

A watercolor illustration of a butterfly with orange, red, and purple wings, positioned in the upper right corner of the page.

the
christian

a practical
study guide

life

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Introduction

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a Christian. To know meaning in life, the grace of wrongs forgiven, to have hope on earth and life after death—that is our delight through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1–2 NIV).

In the 16th century, a follower of Jesus Christ often highlighted this verse: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). That follower was Menno Simons (1496–1561), a Dutch priest turned Evangelical Anabaptist, from whom Mennonites get their name.

The purpose of *The Christian Life: a practical study guide* is to help you to explore the basic teachings and practices of our faith. We trust that teachers and students will find the materials useful. We have deliberately placed more materials in each of the lessons than can be included in class time. How students and teachers delve into the materials is only limited by their creativity, time, and interest.

This guide is based on a booklet *That I May Know Him* that the EMC published in 1967. It was expanded and became this guide in 1985. In 1995 the guide was again revised and expanded, becoming a joint publication of the EMC and the EMMC. In 2019 the Christian Mennonite Conference, whose ministers have used the material, added its story and statement of faith.

Key people in putting together this guide were Edwin Friesen, Walter Reimer, John Stoesz, Ron Kroeker, Martha Kroeker, Dr. Stan Hamm, Betty Koop, Cameron McKenzie (all EMC) and Henry Dueck, Art Friesen, Gary Klassen, and David Penner (all EMMC).

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Our Anabaptist Heritage

Introduction

The book before you is called *The Christian Life*. It describes and explains beliefs and practices held in common by many Christians. As such, it will be helpful for anybody who wishes more clearly to understand what Christians believe, and how Christians live. But there is no such thing as a generic Christian. Every Christian belongs to a specific group of Christians, a group that has its own particular way of expressing its understanding of Christianity and the Christian life.

There are many ways to describe these different groups. We may use names like Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant to describe the major groupings of Christians in the world. Within the Protestant world we talk about denominations, conferences and conventions when describing the smaller bodies of Christians. Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Mennonite are all examples of these distinct groups of Protestant Christians. Each of these groups shares a belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and each of these groups confesses that salvation is a gift of God's grace to those who believe. That is, to those who accept by faith the fact that Jesus died, was buried and rose again and because of this they can have their sins forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life; at the same time, as each of these groups faithfully read the Bible and seek to understand its message, they arrive at different answers to many of the questions that come to Christians: What is the Church? How should the Church operate and govern itself? What are the sacraments? When should a person be baptized? How are Christians to live "in the world" without being "of the world?" How does the Church and its members relate to society, government and politics?

The fact that you have this book means that you probably are part of a Mennonite Church, or you have a Christian friend who is. So then, this book is going to describe what a Christian is and how a Christian lives from the perspective of the Mennonite tradition. It will answer many of the above questions, and it will do so by exploring what we as Mennonites have learned from studying the Bible together with each other, and what we have learned in conversation with many of the other Christians groups mentioned earlier.

In order to help you appreciate this Mennonite or this Anabaptist perspective as it is sometimes known, let's begin our study by exploring who the Mennonites are, where we came from, what we believe, and how

our reading of the Bible has influenced the ways in which we describe and interpret the Christian Life.

A. History

The Church was established by Jesus Christ, through the ministry of his disciples, the apostles. His followers showed their unreserved commitment to Him and His message. His disciples recognized Him as the Son of God, and the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. His teaching and works were marked by divine authority.

The teaching of Jesus made a life-changing impact on the people of His time. By preaching and passionate sharing of the gospel message the disciples of Christ led many to an understanding and acceptance of it. Committing themselves to it, the people were radically transformed in their religion and lifestyle.

In spite of persecutions under various Roman emperors, the Christian movement became a dominant force in the empire. In fact, after Constantine gave legal status to Christianity in 313 A.D, it eventually became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Both the church and the state were powerful and all-embracing institutions. A person had no choice in either; at birth he became a member of both. Disloyalty to the church was heresy and the penalty could be death. Disloyalty to the state was treason, also punishable by death. In practice the church and state often worked as one.

Various false teachings regarding the person and ministry of Christ at times challenged the church. Church Councils of Bishops dealt with these and defined the Christian faith in the form of creeds.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, the Christian movement lost its fervor. The reality of the life and teachings of Jesus faded to a nominal influence. Pious monks, however, continued to study the Scriptures. Also, there were groups of Christians who kept calling the church back to the teachings of its founder, Jesus Christ.

By 1525 there were several movements challenging some of the teachings and practices of the established church. Martin Luther and John Calvin were noted reformers. They attempted to reform the church from within, without separating the church and the state.

Meanwhile, Huldreich Zwingli, a preacher in Switzerland, was a serious student of the Bible and preached justification by faith. Among his followers were Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and George Blaurock, who also felt that the church did not live up to the Biblical model. In fact, they wanted to reform the church more completely than the other reformers did. They believed in a free church, one not ruled by the state, but committed to the Scriptures.

They defined the church to be made up of those who believed in Jesus Christ and voluntarily chose to follow Him in obedience to His teachings. They demonstrated their commitment to Him by being baptized. They were called “Anabaptists” which means “rebaptizers”.

In 1525 the Zurich town council issued an order that these men and their followers stop meeting for Bible study and immediately baptize their children. Failing to obey would mean arrest. After a lengthy prayer meeting they decided to obey God rather than men. They proceeded to baptize each other. This was the birth of the Anabaptist movement later also called “Mennonite.” Many died for their new-found faith.

At the same time Menno Simons left the priesthood and joined the Anabaptists in Holland and Northern Germany. He soon became the strong leader of these north European Anabaptists. His influence was so wide that they began to call the Anabaptists “Mennonites.” Menno preached the Word of God as he understood it. His teachings included a strong emphasis on obedience to the teachings of the New Testament. Nonviolence, love in social relationships, and a life worthy of Jesus Christ were emphasized. People were baptized as a symbol of their faith in Jesus Christ, their commitment to obey His words and their identification with the church.

The two strains of Anabaptists (Mennonites) continued their independent development. They had some meetings, trying to work together. No formal union was formed, however. The Swiss-South German Mennonites continued their work. Many migrated to the USA and from there to Canada. In the New World they continued to live their faith. The Dutch-North German Mennonites moved to the Danzig (modern Poland) area, from there to Russia and from there to North America and South America.

The various Mennonite bodies have been finding each other and are learning to understand each other. Various groups are engaging in several cooperative efforts in the area of missions, education and Mennonite Central Committee, a world-wide relief and development agency.

When the people who identified with Menno Simons during the 16th century reformation were called “Mennists,” it was a derogatory nickname given by those who despised Menno’s position on baptism for adult believers, Christian non-violence, and a pure believers church. Persecution scattered these Dutch and Swiss Mennonites to other European countries and many came to North and South America in search of religious freedom. Through the migration and missionary efforts of the Mennonites there are some 75,000 Mennonite churches around the world, worshipping in dozens of different languages.

The Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) was born in 1812 in Russia when Klaas Reimer, with a few followers, broke with the larger Mennonite church. This new group was called *Kleine Gemeinde* (small church) in contrast to the large church. It grew very slowly.

In 1874 the whole EMC group moved to Canada and the USA. The USA group seceded in the 1940s. In Canada the *Kleine Gemeinde* changed to the *Evangelical Mennonite Conference*. (For a more detailed description of the EMC see chapter 12.)

The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference began in 1937 in southern Manitoba when 1,100 members separated from the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church. They were descendants of Mennonites from the Bergthal colony in Russia who immigrated to Canada in the 1870s. The group, organized in the community of Rudnerweide, took the name *Rudnerweider Mennonite Church*, with Rev. W.H. Falk as its first bishop.

In 1959 the Rudnerweider churches organized in a Conference structure as the *Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference* (EMMC). (For a more detailed description of the EMMC see chapter 13.)

B. Doctrine

The faith of the Mennonites was an active one. They outlined their beliefs as they understood Scriptures and then tried to live these truths in daily life.

1. DOCTRINES EMPHASIZED BY THE ANABAPTISTS

Through the serious, corporate study of the Scriptures, the Anabaptists recaptured a vision for the teaching and life of the New Testament church. They understood this to be based upon the priority of the life and teachings of Jesus. These teachings also influenced other reformation groups and today you will find most of these beliefs held by other evangelicals as well.

a) Conversion. Conversion is necessary to becoming a Christian. Though God's grace precedes all human acts of faith, and, indeed, makes such acts of faith possible for sinful human beings, people must accept Christ's death and resurrection by faith, and commit themselves to a life of obedience to the scriptures, under the lordship of Jesus Christ (*John 1:12, Romans 10:9*).

b) Adult Believer's Baptism. Baptism is a symbol and an initiation rite. It is to be administered only to those who are old enough to accept Christ by faith. Baptism is a symbol of the believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*). It is also a symbol of the inner cleansing and the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38*). Because baptism is a sign of the new birth [an outward

sign of an inward change], it can only be administered to those who can bear witness to their experience of re-birth.

c) Believers' Church Membership. Anabaptists believe that the church includes those who have experienced spiritual re-birth by the exercise of faith in Jesus, His death, and His resurrection, and who are living a transformed life. To the Anabaptists, the church is a select group, keeping itself separated from the world. The Anabaptist reformers followed the example of the Church in the book of Acts, in which a person becomes a part of the church through the process of conversion and baptism (*Acts 2:41*). The Church is thus a body of believers, who by choice have entered into the new covenant community.

d) Separation. The church is separate from the state. This more than any doctrine captures the heart of the Anabaptist reformation. This was a crucial doctrine, especially in the 16th century when the concept of a free church was virtually unknown; to be born and baptized was to be a citizen of the church and the state simultaneously. But the New Testament teaches that Christians belong to a kingdom not of this world (*John 18:36*). In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul clearly teaches the Christian's moral responsibility to respect human governments, but does so while maintaining a clear distinction between the Church and State. In Romans 12, speaking to Christians, Paul addresses his audience as "we" and "us." In Romans 13, speaking of the state, Paul addresses the members of human government as "they" and "them." This is consistent with the New Testament's teaching on the relationship between the Church and the world. The New Testament teaches a two-kingdom view of society. The state embraces all the population of a given geographic area; it is political in nature and rules by force; its "king" is the head; its task is to preserve law and order. The church is made up of true believers in Christ. The church is spiritual in character and is ruled by love; Christ is its head; its task is to proclaim the Gospel. The state cannot dictate to the church what it should believe. The church is Christ's body and therefore He is her Lord. While Christians live as citizens of the state, they consciously embrace a pattern of behavior and relationships modeled on the example of Jesus and the teachings of scripture as a whole (*Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 1 Peter 2:11f*).

e) Discipleship. Being a Christian involves more than mere acceptance of the right beliefs. Faith implies a life lived out in faith. A Christian is one who obeys Christ, who lives a life of discipleship. You cannot know Christ truly unless you follow Him daily in life. Faith and living are inseparable. To be a Christian means you are a disciple of Christ (*Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26*).

f) The Way of Love. Perhaps the most widely known belief of the Anabaptists is that the believer is to walk in love towards all. Commonly this is called the doctrine of non-resistance. The Anabaptists believe that the Bible teaches that we are to walk in love in all relationships. We are to love our enemies and bless those who curse us. In its being and in its witness the church makes a commitment to a nonviolent way of life. This commitment is based on the teaching and example of Jesus and on an understanding of the nature of the church as the body of Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17–21*). Christians do not participate in human warfare. If threatened by violence, Christians do not resist evil or return evil for evil, but through non-resistance seek for reconciliation (*1 Peter 2:23*). This is because Christians are called to love their enemies and do good to those who hate them (*Matthew 5:38–48*). Christians have an obligation to uphold the way of peace, justice and nonviolence before all people and to pray that the kingdom of God will come with peace for the whole earth.

g) Church Discipline. The Anabaptists believe that the church has a responsibility as a community to help each other live faithfully as disciples of Jesus. Historically, the Anabaptists identified this as church discipline. The purpose of church discipline is not to punish or hurt wrongdoers in the Church. Instead, church discipline is to be redemptive and restorative. It involves teaching, modeling, mentoring, counseling, exhorting, and, in limited, extreme cases, expulsion from the fellowship, all directed to the goal of restoring broken and often hurting brothers and sisters to a healthy, joyful path of discipleship, and to the fellowship of the Church (*Matthew 18:15–20; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; Galatians 6:1–5; James 5:19–20*).

h) The Non-Swearing of Oaths (*Matthew 5:33–37; James 5:12*). The idea that appealing to God's name through an oath can somehow make our words more truthful implies that without such an oath our words cannot be trusted. To even suggest that followers of Jesus need special incentives to tell the truth is an insult to God. The declarations of a follower of Jesus must always be characterized by truthfulness. In Canada, the law makes provision for people, who because of conscience are not prepared to swear an oath, to make a simple affirmation of their intention to tell the truth.

