt. 25:31; John 5:28; II Cor. 5:10; I Cor. 15; Rev. 20:12; I Thess. 4:15; I Cor. 2:9; Mark 9:44; Rev. 14:11.

XVII. We believe that the civil government is ordained of God to maintain order in society and that it is the Christian's duty to honor and pray for those in authority. Believers love all men and resist evil without the use of carnal force, following Christ's example of overcoming evil through suffering love. They influence and bless society with Christ-like compassion for the oppressed and holy living in the midst of an immoral generation.<sup>16</sup>

XVIII. We believe that God established marriage as a holy life-long partnership between one man and one woman for companionship and the continuance of the human race. Only those free from all previous engagements or marriage commitments may enter matrimony. Marriage in the Christian community is for those who have committed themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to a body of believers who know and seek the Lord in daily life. God has called the husband to lead as well as love and cherish his wife, and the wife to submit to and honor her husband. God's charge to fathers gives men primary responsibility to guide their homes in righteousness. The church supports the home in developing Christian character and principles.<sup>17</sup>

XIX. We believe the teaching of scripture and tradition of the early church regarding the sisters' veiling. Sisters wear the veil both to reserve the glory of their hair in public and to signify their acceptance of their role in God's order of headship, a powerful sign to angelic beings.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:17; Matt. 22:21; 17:27; I Tim. 2:1; Matt. 5:39, 44; Rom. 12:14; I Pet. 3:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3; Zech. 9:8-9; Matt. 5:39; Rom. 12:19-20; II Cor. 4:2; Matt. 7:12.

<sup>17</sup> Gen. 1:27; Mark 10:4; II Cor. 7:2; I Cor. 9:5; Gen. 24:4; 28:2; I Cor. 7:39.

<sup>18</sup> I Cor 11:1-16; Eph 5:22-33.

## Statement of Practice

Historically godly communities have applied the Word of God to their lives in many different ways. Guidelines do not offer spiritual life, nor does strictly following a code of behavior change one's heart before God. We present these statements as expressing applications of Biblical teaching that we hold in common. We do not intend to state all applications, believing that faith in God will find expression in various ways in the lives of individuals and families.

- I. Conformity to Christ begins with a transformed nature and a heart desire to identify with Jesus and His people. Our choices for attire and appearance are guided by our values of simplicity, humility, modesty and identity. In the care and keeping of our bodies, we present the gospel in attractive, compelling ways without drawing undue attention to our personal appearance.
  - a. Men's short hair and unveiled head reflect the glory of Christ, while women's long hair and veiled head acknowledge the headship of men. Women wear their long hair put up in a simple style and covered by an opaque hanging cloth veiling or a cap-style covering.
  - b. On formal occasions men wear plain suits or other formal attire without neckties to identify with conservative Mennonite groups with whom we enjoy fellowship. For public attire, sleeves are long enough to reach near the elbow, and pants are full-length.
  - c. Women wear a modest cape dress or a loose-fitting cloth vest, jacket, or sweater over a long, loose-fitting dress or jumper. For public attire, sleeves are long enough to reach near the elbow, and dresses are long enough to reach at least halfway between the knee and the ankle.
  - d. Neither men nor women wear jewelry, decorative cosmetics or faddish hairstyles.
- II. We affirm and embrace our musical heritage of congregational a cappella singing in harmony. We desire to practice music among us in a way that worships God and builds the community, that our souls and spirits might be enlivened. We believe that music should be aesthetically pleasing, lyrics should be true and honest, and that the combination of the two should be redemptive. We encourage our members to train their ears and hearts to enjoy and express music that is excellent and orderly.
- III. We recognize the potential of electronic media such as television, video, radio, and the Internet for both good and evil. While we recognize their legitimate uses, we also recognize the need for self-control and wisdom in using such tools. In using any media, we pursue those things that are noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and worthy of praise, guarding our hearts as the wellspring of life. We value personal discernment, open discussion and brotherly accountability as safeguards against the corrupting influences of these media.<sup>19</sup>

We affirm the priority of family values and needs, including protecting the innocence of children and affirming the loving authority of parents. We value and submit to corporate discernment in hearing the Holy Spirit's guidance regarding media.

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<sup>19</sup> Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 4:23