COMMON DOCTRINES

The Mennonites, in particular the EMC and EMMC, hold many of the same doctrinal beliefs that other evangelical Christians do. They include:

- a) The Bible is the inspired revelation of God and the only rule for faith and conduct.

- b) Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became a human being to die for the sins of the world.
- c) Humankind is saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.
- d) Christ is coming again.
- e) The final destiny of humankind is heaven or hell.

Conclusion

Most of the early Anabaptists were either Swiss-South German or Dutch-North German people. (The EMC and EMMC trace their roots to the Dutch-North German people). As the Anabaptists (Mennonites) migrated and shared the gospel, people of many lands and nationalities professed faith in Jesus Christ and joined the Mennonites in a life of worship, discipleship and service. Today there are large contingents of Mennonite churches in Africa, India, Europe, Latin and North America. They speak dozens of different languages, yet have a common bond of faith and fellowship.

The early Anabaptist leaders gave witness to the love and power of God in their generation. They took the Bible seriously and sought to pattern their lives after the Master. Let us do the same.



Let's Talk it Over

1. As you examine your life, can you point out things that you do because they have been passed on to you from your parents? Are these important things?
2. Are the emphases that are considered unique to the Anabaptist tradition Biblical?
3. How do you apply the way of love in a competitive society? For example, how does it affect playing hockey?

FOR FURTHER READING

Augsburger, Myron S., *Pilgrim Aflame*. Herald Press, 1967.

This historical novel of the life of Michael Sattler illustrates the courage and endurance of the early Anabaptist. Sattler was burned to death in 1527 after two years as an Anabaptist.

Wenger, J.C., *How Mennonites Came to Be*. Herald Press, 1977.

This booklet describes the living faith of the Mennonites and its New Testament roots. The lifestyle and convictions which flow from this faith will inspire the reader.

Wenger, J.C., *What Mennonites Believe*. Herald Press, 1977.

The central truths of the Christian faith—hope, fellowship, love, peace, discipleship—are clearly described.

God Reveals Himself to Us

Key Verse: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge” (Psalm 19:1–2).

All that we know about God has been revealed at His initiative. Though people, as human beings, can never fully understand God, yet God has in various ways shown us what He is like. He has also shown us how people should relate to Him and to each other.

A. God Reveals Himself through the Bible

The Bible is the primary source of our knowledge of God and His relationship to His creation. It is God’s message to the human race.

1. THE FORMATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a unique book. In a special way, referred to as “inspiration,” God guided approximately forty different authors who wrote over a period of at least fifteen hundred years to record a unified message from God to humankind. At times God gave His message directly to the authors (*Exodus 20:1–20*) while at other times the writers observed and recorded God’s acts in their lives and in history (*Hebrews 11:1–40*).

By the first century A.D. there was a distinct collection of Old Testament writings which Christ, as well as the Jewish people, regarded as Scriptures (*Matthew 5:17–18; Luke 16:16–17*). Jesus as the Messiah was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, validating them as God’s Word.

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament may be grouped as follows:

HISTORICAL

Genesis	Joshua	Ezra
Exodus	Judges	Nehemiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Esther
Numbers	1 Samuel	
Deuteronomy	2 Samuel	
	1 Kings	
	2 Kings	
	1 Chronicles	
	2 Chronicles	

POETICAL

<p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon</p>

	PROPHETICAL	
<p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel</p>	<p>Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah</p>	<p>Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>

By the end of the first century copies of most of the New Testament writings were being circulated among the churches (*Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27*). These were regarded as an authentic record of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and instructions for the Christian life.

To determine which writings should be regarded as God-inspired the church asked questions such as: a) Does the book claim to be of God? b) Was it written by a servant of God? (*2 Thessalonians 2:2*) c) Does it tell the truth about God, humans, etc.? d) Does it possess the life-transforming power of God? e) Do the people of God, for whom it was originally written, recognize it as being from God?

As the New Testament church proclaimed the gospel to people of other languages they needed to know which New Testament writings were of God so that these could be translated. The new believers experienced persecution and they had to decide which was God's Word for which they would be willing to suffer. Heretical teachings needed to be confronted and corrected. These and other events were used of God to guide the church in deciding which writings constituted the New Testament.

The early church fathers (75–300 A.D) quoted the New Testament writings extensively in their correspondence. They listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament and regarded these as divinely inspired.

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament may be grouped as follows:

HISTORY	PAULINE EPISTLES		GENERAL EPISTLES	PROPHECY
Matthew	Romans	1 Thessalonians	Hebrews	Revelation
Mark	1 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians	James	
Luke	2 Corinthians	1 Timothy	1 Peter	
John	Galatians	2 Timothy	2 Peter	
Acts	Ephesians	Titus	1 John	
	Philippians	Philemon	2 John	
	Colossians		3 John	
			Jude	

2. THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, which was the primary language of the Israelites. Some sections were also written in Aramaic. Around 280 B.C seventy scholars were assigned to translate these Old Testament writings into Greek. This became known as the Septuagint. Greek was rapidly becoming an international language and by the time the New Testament documents were written the use of Greek was widespread.

Though there are no known original manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments, thousands of partial and complete manuscripts exist, dating back to as early as the third and fourth centuries. These validate our present Scriptures.

God has not only guided the original authors in their writing but has guided the preservation of His Word through the centuries.

3. THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE

- The Bible is the infallible Word of God (*Matthew 5:18; 24:35*).
- The Bible is inspired by God (*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21*).
- The Bible is the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct (*2 Timothy 3:15-17*).

4. THE FUNCTION OF THE BIBLE

- The Bible instructs us in the way of salvation (*John 20:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:15-16*).
- The Bible teaches us how to avoid sin (*Psalms 119:11, 105; Matthew 4:1-11*).
- The Bible aids Christian growth (*1 Peter 2:2*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. In what way is the Bible inspired by God? (Psalm 19:7–11; Colossians 3:16)
2. How can the Bible help us avoid sin? (Psalm 119:105)

B. God Reveals Himself through Jesus Christ

During His incarnation Christ was God in a human body (*John 1:14; Colossians 2:9*). As people observed Jesus' lifestyle and teaching in the context of ordinary life, they saw how God related to people and their need. His death and resurrection not only provided salvation for people but also showed the seriousness of sin and the self-sacrificing love of God.

Jesus was also God's final revelation. Once the apostles, who had witnessed Jesus' life, death and resurrection, had died, the recorded story of redemption was complete (*Matthew 11:27; John 14:9; Hebrews 1:1–4; Revelation 22:18–19*).

C. God Reveals Himself through the Human Conscience

God has created human beings with a conscience which acts as a moral sensor in each person. The conscience passes judgment on our actions, giving us a feeling of commendation if the action is good or guilt if the action is wrong. Though the conscience can be dulled or misguided it reminds us of our sinfulness and need of forgiveness (*Romans 1:18–23; 2:14–15; 1 Timothy 4:2*).

D. God Reveals Himself through Creation

Creation gives evidence of a divine Creator and Sustainer. Nature is an expression of the power, glory, creativity and goodness of God (*Psalm 104*). God expects nature to remind us of Him, leading us to worship Him and to

search for a more complete knowledge of Him. People who see God's hand in nature but refuse to worship Him are "without excuse" (*Romans 1:20*) and will be held accountable to God for having rejected Him.

Though there is beauty and order in creation, sin has also left its mark on nature, resulting in disorder, disaster, sickness and death (*Romans 8:20-22*). God uses these events to remind people of their helplessness apart from Him.

Though nature points to God it does not explain God nor humanity's special relationship to Him.



Let's Talk it Over

1. There seems to be a more complete revelation of God in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Why?
2. Should the different avenues of God's self-revelation be accepted as equal in importance or must some take priority over others?
3. Does God continue to reveal Himself today in new ways?

Notes:

Name _____

1. What is the created world telling us about God?

Psalm 19:1 _____

Romans 1:20 _____

2. In *2 Peter 1:20–21* find three facts about the contents of the Scriptures.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

3. Read *1 Corinthians 2:10–15*.

1) Who can reveal the things of God to us? _____

2) How did Paul know what to say to God? _____

3) What kind of people can understand spiritual matters? _____

4. Discover the purpose of the Scriptures.

1) Why were the experiences of Israel recorded? *1 Corinthians 10:6–11*

2) Why did Luke write his Gospel? *Luke 1:1–4* _____

3) Why did John write his account of the works of Jesus? *John 20:30–31*

4) For what purpose has God given us the Scriptures? *2 Timothy 3:16–17*

5) According to Psalm 119, what is the value of the Word of the Lord?

v. 9 _____

v. 28 _____

v. 105 _____

v. 130 _____

6. What should we do with the Word of Christ? *Colossians 3:16*

7. Recall some benefits you have gained from recent Bible reading.

8. Write the key verse from memory.

* * * * *

Key Verses: “And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation’” (Exodus 34:6-7).

God is alive with feeling, power and activity. God is a person with intellect, sensibility, and volition. He speaks, sees, hears, and loves. God is eternal; He is without beginning and without end. He is not limited by the boundaries of time or space. This means the past and the future are as clear to Him as the present. God is also the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Ruler of the universe (Psalm 104: 27-30; Matt. 6:26-33; Acts 14:15). “God is Spirit” (John 4:24). That means He is not material. He is invisible, yet people have been created with ability to know and relate to God.

A. The Triune God

There is only one God, and yet there are three distinct persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We cannot fully explain God, nor can we understand the Trinity (three in one) but we accept this truth by faith.

1. There is one God. Yet He is not merely one; He is the only One (*Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 1 Kings 8:60; Mark 12:29–32; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6*).
2. There are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19; John 14:16–17; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:18*). All three are God.
 - a) The Father (*John 6:27; Romans 1:7; Galatians 1:1, 3*).
 - b) The Son (*Matthew 22:41–46; John 1:1–5, 9–14*). Attributes of deity are given to Him that imply deity. He does work that is the prerogative of deity like forgive sin, raise people from the dead, etc.
 - c) The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the three essential qualities of personhood: intellect (*1 Corinthians 2:11*), emotions (*Romans 8:26*), and will (*1 Corinthians 12:11*). The Holy Spirit speaks (*Acts 13:2*), teaches (*John 14:26*), convicts (*John 16:8–11*), calls people into service (*Acts 13:2*), directs them in service (*Acts 16:6–7*). The Holy Spirit can be lied to (*Acts 5:3*), resisted (*Acts 7:51*) and grieved

(*Ephesians 4:30*). His divinity is demonstrated by His attributes, His work, His association with the Father and Son (*Matthew 28:19; Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 13:14*).

B. God the Father

God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Heb. 11:3). He created our world with its profusion of plant and animal life. His crowning act of creation was the creation of human beings in His own image. God as the Creator is distinct from and exalted above His creation. His majestic greatness is seen in the vast expanse of space as well as the intricate complexities of a single cell.

The following are some characteristics of God. These characteristics are also true of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

1. God is holy, righteous and just. His standard of righteousness and justice demands punishment of the transgressor (*Numbers 14:18; 1 Peter 3:18*).
2. He is present everywhere (*Psalms 139:7-12; Acts 17:27*).
3. He knows all things (*Psalms 147:5; Hebrews 4:13*).
4. He is almighty. He can do anything that is in harmony with His will (*Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26*).
5. He is dependable and faithful (*Malachi 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; James 1:17*).
6. He is love. He is benevolent. He is merciful. He offers grace to repentant sinners (*2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 2:4-9; 1 John 4:8, 16*).
7. He is truth. He is the foundation for all correct knowledge (*Proverbs 3:5-6; John 14:6; 1 John 5:20*).

C. God the Son

Jesus Christ was God in human form. Though He was fully human, He also remained fully God (*Colossians 2:9*). As a man Jesus experienced hunger (*Matthew 4:2*), thirst (*John 4:7*), and physical exhaustion (*John 4:6*). He humbled Himself and voluntarily became human in order to save humanity (*Philippians 2:7*). Christ as the God-man provided redemption for sinful people by His death and resurrection. This demonstrates how seriously God viewed sin and how deeply He loved sinful human beings.

1. He was sent by God the Father and became man, born of a virgin (*John 1:14; Matthew 1:22-23*).
2. He is God's son; He is God (*Mark 8:27-29; John 1:1-5; 8:19; 10:30; 14:10, 11; 20:26-29*).

3. He is a teacher revealing God to people (*Matthew 11:27; John 12:45–50; 14:9*).
4. Jesus Christ came to seek and save sinners (*Matthew 9:12–13; Luke 19:10; John 10:10; 1 Tim. 1:15*). He became the sacrifice for sin (*Isaiah 53:4–7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18–19*).
5. Christ rose from the dead, thus ensuring our own resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:20–23*).
6. He is our advocate with the Father (*Hebrews 4:14–16; 1 John 2:1*).
7. He is the Lord, the Head of the body, the church (*John 20:28; Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:13–19*).

D. God the Holy Spirit

God in His great love and mercy forgives our sins and comes to live in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. To live the Christian life we need power beyond ourselves. God provided for this by giving us the Holy Spirit (*John 16:7*). The Holy Spirit is one person of the Godhead. He is God with us and in us.

1. The Holy Spirit indwells believers (*John 14:16–17*) and enables them to bear spiritual fruit (*Galatians 5:22–23*).
2. He convicts people of sin (*John 16:8–11*).
3. He intercedes for us (*Romans 8:26*).
4. He distributes spiritual gifts to the Christians (*1 Corinthians 12:4–11*).
5. He bears witness to Jesus Christ and guides us into truth (*John 14:25–26; 15:26; 16:13–14*).
6. He seals and guarantees our inheritance (*Ephesians 1:13–14*).
7. The Christian receives the Holy Spirit (baptism of the Holy Spirit) at the time of conversion. It is the initiatory experience for all Christians (*Acts 2:38; Romans 5:1–5; 8:9; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Titus 3:3–7*). It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into the Body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:13*) and gives us the assurance that God has accepted us (*Romans 8:16*).

Though God is divine and we are human, He has created us with the potential to live in fellowship with Him. Abraham learned to trust God fully (*Hebrews 11:17–19*) and experienced the reality and the reward of a walk with God. God is waiting for each of us to draw near and wants to be our God in a personal way.



Let's Talk it Over

1. What illustrations can you think of that might help us to understand the Trinity?
2. Which attribute of God is most meaningful to you at present? Why?
3. Why did God become man?

Name _____

1. What do the following scriptures tell us about God?

Deuteronomy 4:35, 39 _____

Psalm 139:1–6 _____

Psalm 139: 7–8 _____

Genesis 1:1 _____

1 Chronicles 29:11 _____

2. The baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of His earthly ministry. It was somewhat like a commissioning ceremony. Notice the role of each member of the Trinity in this event. *Mark 1:9–11*

The Son _____

The Father _____

The Spirit _____

3. One of the best descriptions of God is in *Exodus 34:6–7*. Find here seven things that God says of Himself.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

4. What do the following scriptures teach us about Jesus Christ?

Luke 1:34–35 _____

John 10:30 _____

Mark 10:45 _____

John 13:13 _____

5. What is the work of the Holy Spirit?

1 Corinthians 12:13 _____

John 16:13 _____

Romans 8:16 _____

Romans 8:26 _____

6. What is there about the nature or abilities of God that seems of first importance to you? _____

Why? _____

7. How will you express your love for God? _____

8. Write the key verse from memory _____

Key Verses: “For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

There is a basic difference between Christianity and other religions. In Christianity, God seeks for humanity. God reaches down to humans in the person of Jesus Christ and reveals Himself and his plan through Jesus Christ. God has taken the initiative in providing salvation for us. In other religions people seek for a god and consequently create the kind of god that suits them. It is people-centered from beginning to end. In other religions human beings continually try to appease their god but are never sure if they have done enough.

Without God people are lost and helpless. Their only salvation comes from God. Salvation is something that God has provided and not what humanity does. God is waiting for our response to His provisions.

A. Humanity’s Condition

God created the human race without sin. People were in a state of perfect and harmonious relationship with God. God gave humans the freedom of choice. Human beings chose to disobey God; thus sin entered the world. As a result humanity became estranged from God. The end result is physical and spiritual death.

1. God created human beings in His own image (*Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7ff*).
2. Humankind disobeyed and became sinful (*Genesis 3; Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9–18, 23*).
3. Humanity needs salvation (*Romans 5:12; 6:23*).

B. God’s Offer

God is holy and people are sinful. Jesus Christ, by dying for the sins of human beings, provided an atonement for sin. He took the punishment for our sins and then offered us forgiveness and new spiritual life. God gives the Holy Spirit to all who respond to Him in repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit enables the person to grow and serve as a disciple of Christ.

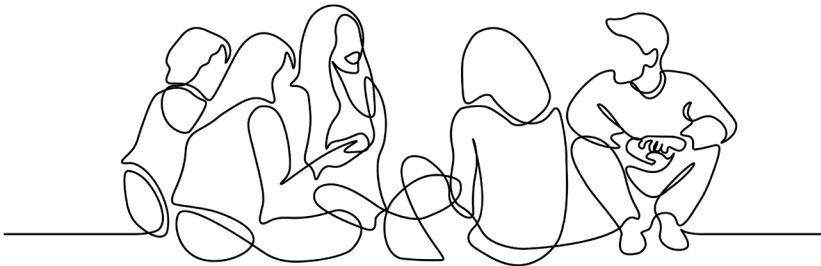
1. God loves sinners; He is love (*John 3:16; 1 John 3:1; 4:8–10*).
2. Jesus Christ is the *only* means of salvation (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:10–12*).

3. Jesus died for our sins and bore them on the cross (*Isaiah 53:4–7; Romans 5:6–8; Colossians 1:19–20; 1 Peter 2:24*).
4. God convicts and draws people (*John 6:44; 16:8*).
5. God gives the Holy Spirit to each new believer as a seal of His ownership and enablement (*Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 1:22*).

C. Our Response

God took the initiative in providing salvation for us and is now waiting for us to respond. We need to respond to God in repentance and faith to receive His forgiveness for our sins.

1. We must personally receive Christ into our lives as Saviour and Lord (*John 1:12; 3:16–17*).
2. We receive Christ through faith. We trust in the atonement Christ provided and surrender to His lordship (*Ephesians 2:8–9*).
3. Receiving Christ involves repentance, confession of sin, and restitution where necessary (*Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9; Luke 19:1–10*).
4. We receive Christ by responding to his personal invitation (*John 6:37*).
5. We need to continue abiding in Christ (*Matthew 24:13; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:18–20*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. Why would a person not want to be a Christian?
2. What is faith?
3. What influences people to choose either God's way or Satan's way?

D. Results of Salvation

The benefits of salvation are both immediate and long-term. The release from long-standing guilt and the overwhelming experience of God's love may fill the person with immediate joy and peace. Experiencing the continual renewal and provision of God in daily living is an ongoing blessing. We also confidently anticipate our eternal home in heaven.

1. We are cleansed from all sin and are justified in God's sight (*Romans 3:24; 5:1; 1 John 1:9*).
2. We receive a new nature (*Romans 6:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20*).
3. We have eternal life (*John 3:14–16; 4:13–14; Romans 6:23*).
4. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer (*Romans 8:9–16; Ephesians 1:13–14*).
5. God places us into His family (*1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:12–14*).

E. Assurance

It is important that a person be sure he is saved in order to be a growing dynamic Christian. New Christians frequently have the problem that they don't feel saved. Feelings can be unpredictable, especially when you enter a new phase of life. Feelings do not serve as a good spiritual thermometer. We need to depend on God's Word. When Satan tries to cast doubt on the new work God has begun in our lives, we need to resort to God's Word and not to our changing feelings.

In order to have assurance of salvation it is important that we understand the Biblical plan of salvation. If we know the answer to the question, "How do I become a Christian?" then we can simply check whether we meet the conditions. If we do, then on the basis of God's trustworthy Word we can be sure we are Christians and thank God for it.

The following can give us assurance:

1. TRUST IN THE WORD OF GOD.
 - a) If we confess our sins God's promise is that he will forgive and cleanse (*1 John 1:5–9*).
 - b) If we come to Christ, He will receive us (*John 1:12; 6:37; Romans 10:13*).
 - c) If we have Jesus Christ we have eternal life (*1 John 5:11–12*).
2. THE HOLY SPIRIT (*Romans 8:9, 16; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5; 1 John 4:13*).

3. A CHANGED LIFE

- a) Obedience (*1 John 2:3-6*).
- b) Love (*1 John 3:14; 4:7-12*).
- c) A new nature, new desires, new attitudes and thought patterns (*Romans 6:4-6, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:8*).
- d) Fruit of the Spirit (*Matthew 7:20; Galatians 5:22-23*).



Let's Talk it Over

- 1. How does the Holy Spirit give us assurance?
- 2. Are feelings dependable?

Name _____

1. What do all people have in common? *Romans 3:23*

2. What is the meaning of "sin"?
James 4:17 _____
1 John 5:17 _____

3. What is the result of sin? *Romans 6:23* _____

4. What has Christ done about our sin problem?
1 Peter 2:24 _____

Romans 5:8 _____

Hebrews 10:12 _____

5. Whom does God wish to save? *2 Peter 3:9* _____

6. Who will receive God's salvation? *John 3:16* _____

7. Why can we be saved only by faith? *Ephesians 2:8-9* _____

8. What is the result of faith? *Romans 5:1* _____

9. What is different about the person who believes in Christ? *John 3:36*

10. In the following verses notice your responsibility to God's offer of salvation and then notice God's response.

1 John 1:9

Your responsibility _____

God's response _____

Romans 10:9

Your responsibility _____

God's response _____

John 5:24

Your responsibility _____

God's response _____

John 1:12

Your responsibility _____

God's response _____

11. What doubts or questions do you have about your relationship to God? _____

12. In your own words describe your response to God's offer of salvation.

13. Write the key verse from memory _____

Christian Growth

Key verse: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6–7).

Christianity is much more than a fire escape from hell. It is a growing, developing relationship with Jesus Christ. Receiving Jesus Christ as Lord of life and our Saviour from sin is the only way we can receive eternal life. However, we must guard against the danger of being interested only in seeing “souls saved,” and depreciating the importance of genuine growth and development in Christian living. Sometimes we may be overly anxious to simplify matters at this point. When a person becomes a Christian, life takes on new meaning. This involves a new and radical lifestyle, the kind of lifestyle that Jesus taught and demonstrated. Even though we are born again, maturity or becoming more and more like Jesus is a lifelong process. This process is superintended and aided by the Holy Spirit as we study God’s Word, pray, serve and fellowship with other believers.

A. A Spirit-filled Life

A Christian is a person who has received Jesus Christ. A spiritual Christian is a person through whom Christ lives, and this is done by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Spirituality then is Christ-likeness and Christ-likeness is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Our sinful nature has been crucified, breaking our bondage to serve its destructive impulses, setting us free to live “in step with the Spirit” (*Galatians 5:24–25*).

Though all Christians have received the Holy Spirit, many live defeated and impoverished lives. This may be due to a lack of proper instruction and a lack of emphasis on obedience to God and His Word. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us by helping us understand and apply the Scriptures to our lives. Christians need the power and motivation of the Holy Spirit to live in newness of life. We need to yield to His control so that the living Christ will be exhibited in every area of our lives.

We need to study the Scriptures to learn about the Holy Spirit and to appropriate His resources in our lives.

1. The control/fullness of the Holy Spirit is meant to be a continual and growing experience (*Acts 4:31; Ephesians 5:18*).

2. As Christians submit their selfish wills to the Holy Spirit, He produces spiritual fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (*Galatians 5:22–23*).
3. God, through the Holy Spirit, has given a spiritual gift(s) of ministry to every Christian by which to serve God and minister to other people (*1 Corinthians 12:7–11*).
4. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to testify of Christ (*Acts 1:8; 2:4, 22–24; 4:8–10*).

B. The Bible

To grow in our Christian lives we must read, understand and obey the Bible. It is God's message to people. It is the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct. The Bible unfolds the account of how God acted throughout early history, making preparations for the time when His Son, Jesus Christ, would come to this world. The Bible then gives us the all-important account of Jesus Christ, His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the promise of His return. The Bible also interprets for us what this means in terms of our salvation and our Christian life.

God, through His Word, brings comfort to the sorrowing, strength to the weak, and guidance to the searching (*Psalms 119:105*).

A new Christian should immediately become a student of the Bible. A good place to begin reading is the Gospel of John in the New Testament.

1. The Bible instructs us in the way of salvation (*John 20:30–31; 2 Timothy 3:15–16*).
2. The Bible teaches us how to avoid sin (*Psalms 119:11, 105; Matthew 4:1–11*).
3. The Bible aids Christian growth (*1 Peter 2:2*).
4. The Bible aids us in understanding God's will and our proper response to it (*Proverbs 3:5–6*).

The believer should read God's Word regularly, reading through it book by book.

The following questions can help us in understanding and applying the Scriptures to our lives:

1. What is the main subject of the passage?
2. What does it teach about God? about humanity?
3. Is there a promise which I should claim?
4. Is there a duty which I should perform?

You might also do a topical study in which you select an important subject

such as prayer, love, grace, salvation or peace, and trace its teaching through the Bible, using a concordance or a topical Bible. Making notes of your discoveries will enhance the learning.

Memorizing Scripture helps us to be saturated by its teaching and is an excellent way of learning to locate and know key passages. Devotional guides may also be helpful in understanding and applying biblical truths.

C. Prayer

Christians have the unique privilege of communicating with God through prayer. Prayer is conversing with God, talking to Him about our joys and concerns (*Philippians 4:6*). In many respects, prayer is a mystery yet, even though we may not understand it completely, we know that we can communicate with God through prayer. We also know that God does things in answer to our prayers (*Matthew 21:22; Acts 12:1–14*). God's work in the world is advanced through the prayers of His people.

Christian growth involves warfare—warfare against Satan and the evil forces and influences of this world. Bible study and prayer are effective weapons for the inevitable spiritual battles (*Ephesians 6:10–18*).

Prayer should include the following:

1. Confession of sin (*1 John 1:9*).
2. Praise, adoration and thanksgiving (*The Psalms; Ephesians 5:19–20; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18*).
3. Asking for personal help (*Matthew 6:5–15; Philippians 4:6*).
4. Interceding for others (*Romans 9:1–2; 10:1; 1 Timothy 2:1–2*).
5. Communion, listening, waiting (*Psalms 27:14*).

Conditions for effective prayer:

1. Faith (*Matthew 17:20; 21:22; Mark 11:22–24; Hebrews 11:6*).
2. Walking in close fellowship with Jesus Christ (*John 15:7*).
3. Praying in the name of Jesus (*John 14:13; 16:23–24*).
4. Confessed sin and right attitudes (*Psalms 66:18; Isaiah 59:1–2; Mark 11:25; James 4:3*).
5. Praying according to God's will (*1 John 5:14–15*).
6. Perseverance (*Luke 11:5–13; 18:1–8, 1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

D. Fellowship

All Christians are a part of Christ's Body, the church. As such they spend time together for encouragement, teaching, admonition, worship and prayer. Even though we have a diversity of functions, yet God has designed Christians in such a way that they need and complement each other with the

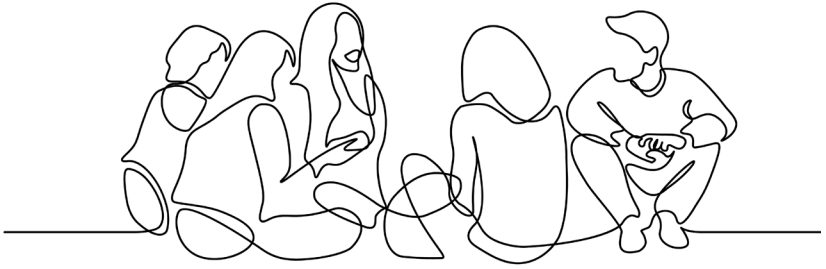
use of their spiritual gifts. In order to edify each other in the Body we need to heed the admonition, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (*Hebrews 10:25*).

Fellowship is spending time and working with other Christians. Christians, like logs in a fire, need to be together to burn brightly for God. When Christians do not fellowship with each other they lose their enthusiasm. Fellowship is vital for Christian growth.

1. We need the fellowship of Christians in prayer to support and encourage us (*Matthew 18:19–20; Acts 2:42; James 5:16*).
2. We need the fellowship of Christians to correct us in doctrine and conduct (*Galatians 6:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:16*).
3. We need to worship God in the fellowship of other believers (*Psalms 122:1; Colossians 3:15–16*).
4. God often uses the spiritual counsel of fellow believers to help us discern His will for our lives (*Acts 6:2–6; 9:10–17; 18:24–26*).
5. Believers need to support one another in times of stress and suffering (*Acts 12:5–17; Galatians 6:2*).

As Anabaptists, we also believe that a part of the function of the fellowship of Christians in the body of Christ is to help its members stay on the right path. This is called church discipline. Church discipline involves counseling, exhorting, restoring, and, ultimately, expulsion from the fellowship. The Anabaptists believe that the church should be kept as pure as possible (*Matthew 18:15–20; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; Galatians 6:1–5*).

* * * * *



Let's Talk it Over

1. What are some of the difficulties in maintaining a good prayer life?
How can they be overcome?
2. How does God use other believers to help us discern His will?
3. Why do some Christians withdraw from fellowship?

* * * * *

Notes:

Name _____

1. Growth means change. What changes will the Holy Spirit make in our lives?

Ephesians 5:18 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

Romans 8:13 _____

2 Corinthians 3:18 _____

2. List the results of the Holy Spirit's influence. *Galatians 5:22–23*

3. Study *1 Peter 2:1–3*.

With whom are believers compared? _____

What do we need in order to grow? _____

4. Study *Philippians 4:6–7*.

What is the Christian alternative to worrying? _____

What kind of praying is advised here? _____

What will be the result of such prayer? _____

5. Study the recipe for growth as given in *Colossians 3*.

With what basic commitment should you begin? vv. 1–2

What would be entirely out of place in your life? vv.5–7

What should be removed from the Christian life? vv. 8–9

What is the most important addition to the Christian life? vv. 12–14

By what should our inner lives be controlled? v. 15

What do we need in order to help others? v. 16_____

6. In what ways have other believers been of help to you?

7. In what ways could you contribute to the growth of other Christians?

8. Write the key verses from memory.

The Church

Key Verse: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A. The Universal Church

Since the creation of Adam and Eve, God has been calling people to Himself. In a special way God chose Abraham (*Genesis 12:1–3*) and his descendants to be a people of God. Gentiles were invited to join the Jews in being the people of God. God sent prophets who declared His message, calling people to leave their false gods and to live in obedience to the true God. In the New Testament the people of God are called the church. The church is not an institution, organization or building. The church universal is the total people of God. It is all those who have been born again by the Spirit of God and have become followers of Jesus Christ. The church, then, is not a human organization; it is the absolute possession of the sovereign Lord. The church is the extension of Christ, His work, and His ministry in the world after He departed. As such, the church is both God’s message and God’s messenger (*1 Peter 2:9–10*). To be a Christian is to be a member of Christ’s body, the church.

The Bible is permeated with metaphors that describe the corporate nature of the Christian life. Here are a few:

1. The church is a building; every Christian is a “living stone” contributing to the total structure (*Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Peter 2:5*).
2. The church is a family (*Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19*).
3. The church is made up of branches on one vine (*John 15:1–8*).
4. The church is a flock with one shepherd (*John 10:14–16*).
5. The church is a body with Christ as its Head (*1 Corinthians 12:12–31*).

Perhaps the last metaphor, that of the body, is the most meaningful one. The body is an organism of members functioning together. The members are not the same; they have different functions but they form *one harmonious whole*. All parts of the body are necessary for the well-being of the total body. There is an interdependence of the different members. If one member is missing or ailing, the whole body is impoverished. If a member is removed (e.g. an arm is amputated), it dies and ceases to function. This is a picture of the church. Paul reminds us that by one Spirit we were baptized into one body,

with Christ as the Head (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). This means that all believers are one in Him, receiving all resources, all strength, all wisdom, and all instruction from the same Head, Jesus Christ. Believers from all around the world belong to this one body.

The church is separate from the state. The state cannot dictate to the church what it should believe. The church is Christ's body and therefore He is her Lord. This was a crucial doctrine, especially in the 16th century when the concept of a free church was unthinkable. Separation does not include only church and state but also separation of the believer from the world. The Christian is to be in the world but not of the world. He does not join associations of the world which conflict with Christian principles. Also, the believer refrains from practices that are non-Christian (*Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 1 Peter 2:11f*).

B. The Local Church

While there is but one church, the believers in each regional community represent Christ in their own unique environment. The local culture, economics, politics and religion have a strong impact on the life of the church. For this reason it is urgent that the church be diligent in the Word and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. To be a member in the church is to actively participate in the local community of faith, and in that context embody the life of Christ. It involves close relationships, communication and love between Christians.

The local church is the functional and visible expression of the universal church. It is in the local church where the action is. It is here that the believers must practice the sharing, caring, burden-bearing, instruction and discipline to which Christ has called the church. To become a member of the body of Christ (church universal) and not to identify with a local group of believers is to be inconsistent.

The church is the body of Christ, reflecting God to the world and bringing glory to God by its total life and witness (*Romans 15:6-9; Ephesians 1:11-14*). The church accomplishes this through the worship of God and the ministry to one another and the world.

WORSHIP OF GOD

- a) To lead people in the worship of God (*Colossians 3:16; Romans 12:1-2*).
- b) To bring glory to God by our lives (*John 15:8; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 13:15-16*).
- c) To encourage people to praise God as their needs are met through fellow Christians (*John 13:35; 2 Corinthians 9:11-14*).
- d) To administer the ordinances of water baptism, communion, and footwashing (*Matthew 28:18-20; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34*).

MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

- a) To disciple people, teaching them in the ways of God and Christian living and to help each member grasp what it means to be a member of a supportive Christian community (*Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:11-16*).
- b) To foster fellowship by helping people relate to each other in an intimate, honest, loving and caring fashion (*Acts 2:42-47; James 5:16*).
- c) To provide ministry opportunities giving believers the opportunity to use their spiritual gifts in ministry to each other and the world (*1 Peter 4:10-11*).
- d) To train all disciples so they can in turn reach others for Jesus Christ by their lifestyle, social concerns and verbal witness (*Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:2*).

MINISTRY TO THE WORLD

- a) To proclaim the message of salvation, persuading people to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (*Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8*).
- b) To demonstrate the love of Christ by meeting the practical needs of people around us, e.g., friendship, food, etc. (*Matthew 25:34-40*).
- c) To be “salt” and “light” in our communities and in the world (*Matthew 5:13-16*).

Every believer, by the grace of God, should seek to live a life of practical holiness, separated from sin and dedicated to the service of Christ. The believer needs to participate regularly in the functions of the church such as worship, communion, service and giving. Our faith needs to be translated into a practical Christian life of peace and love, evidenced in our families, communities and nation.

C. Church Membership

The church is a covenant community in which believers assume mutual responsibility and care for each other (*Acts 6:1-11; Galatians 6:1-2*). It is the context in which the Christian life is nurtured and expressed (*Acts 2:42*). These are the people who have shared the gospel with us and with whom we find avenues of service to others (*Acts 13:1-3*). A Christian should not, from a biblical perspective, seek a lifestyle which is lived in isolation or independently of other believers. Our vertical relationship with God is expressed in our horizontal relationships within the body of Christ (*1 John 1:5-7*).

The church is for people who with humble insight realize that they need the strength, the guidance, the fellowship and the opportunities of service available in the local church, and upon this admission of need declare to the

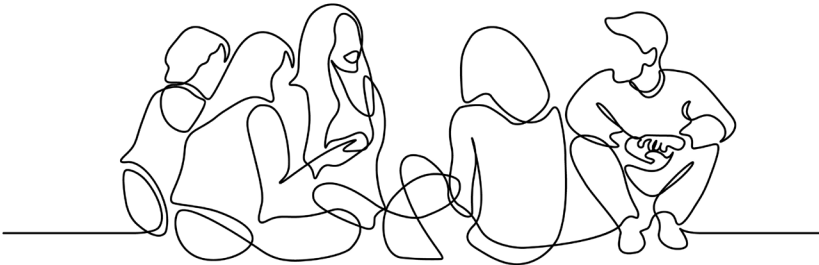
church, “Fellow believers, I need to be a part of the family of God here. Help me to walk as a faithful disciple of Christ. I commit myself to serve God with you.” Baptism and membership formalizes this covenant.

1. MEMBERSHIP THROUGH BAPTISM

The baptism of the Holy Spirit places the believer into the universal church which is the corporate body of Christ (*Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13*). In a similar way, water baptism symbolizes the initiation and covenant with the local church (*Acts. 2:41, 47b*). Therefore, when people are baptized in our churches they also become members.

2. MEMBERSHIP THROUGH TRANSFER

This is done with the understanding that the applicant is a baptized believer in good standing in another evangelical church. After becoming acquainted with the Statement of Faith the applicant should request a letter of transfer from his/her former church and complete a membership application form.



Let’s Talk it Over

Read the following covenant carefully. Would this be a good covenant for you to make with other believers in this church? Why or why not?

“I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and have received His forgiveness. Now we are one in Christ and in the fellowship of His church. We solemnly covenant with each other to live together in Christian love, to lovingly disciple one another toward spiritual maturity. Realizing our tendency to err, we will exercise a mutual care for one another by admonishing and edifying one another with respect and love. We commit ourselves to serve the Lord faithfully, relying on His strength”.

* * * * *

Name _____

1. The chapter describes the church as one body (church universal) representing Christ in the context of distinct regional communities (church local). What does the word “church” mean in *Ephesians 5:23–27*? _____

Are you a member of the church described in Ephesians? Explain your answer. _____

2. Now read *Acts 13:1; 14:23; 16:5*. What does “church” mean in these texts? _____

3. Study *1 Corinthians 12* as a lesson on church life. Why has the Lord given spiritual gifts to people in the church? vv. 4–7

Who decides what gifts each believer gets for ministry? vv. 8–11

What is the key idea in verses 12–14? _____

In your own words state what verses 14–17 teach about the different members of the church. _____

What is the practical significance of the lesson on the weaker or less honourable members? vv. 21–24 _____

List the three duties which all members have. vv. 25–26

In summary (v. 27), we are the _____ of _____

What seems to be the reason for the list of gifted church workers?

4. On the basis of this study, why is it beneficial to belong to a church?

5. In what way can you already now contribute to the life of your church?

6. Write the key verse from memory. _____

The Ordinances

Key Verse: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

God has planned that the people of God should remind themselves of some of the great spiritual truths by physically participating in symbolic observances of those truths. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a reminder of their covenant with God. The passover meal reminded them of their deliverance from Egypt and the various sacrifices symbolized the atonement for sin. Again in the New Testament God has commanded His people to symbolize several important teachings by celebrating these in symbolic observances. This symbolic observance of a spiritual truth is called an “ordinance.”

The EMC observes three ordinances. Water baptism symbolizes being converted and initiated into the body of Christ. The Lord’s supper reminds us of the sacrificial death of Christ on our behalf. Footwashing symbolizes spiritual cleansing and the attitude of humility and service which should characterize the believer. The EMMC observes two ordinances, water baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

A. Water Baptism

It is thrilling to see a new Christian take a public stand for God through water baptism. It speaks to the Christian and non-Christian alike. It is a confirmation of the baptismal candidate’s commitment to Christ and His church. Baptism formalizes the new Christian’s covenant with God as Saviour and Lord and with the congregation as a fellow member in the body of Christ. The practice of water baptism rests on the clear command of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 28:18–20*). It is also of significance that Jesus was baptized. The New Testament church was faithful to this commandment and baptized people whenever they confessed faith in Christ.

Paul, in writing about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea (*1 Corinthians 10:1–2*), said that the people were baptized into Moses. By following Moses’ leadership, the people had passed through the sea and then watched it close behind them. This totally cut them off from their former life in Egypt. The Israelites were now one with Moses and dependent on God to lead them to a new life in Canaan. This is a picture of the new believer. The new Christian

needs to break all ties with a former life of sin and be joined wholeheartedly to Christ and His body, the church.

A question frequently asked is, "When should a person be baptized?" Scripture indicates that baptism should follow after a conversion experience (*Acts 2:38; 9:18; 10:47*). Since baptism is an outward sign of an inner spiritual experience it follows that people should not be baptized before they have become a Christian. Baptism also involves a commitment of one's future to Christ. Such a commitment can only be made in a meaningful way after people are responsible for their own decisions.

What is the relationship between baptism and membership in a local church? Through baptism the new believer identifies with the body of Christ, the people of God (*Acts 2:41-44*). The local church is the visible expression of the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, to identify with the people of God through baptism and fail to identify with a local church is inconsistent. Historically, the mode of baptism in our churches has been pouring, which symbolizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is given to every believer at the time of conversion (*Ephesians 1:13-14*), is said to have been "poured out on" believers (*Joel 2:28; Titus 3:5-7*).

Today, some of our churches baptize by immersion, which symbolizes being dead to sin (*Romans 6:1-6*) and rising to new life.

We recognize both modes as being valid, and rich in their symbolism. Water baptism involves the following:

1. It is administered to believers upon their repentance from sin and confession of faith in Christ (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 18:8; 2:38*). It is a public testimony of what God has done for us and of our commitment to Him.
2. It symbolizes the Christian's experience of being baptized by the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:38*). God gives the Holy Spirit to each person at the time of conversion.
3. It is an act of obedience which identifies believers with the church of Christ and initiates them into the Christian community as expressed in a given local congregation (*Acts 2:41; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27*).
4. It symbolizes spiritual cleansing and forgiveness of sins (*Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5*).
5. It symbolizes death to sin and the old nature, and a newness of life in Christ (*Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:11-12*).

B. The Lord's Supper

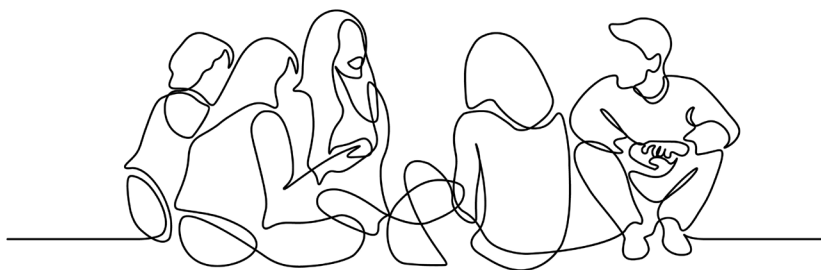
The Lord's Supper is another ordinance instituted by Christ (*1 Corinthians*

11:17–34). This he did in the context of celebrating the passover with his disciples. At the time of the first passover (*Exodus 12*), God gave specific instructions as to the preparation and the eating of the passover meal. All who participated in the Exodus from Egypt partook of the meal. When Jesus took the bread and the cup he gave *new meaning* to the passover meal. It is a solemn occasion in that it is a memorial service for Christ's death for our sins. All those who have turned their backs on the old life of slavery to sin and have entered by faith into a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ have reason to take part in the Lord's Supper in the fellowship of believers. For the believer it is a time for reflecting on the cost of our salvation. It is also a time of joy and celebration. The penalty for our sins has been paid. Christ arose from the dead and He has imparted that resurrection life to the Christian. Believers respond with praise and thanksgiving.

1. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ as a memorial of His death for the sins of humankind, the cup representing His shed blood, and the bread His broken body (*Matthew 26:26–29*).
2. The Lord's Supper proclaims the Lord's death until He comes (*1 Corinthians 11:26*).
3. It involves present realities such as fellowship, self-examination, testimony, confession and thanksgiving (*1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:17–34*).

C. Footwashing

Footwashing serves as a tangible expression of love, cleansing, service and equality among Christians. We, as well as the early disciples, are so often full of self-seeking and personal ambitions. Realizing this, Jesus took the common event of footwashing and used it to symbolize the attitudes that should characterize His followers. We as His followers are to be ready to serve others, irrespective of their status in life. We are also to graciously receive the ministry of others towards us. The world is impressed with people who have money, prestige and power. God evaluates believers by the way they love and serve one another (*Luke 22:24–27; John 13:1–17; Philippians 2:1–11*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. What is the value of an ordinance?
2. Who should be eligible to participate in a communion service?
3. Some people feel that footwashing was merely a local custom at the time of Christ. As such it may not be meant to be a symbolic observance for later generations of Christians. Does a careful study of *John 13:1–17* shed any light on this issue?

* * * * *

Name _____

1. Read the following baptism stories in *Acts* and, in each case, note one important truth that you see.

2:37–41 _____

9:10–18 _____

10:44–48 _____

16:25–34 _____

19:1–7 _____

2. Read the teaching on the Lord's Supper in *1 Corinthians 11:17–34*. How had the Corinthian Christians abused it? vv. 20–22 _____

How did Paul know about the Lord's Supper? v. 23 _____

What do the bread and cup represent? vv. 24–25 _____

Why should the Lord's Supper be celebrated? vv. 24–26 _____

How should a person prepare for the Lord's Supper? vv. 27–30

3. The practice of footwashing is based upon the example of Jesus (*John 13:1–17*). What impresses you about the attitude of Jesus as you read this? _____

For what purpose did Jesus do it? v. 15 _____

Why should we be willing to do what Jesus did? vv. 13, 14, 16

What does Jesus promise those who follow His example? v. 17

4. Write the key verse from memory. _____

Christian Lifestyle

Key Verse: “But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:5–6).

When people receive Jesus Christ by faith they become new persons (2 *Corinthians* 5:17). They have the forgiveness of sin, eternal life and are children of God. This should result in joy, freedom and wholeness of life.

The abundant Christian life is lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is important that we continually, day by day, moment by moment, cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ, admitting our inability to live a life pleasing to Him and depending on Him to do it through us. He will!

It is very important for Christian living that we remember what has been done for us by Christ. It is only as we begin to understand and appreciate what our position is that we can respond by practicing our position. For example, we have been crucified with Christ and raised again to newness of life (*Romans* 6:1–10; *Galatians* 2:20). As we understand this, we can begin to live a life that is dead to sin and alive to God. This is true for many other positional truths.

Christian living means discipleship. Discipleship means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, learning from Him and then putting it into practice (1 *Corinthians* 11:1; *Ephesians* 4:32–5:2). It is to obey His teaching (1 *John* 2:1–6). It is to ask, “If Christ were here in person what would He say? What would He do?” and then in His strength seek to do the same. Our knowledge of what Christ would likely do in the various situations in life is based on the Biblical stories of what Christ actually did when He lived as a man on earth. The more familiar we are with the life of Jesus, the easier it will be to walk in His steps.

The following characteristics are evidence of genuine discipleship:

A. Sharing the Faith

Good news is for sharing. God’s sacrificial love for us and His power to transform our lives is good news.

God puts the believer on display before a watching world, demonstrating what His grace and power can do in a person’s life. It is to show how God meets the human needs of forgiveness, strength, love and purpose.

To share the faith is to direct another person to receive from God the

blessings He has given us. Jesus said that the believer is to be salt (preserving society and creating a thirst for God) and a light (helping people find the way to God) in this world (Matthew 5:13–16). We can accomplish this by living a life that honours God and sharing with others what God has done in our lives.

1. People will be attracted to God when we live a consistent Christian lifestyle (*Matthew 5:13–16; 1 Peter 3:15–16*).
2. We share the faith by explaining to others what God has done in our lives (*Mark 5:18–20*).
3. We share the faith by giving God’s Word to others (*Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:2*).
4. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the boldness to speak of Jesus to others (*Acts 4:29–31*).

B. Keeping Clean

Christians through the ages have often had differing views of what it meant to be in the world but not of the world (*John 17:15*). Centuries ago some monks believed that if they were going to live truly holy lives they would have to be physically separated from this world. Some withdrew and lived in monasteries. A few chose to live on a platform high above the ground, with minimal contact with this world.

Christians who live in such isolation are not the salt and light that Christ wants them to be. God is committed to enable the believer to be in the world while not being overcome by its evil influence.

The Bible gives clear guidance in many areas as to what is right or wrong. The following questions may help us to discern God’s will in areas less clearly taught, e.g., leisure activities, movies and dating.

Would my action encourage or discourage my friends from following God in their own lives?

If Christ were here in person, would He be happy to accompany me to this activity?

Would doing this make me more sensitive or less sensitive to sin?

Does what I am reading and seeing help me to think pure thoughts?

Would my action bring honour to God?

1. God expects the believer to make clear and firm decisions to turn from sinful thoughts and practices (*Matthew 5:21–30; Philippians 4:8; James 4:7*).
2. The Christian needs to view his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, not destroying it through alcohol, tobacco, harmful drugs and overeating (*1 Corinthians 6:19–20*).
3. The Christian should be discreet in his association with non-

Christians, living in such a way that would attract them to Christ (*Philippians 2:14–16; 1 Peter 3:15*).

4. The Christian should have a wholesome approach to sex. God has planned for sex to be a beautiful expression of love in marriage (*Matthew 19:4–6; Ephesians 5:22–23*). When Christians marry they are to choose a Christian mate (*2 Corinthians 6:14–17*). Sex outside of marriage e.g., homosexuality and extra-marital affairs, are sin (*Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, 18–20*).
5. When we sin we need to repent and turn from sin to God and receive His forgiveness (*Acts 26:20; 1 John 1:9*). If our sin has been directed at any particular person we need to confess our sin to them as well, seeking their forgiveness and a restored relationship. At times we will also need to make restitution (*Luke 19:1–10*).

C. Love and Peace

Perhaps the most widely known belief of the Anabaptists is that the believer is to walk in love towards all. Commonly this is called the doctrine of non-resistance. The Anabaptists believe that the Bible teaches that we are to walk in love in all relationships. We are to love our enemies and bless those who curse us. The way of love involves not going to war, returning good for evil, and avoid taking selfish advantage over the next person. It is seeking the welfare of the other person regardless of personal cost (*Matthew 5:10–12; Romans 12:14–21*).

The quality of our Christian lives is best measured by how we relate to other people. Jesus said that the world would recognize His disciples by the love they have for each other (*John 13:35*). Christians express their love for God by loving people. In fact, to say that we love God but not our neighbour is a contradiction (*1 John 3:16–18; 4:19–20*).

Jesus, by His life and teaching, exemplified what it means to love all people at all times. When people mistreated Him, He did not retaliate. He absorbed their hostilities, believing that justice and judgment were in God's hands (*1 Peter 2:23*). We need to do the same. For us, who call ourselves followers of Christ, to take matters of retribution into our own hands (be that through legal or violent action) is to deny that Christ is Lord.

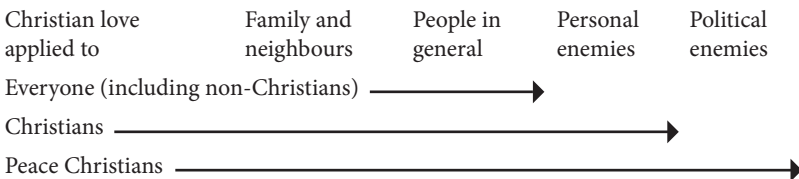
1. We are to do good to all people, trying in whatever way we can to help them spiritually and physically (*Galatians 6:10; Titus 3:14*).
2. We are to try to live in peace with all people, being patient and forgiving rather than seeking revenge (*Matthew 5:44–46; Romans 12:17–21; Hebrews 12:14*).
3. We are to be subject to the governing authorities, remembering that our supreme allegiance belongs to God, and that when the demands of the

state are contrary to our conscience (such as active participation in war) we must obey God rather than any human authority (*Acts 5:27–29; Titus 3:1*). Ultimately, we rely on God for protection and justice. While the state has a responsibility under God to protect us, we do not demand our rights to such protection to the detriment of others (*Exodus 20:2–6*).



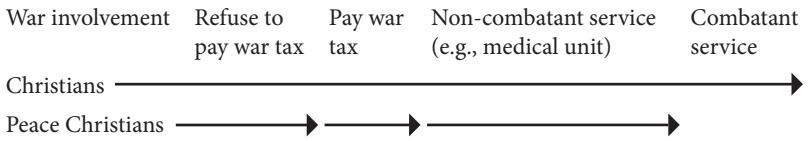
Let's Talk it Over

1. What did Jesus have in mind when He said that believers are the "salt" and "light" (*Matthew 5:13–16*)?
2. Jesus' teaching on loving our enemies is well known (*Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12:9–21*) but Christians differ as to how far to apply this principle. The following diagram illustrates this:



What are the arguments for and against loving our political enemies?

3. Christians also differ as to how far to become involved as citizens of a country at war with another nation. The following diagram illustrates this:



How can a Christian decide how far he should be involved in the war effort of his country?

* * * * *

Notes:

Name _____

1. Find an important principle about the Christian lifestyle in each of the following verses:

1 Peter 1:14–16 _____

1 Peter 2:21 _____

Matthew 7:21 _____

1 Corinthians 10:31 _____

Matthew 5:16 _____

Romans 14:19–21 _____

2. *Ephesians 4:22–24* teaches that the old way of life should be exchanged for a new life. In each of the following texts find the old and the new:

4:25 _____

4:28 _____

4:29 _____

4:31–32 _____

3. Continue this study in *Ephesians 5*.

Verses 3–5 list a variety of sins. Why should a Christian not practice any of them? _____

Why should Christians not follow the lifestyle of unbelievers? v. 6

Why should Christians live as children of light? v. 8

What is the positive choice a Christian is urged to make rather than following the deeds of darkness? (See verses 1–2 and 11).

3. Do some thinking about the life of love.

4. What is the new commandment? *John 13:34* _____

What is one way of expressing this love? *1 John 3:16–18* _____

Find another expression of love in Romans 12:18–19.

What do we need to do in order to live like children of God? *Matthew 5:44–45* _____

5. For personal reflection: How would you counsel a person who finds the Christian lifestyle unattractive? _____

6. Write the key verse from memory. _____

Service - An Expression of Faith

Key Verse: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

Service is putting feet to our beliefs. James says that we express our faith by serving God and people. God’s purpose in saving us was not only to save us from eternal punishment but also to have us live a life of service. It is in the giving of ourselves sacrificially in ministry to others that we become Christ-like (*Mark 10:45*). This may include showing mercy, teaching, sharing God’s good news, sharing the resources God has given to me, and most important, investing my life in other people. An active participation in service will be a tremendous incentive for spiritual growth.

In Israel, the Jordan River, along with several other tributaries, flows into the Dead Sea. Since there is no water flowing out, the Dead Sea has become stagnant and lifeless. The water is so full of minerals and other deposits that no marine life can live in it. We can absorb a lot of Biblical teaching but unless we implement that into a practical life of service we become just like the Dead Sea. Jesus warned about a fruitless life and compared it to drying up on the vine (*John 15:1–8*). God wants us to live a life that will overflow to others (*John 7:37–39*).

Service is one of several tools that God uses to develop growth and maturity in our lives. By serving we express our gratitude and faithfulness to our God who saved us. In service we meet the needs of people.

In service it is more important that our lives are permeated and characterized by the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, etc. (*Galatians 5:22–23*)—than that we are exceptionally gifted. A life that is fragrant with these qualities attracts people to God. God is more concerned about our attitudes and availability than He is about our abilities.

Much of our service for God may happen behind the scene but that doesn’t detract from its value. Sharing in the sorrow of a friend is as important as chairing a board meeting. Making a small but sacrificial contribution (*Luke 21:1–4*) is more worthwhile in God’s sight than a large gift which requires no sacrifice. Jesus wants us to assume the role of a gracious, eager servant, anticipating opportunities for service, whether public or private. When we are faithful with present, though limited, opportunities, God will entrust us with greater responsibilities (*Matthew*

25:14–30).

Our primary focus of service and giving should be with the people and programs of our local church. As I join hands with fellow Christians, I become part of a ministry team. They care enough to correct me when I'm wrong in my approach, encourage me when I feel like giving up, and pray for me when I face a difficult challenge.

A. Gifted for Service

The body of Christ is made up of different people, each gifted to make a unique contribution to God's work on earth. God wants the church to be healthy, vigorous, growing, and maturing. To accomplish this all members must assume their God-given roles in service.

Spiritual gifts/abilities with which to worship God and serve people are given to each believer. The Holy Spirit superintends the distribution of spiritual gifts/abilities to ensure that each group of believers is equipped to function as a body. We need to dedicate these spiritual gifts/abilities to God, anticipating opportunities to use them in worship and in service to others.

We discover and develop our God-given abilities through service. When we see a need, e.g. a neighbour's car that needs repairs, a Sunday school class that needs a teacher, an unemployed person who needs encouragement, a student who wrestles with questions of faith, a young mother who needs a prayer of faith for healing, a youth group that needs an activities coordinator, a senior who needs companionship or a foreign missions venture that needs volunteers we need to ask God if we are the ones able to meet that need. If so, we need to serve in the strength that God offers, believing that our ministry will bring these people closer to God. When people are encouraged by our ministry it confirms our giftedness in this area of ministry. It also provides us with meaning and fulfillment in our own lives.

If Christians do not use their spiritual gifts they curtail God's work and maim the body of Christ. God wants all Christians to serve him with their God-given abilities and opportunities.

1. We need to believe that God has gifted us for meaningful service (*1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10*) and these gifts are to be used for the common good (*1 Corinthians 12:7, 21–26*).
2. It is through discernment in the church that our giftedness is recognized and developed (*1 Timothy 4:14*).
3. Believers need to be permeated with the fruit of the Spirit, e.g., love, joy, peace and patience as they exercise their spiritual gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3; Galatians 5:22–23*).
4. Public gifts, like preaching, are not to be valued more highly

than gifts used in less public ways, such as showing mercy (*1 Corinthians 12:21–26*). There is no particular gift that everyone must have (*1 Corinthians 12:7–11*).

5. We need to share physical necessities such as food, clothing and shelter with those in need (*Matthew 25:31–46; James 2:15–17*).
6. We need to share the gospel with those in spiritual need (*Mark 16:15; Acts 16:10; 1 Corinthians 9:16*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. What are possible areas of service for me right now?
2. How do I invest my life in other people?

B. Resources for Sharing

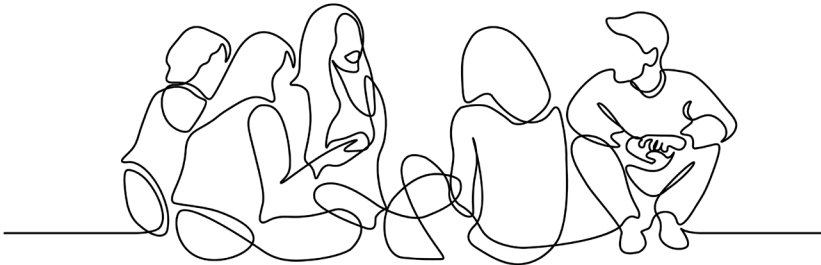
God has made us stewards of all that we are and have. To be a steward means to be entrusted with someone else's possessions and being held accountable for them (*Matthew 25:14–30*). As Christians we and all that we have (time, abilities, money, opportunities) belongs to God. Even though all of it belongs to God, He has, along with some principles, placed us in charge (as stewards) of these resources (*1 Corinthians 4:1–2*). The portion that we give directly to God's work of our time and resources is symbolic of the realization that all we have belongs to Him.

Much of Jesus' teaching revolved around our relationship with money. He knew that material possessions could make us so earth-bound that we would have difficulty in following Him. By giving regularly we remind ourselves that it is eternal things that are really important (*Matthew 6:19–21*).

God is pleased with generous cheerful givers who respond to needs

around them (*Luke 10:30–37*). Many Christians practice tithing (giving a tenth of their income) and that is a good beginning. Others make “faith pledges”, trusting God to enable them to give significantly more. God does not want us to be legalistic about our giving but He does expect us to give regularly and faithfully as we are able. As our income increases, so should the percentage we give to God. Everyone, including young people, needs to develop regular patterns of giving.

1. God expects that all that we are and have should bring glory to Him (*1 Corinthians 10:31*).
2. We need to give our offerings to God and His work (*Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6–7*).
3. God gives spiritual and often material blessings to those who share sacrificially and joyfully (*Malachi 3:8–12*).
4. Our giving should be regular and in proportion to how God has blessed us (*1 Corinthians 16:2*).
5. Our giving will result in people praising God (*2 Corinthians 9:11–12*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. What are tithes and offerings?
2. There are so many appeals for money. How should I decide where to give my money? (*1 Corinthians 16:1–3; Galatians 6:10; 1 Corinthians 9:1–14*).

Name _____

1. In each of the following Scriptures find an important truth about being servants:

Colossians 3:23–24 _____

Mark 10:42–44 _____

1 Peter 2:16 _____

Ephesians 6:7–8 _____

2. Study *1 Peter 4:10–11* for some information on Christian service.

For what purpose should our gifts be used? _____

If your gift is speaking you should speak as if _____

How can a weak person serve effectively? _____

What is the purpose of our service? _____

3. Discover the ways in which Christians should serve one another:

Colossians 3:16 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:11 _____

Hebrews 10:24 _____

James 5:16 _____

Galatians 6:1 _____

4. How should all Christian service be done? *Galatians 5:13*

5. The Bible teaches that we are God's stewards. What is the first requirement of stewards? *1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

6. Look for some rules on the stewardship of money.

Matthew 6:19-20 _____

1 Timothy 6:17-18 _____

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 _____

2 Corinthians 9:7 _____

7. What form of service has been an encouragement or joy to you?

Why? _____

8. Write the key verse from memory. _____

* * * * *

Victorious Living

Key Verse: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful: he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

There are two kingdoms in the world, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. There is an ongoing, clearly defined battle going on between these kingdoms. When we become Christians we become a part of God’s kingdom (*Colossians 1:13–14*). Satan, who has never been able to inflict damage on God directly, continues to attack Christians who are God’s pride and joy, hoping to destroy their faith and walk.

This battle also involves many unseen spirit beings who either help or hinder God’s work with people. The angels that retained their holiness serve God and Christians with joy. The angels that followed Satan in his rebellion against God were cast out of heaven and have continued to fight against God and His people (*Isaiah 14:12–15; Mark 5:1–20; 2 Peter 2:4*).

Satan, with the help of these fallen angels (Jude 6), called demons, is seeking to exploit the weaknesses of the Christians, causing them to fall. To make matters worse, we as the descendants of Adam and Eve are born with a sinful nature, making it natural for us to sin.

At the time of conversion God gives us His Holy Spirit who creates in us the desire to live a life that pleases God (*2 Peter 1:3–4*). At our request, God’s Spirit will give us victory over the desires of our sinful nature and the allures of Satan.

The shed blood of Christ, which atoned for humanity’s sin before God, is the basis for our defense and victory over Satan. This is an ongoing battle and will only be completed at the end of this life.

Some new Christians experience immediate and complete victory over sinful habits that have been well ingrained over a period of years, while others may experience a prolonged struggle. God, who is in us, is able to give victory as we yield to Him. Believers who fail to deal with known areas of sin in their lives will lack the joy and freedom that should characterize the believer. Christians who persistently choose to disobey the teaching of the Bible compromise their spiritual vitality and may eventually come to the place where they reject the grace of God they once embraced (*1 Timothy 1:18–19; Hebrews 3:12–14*).

A. Satan and His Evil Forces

The Bible teaches that Satan is the archenemy of God. He is opposed to God and all that is godly. He is the enemy of our souls and seeks to delude and lead astray the children of God, coming as an “angel of light” or as a “roaring lion”. The devil and his hosts seek to blind the minds of human beings and to bring them into the bondage of sin. Believers therefore are engaged in a spiritual warfare against powers they cannot handle in their own strength. These evil powers can only be overcome through faith in the blood of Christ, the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Satan is a created being who rebelled against God and was consequently cast out of God’s presence, along with other angels who rebelled (*Isaiah 14:12–15*).
2. Satan has supernatural power, yet is finite and does not have all power (*Luke 22:31–32; James 4:7*). He is limited in knowledge. Consequently he often defeats his own purposes and plans.
3. Demons or evil spirits cooperate with Satan in carrying out his purposes and plans (*Ephesians 2:1–3; 6:12*).
4. He is the tempter and uses any means possible to cause people to sin (*1 Thessalonians 3:5*).
5. He is the devil, the false accuser and slanderer (*Revelation 12:10*).
6. He will come as an angel of light or as a roaring lion, seeking to mislead and destroy God’s people (*2 Corinthians 11:14, 15; 1 Peter 5:8*).

B. God’s Triumph Over Satan

While Christ was on earth, Satan attempted to destroy Christ and His redemptive ministry in various ways. Satan through King Herod failed in his attempt to have the baby Jesus killed (*Matthew 2*). He tried to defeat Christ by tempting Him to do things that would have meant disobedience to His God-given mission, but Christ stood firm (*Matthew 4:1–11*). A synagogue crowd was so furious at Jesus’ teaching that they were going to throw Him over a cliff but Jesus walked right through the crowd and carried on (*Luke 4:28–30*). It is quite likely that Satan rejoiced at the crucifixion of Christ, not realizing that the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ would provide the basis of salvation for all people (*Colossians 2:13–15; 1 Peter 2:24*).

In the end God will banish Satan and his evil forces to a place of eternal torment (*Revelation 20:10*). Then God’s rule will be complete and uncontested.

Though unseen, angels are also key participants in this drama. They were very involved in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 1:20; 4:11; 26:53; 28:2–7; Luke 1:26, 38; 2:8–15; 22:43; Acts 1:10–11*).

They have also served God's people by giving protection (*Psalm 34:7*), guidance (*Acts 8:26*), encouragement (*Hebrews 1:14*) and will be very involved in the events accompanying Christ's return (*Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16*). At times it appears that there may even be direct confrontation between Satan and his angels and God's angels (*Daniel 10:12-14*).

C. God's Resources for our Victory

God, through Christ, has demonstrated how to live a victorious life. Christ in human flesh relied on the power of God for victory over sin. We can and must do the same.

1. We are harassed by Satan and tempted by our inherited impulses to sin (*1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:16; Revelation 12:10*).
2. God, who is almighty and faithful, will not permit any temptation or trial to come our way which is beyond our ability to handle in His strength (*1 Corinthians 10:13*).
3. God can use the process of temptation and victory to strengthen and mature the believer (*Luke 22:31-32; James 1:2-4*).
4. We claim victory over sin on the basis of the shed blood of Christ and through His power and authority (*1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 12:11*).
5. As Christians we need to yield to the control of the Holy Spirit who can empower our lives for victory and service (*Zechariah 4:6; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9*).
6. Christ is interceding for us (*Romans 8:26, 31-34; Hebrews 7:25*).
7. We claim God's power through prayer (*Mark 9:25-29; Ephesians 6:12, 18; Hebrews 4:14-16*).
8. By faith we accept that we are dead to sin and alive to God and seek to practice that reality in daily life (*Romans 6:11; Hebrews 11*).
9. The Christian needs to know and practice the Word of God (*Psalm 119:11; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12*).
10. Our fellowship with other Christians strengthens us (*Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:1-4; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:13-16*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. In what ways do Christians open themselves up to the influence and control of Satan?
2. What is meant by "the shield of faith" (*Ephesians 6:16*)?
3. Why did Satan quote Scriptures to Christ during His temptation (*Matthew 4:1-11*)?
4. Someone has said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." How does this relate to temptation?

Name _____

1. Read about the temptation of Jesus in *Matthew 4:1–11*.

Who is the tempter? _____

How did Jesus respond to the temptation? _____

2. List the steps in the process of temptation. *James 1:13–15*

3. How can we resist and overcome temptation?

Psalm 119:11 _____

Matthew 26:41 _____

James 4:7 _____

2 Timothy 2:22 _____

Philippians 4:8 _____

4. To understand that a victorious life is possible, find out why Jesus died for us.

1 Peter 2:24 _____

Titus 2:14 _____

5. Analyze the key verse (*1 Corinthians 10:13*).

What can be said about every temptation? _____

To what has God committed Himself?

a) _____

b) _____

What is God's will for all tempted people? _____

6. How will we get through life without falling away?

2 Timothy 1:12 _____

1 Peter 1:5 _____

Romans 8:35-37 _____

7. Identify some specific actions that have helped you overcome temptation. _____

8. Write the key verse from memory. _____

* * * * *

Second Coming of Christ

Key Verse: “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Sometimes we are so engrossed in our present life that we tend to forget that this life is merely a prelude to an eternal future ahead of us. Yet the second coming of Christ is one of the major themes of the Bible. The return of Christ is the Christian’s blessed hope. It is the final fulfillment of God’s great plan of salvation. For the Christian, the prospect of the return of Christ is a bright light amid the gathering clouds of doom in our world. The question “Where am I going after this life?” is a basic human question. Consequently, it is through the Biblical teaching of Christ’s return that the believer finds hope, direction and meaning for life.

For the unbelievers Christ’s return will terminate any opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. It will be a day of remorse and fear as people stand in judgment before God. Any excuses for having rejected Christ will sound hollow in the face of eternal punishment. Jesus invites us to come to Him now for salvation while we have the opportunity.

Sometimes too much attention is given to unclear details surrounding our Lord’s return. It is not necessary to fit all the events at the end of time into a neat, systematic package. The concern of the Biblical writers was to give teaching on the second coming of Christ in the context of what that truth should mean for Christians living today. A study on the second coming of Christ should change and mold our lives now; it should lead to holy, non-materialistic living. It should motivate us to share the gospel with others. This is where the emphasis should be.

A. Christ is Coming

When Jesus had completed his earthly ministry, He was taken up into heaven. At His departure, two men dressed in white appeared and said to the bewildered disciples, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven” (*Acts 1:11*). Since that time believers have been waiting for His return, which will mark the end of time as we know it and the beginning of eternity.

1. OUR LORD WILL RETURN

- a) He will come personally and visibly (*Matthew 24:29–31; Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7*).
- b) His coming will be at an unknown time (*Matthew 25:1–13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11*).
- c) He will gather the Christians to Himself and bring the unbelievers to judgment (*John 14:1–3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*).
- d) Our world, which has been under a curse since the fall in the Garden of Eden, will be destroyed (*Genesis 3:17–19; Romans 8:18–22; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 13*).

2. SIGNS OF HIS COMING

- a) There will be widespread deception, wars, national strife, unrest, and wickedness (*Matthew 24:4–14; Acts 2:17–21*).
- b) There will be tribulation and many believers will fall away (*2 Thessalonians 2:1–3; 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 7:14*).
- c) The gospel will be preached all over the world (*Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9–10*).

3. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (1 CORINTHIANS 15)

- a) In the interval between death and resurrection, the righteous will be with Christ in a state of conscious bliss and the unrighteous will be in a state of conscious suffering (*Luke 16:19–32; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1–8; Philippians 1:21–23; 2 Peter 2:4–9*).
- b) It will be a bodily resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:42–44*).
- c) People will receive new or changed bodies (*1 Corinthians 15:42–54*).
- d) The resurrection of Christ guarantees the Christian's resurrection (*1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:20–23; 2 Corinthians 4:13–15*).

4. JUDGEMENT (*Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 20:11–15*)

- a) All people will be judged (*Romans 2:1–12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27*).
- b) Judgment will be according to works (*Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10*).
- c) Christ will be the judge (*John 5:22*).
- d) Judgment will be related to rewards and punishment, eternal rewards for the faithful and eternal punishment for the wicked. Christians will be judged as Christians and the unbelievers will be judged as unbelievers. Whether a person is lost or saved is decided in this life (*Matthew 25:31–46; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–8; Revelation 20*).

B. Christ's Coming and the Believer

1. God has prepared a place in heaven for all Christians. They will be in God's presence in a state of perfect happiness (*Matthew 25:34; John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:22-27*).
2. At Christ's coming the believers who have died, as well as the ones who are living, will receive new bodies (*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*).
3. Christians will be judged, not to determine whether they will go to heaven, but to determine rewards for faithful service. The Christian will not be judged for sins forgiven in this life (*John 5:24-29*).
4. Justice will finally triumph. If there is a problem of evil and why God allows it, we know that God is not finished yet. God will set all things right (*Romans 12:19; Revelation 20:11-15*).

C. Christ's Coming and the Unbeliever

1. When Christ returns, Satan and all his followers will be defeated and banished to eternal punishment (*Revelation 20:10-14*).
2. People who have rejected God's salvation will suffer eternal punishment in hell (*Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:11-15*).
3. The anticipated coming of Christ serves as a warning to the unbeliever to seek God's mercy and forgiveness now when there is the opportunity (*Revelation 21:5-8; 22:12-15*).

Knowing that Jesus Christ is coming again gives us a perspective on the meaning and importance of our present life. This hope should encourage us to live holy lives (*2 Peter 3:11*) and sustain us during difficult times (*Hebrews 11:24-26*). Knowing that this life is temporary, the Christian needs to live for God and not for earthly riches and pleasures (*Colossians 3:23-24*). The imminent return of Christ stimulates us for Christian service (*Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11*).

The last prayer in the Bible is perhaps a suitable prayer to end this lesson, "Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (*Revelation 22:20*).



Let's Talk it Over

1. Are there any indications that the coming of Jesus Christ is fast approaching? If so, what are they?
2. Do you frequently think of Christ's return? Are you waiting and watching? How can a Christian grow in this area?
3. If you knew that Christ would return one year from today, how would that affect the way you live?

* * * * *

Name _____

1. What does Paul teach about Christ's return in *1 Thessalonians 4 and 5*? He does not want us to be _____, so that we may not _____ (4:13).

What will happen first when Christ descends? (4:16)

What will be the second event? (4:17)

What will be the continuing result of His return? (4:17)

What will the coming of Christ be like for unbelievers? (5:2–3)

a) _____

b) _____

How should we prepare for His return? (5:6)

What is the state of those believers who have died (are asleep)? (5:10)

2. Discover more details about Christ's return:

Acts 1:11 _____

Revelation 1:7 _____

Matthew 24:44 _____

Philippians 3:20–21 _____

John 14:3 _____

Matthew 16:27 _____

1 Peter 5:4 _____

1 John 3:2 _____

3. What should be our attitude to the promise of His return?

Mark 13:33 _____

2Thessalonians 2:12 _____

Titus 2:13–14 _____

1 Peter 1:13 _____

2 Peter 3:11–12 _____

4. Reflect: Is the hope of Christ’s return an encouraging or a frightening thought to you? Explain _____

5. Write the key verse from memory _____

* * * * *



Christian Mennonite Conference

The Story of the Christian Mennonite Conference

The Christian Mennonite Conference (CMC) is somewhat unique in that it is actually structured as a group of congregations within one church rather than a group of churches that are united in a conference. Today each congregation operates with more autonomy in how they worship and run their programs. However the structure of the Conference was a system of itinerant preachers who took their turn speaking at each congregation.

Over the years, the CMC has had numerous changes to its structure. Congregations have joined and left the Conference. The practices of the worship services, baptism and communion have also seen change. The following is a brief picture of the CMC and how it has developed.

A. History

A new page was added to the history of the CMC at the Annual Meeting held on April 18, 2015. The delegates made a decisive move to change the name of the Conference to *Christian Mennonite Conference*. After 137 years known as *Chortitzer*, the churches felt it was time for a change. After deliberations of various names, the choices were narrowed down to three from which the delegates then voted on at the meeting of April 18. They wanted to choose a name that represented more of who they are rather than just from where they came.

There is a saying that location is everything. When looking at the history of the Christian Mennonite Conference, this saying fits well. The Mennonites tended to locate where they were free to worship and live according to their beliefs. So the Mennonites of the Bergthal Colony within Russia faced a dilemma. Not all of them were able to own land, and so when the threat of changes to their educational system and the loss of their military exemption became real, they considered a move.

A delegate visit to Canada looked promising and so they began negotiations. With the promise of the freedom to worship and to remain exempt from the military, they began the long journey to discover a new

home. More than 80 percent of the colony made the trek to settle in the East Reserve within the province of Manitoba.

In 1874 they came to Manitoba. The Bergthal Mennonites developed villages around which they farmed the land. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe settled in the new village of Chortitz where the first church was built. It was because of this location, the place where Bishop Wiebe lived, that the new church was soon named “Die Mennoniten Gemeinde Zur Chortitz,” which then became the Chortitzer Mennonite Church.

With a number of this Mennonite group settling in the southern portion of the East Reserve, another church was built in Grunthal. Otherwise, people met within their villages with itinerant pastors who would move from village to village to bring the service. Twice a year the people would meet in either of the two churches for communion and baptism.

A number within the group found the land unsuitable and ended up moving to the West Reserve. This group became the Bergthal church.

When the Canadian government introduced new regulations for education, many in the group felt threatened and once again the group was split as they headed for a new home in Paraguay.

This opened doors for changes within the Conference for the remaining people. It grew into a number of congregations each with their own church building. In the beginning most pastors had other employment and served the church in an unpaid position. As the churches continued to grow, a number saw the benefit of having a paid pastor. Many of the pastors preach more in their own congregation with less time spent as an itinerant speaker in other churches. This has slowly changed from a time when all pastors were on an itinerant schedule.

From having churches only in Manitoba, the Conference expanded to include Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. At present Manitoba has eight churches and BC has two.

The first CMC church in Randolph, formerly Chortitz, discontinued services on August 29, 2010, due to a dwindling congregation. The church has been declared a heritage site to be preserved for future generations.

B. Practices

For many years, all services were held in German. However as children grew and English became spoken more within homes, the church gradually added English services as well. At the present time, all CMC churches have English services with two churches having German services as well.

Baptism and communion was officiated by the bishop. While at one time all met at one of the first two churches, eventually each church had their own

baptism and communion. At present baptism and communion services are officiated by the local pastors of their congregation.

Once a year a meeting is held where all churches come together to discuss the operation of the Conference. In the beginning, all men of the churches were welcome and any in attendance could vote of the issues that needed to be decided. This has changed to a delegate system. Each church sends representatives on their behalf who vote in accordance to what the membership has voted on in each congregation.

Pastors and deacons for the most part are elected from within the congregation where they serve. These positions are generally held until retirement. The bishop and assistant bishop have five-year terms. They are nominated by the pastors and deacons and voted upon by the membership of each church. The conference financial board is made up of deacons from the churches.

Missions is an important part of the CMC. Many missionaries have been supported financially by the conference. A number of mission churches have been supported by the CMC Mission Board with financial and leadership support.

One important ministry operated by the CMC is a radio ministry. Low German programs are produced and broadcast on various radio stations within North and South America.

C. CMC Statement of Faith

1. We believe in the one living eternal God in three persons: God, the Father; God, the Son; and God the Holy Spirit; Creator of all things.
2. We believe in the deity, virgin birth, sinless humanity, substitutionary death, atoning blood, bodily resurrection, and ascension to heaven of Jesus Christ.
3. We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit, sent from God and indwelling every believer.
4. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are wholly inspired by God and are infallible and the final authority in faith and life.
5. We believe that man is a sinner by nature.

6. We believe that man is saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
7. We believe that man is a free moral agent.
8. We believe in the church as the body of Christ and its mission to fulfill the “Great Commission” of preaching, teaching, and discipling.
9. We believe that every born again believer should be baptized with water upon confession of his faith in Jesus Christ.
10. We believe that the Lord instituted the ordinance of communion as a remembrance of His suffering and death.
11. We believe that the church has the obligation to keep pure the Body of Christ by disciplining those who have chosen to live in deliberate sin.
12. We believe that every Christian should walk in love towards God and man, refraining from carnal strife and contentions in all areas of life.
13. We believe that God instituted marriage as a permanent bond between male and female of the same faith.
14. We believe that all governments are instituted by God and therefore are to be respected as such.
15. We believe in the literal resurrection of the body; eternal glory for believers in heaven, and everlasting punishment for unbelievers in hell.
16. We believe in the personal and bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

D. CMC Congregations

Bothwell Christian Fellowship
New Bothwell, MB

Christian Faith Church
Winkler, MB

Community Christian Fellowship
Grunthal, MB

Fort St. John Evangelical Mission
Fort St. John, BC

Grunthal CMC
Grunthal, MB

Mitchell Gospel Church
Mitchell, MB

Niverville CMC
Niverville, MB

Prespatou Mennonite Church
Prespatou, BC

Steinbach CMC
Steinbach, MB

Training Grounds
St. Malo, MB



The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference

You're part of the EMC story. Today we come from a range of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. Together we serve in the present, help shape our future, and respond to the past.

A. Current Events

The name *Evangelical Mennonite Conference* expresses the nature of the EMC. We are *Evangelical* in that we stand for the truth of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. We are *Mennonite* in that we hold to the historic distinctives of the faith of the Anabaptists. We are a *Conference* in that we work together as a group of churches in carrying on the ministry Jesus left to his followers. Our Conference slogan is *Christ through us to others*.

Our Conference focus is on ministering to people both spiritually and physically. We do so in the name of Jesus Christ who died for the human race on the cross and was raised to life by God the Father. We extend the hand of fellowship to all like-minded Christians in a spirit of cooperation (*1 Corinthians 3:9*). Our logo shows an active person, a cross, and three concentric rings to portray "surrounding the globe." We, as EMC, are people who actively proclaim the message of Jesus Christ and the cross around the world. If you squint hard enough, you may see the letters E, M and C hidden in the logo. The entire logo is a stylized "e" to represent the EMC.

The EMC has five national boards: General Board, Board of Church Ministries, Board of Missions, Board of Leadership and Outreach, and Board of Trustees. We hold national gatherings regularly: convention (yearly), TRU for youth leaders (every two years), Abundant Springs for teens (every two years), Conference Council and national ministerial meetings (twice yearly), and a ministerial retreat (every two years).

2. MISSIONS

From its beginning in 1812 until the early 1950s the EMC was more

concerned about preserving the faith than sharing it. Though early Anabaptists had a strong missionary spirit, persecution, migration, and general spiritual decline had almost doused the flame. However, during the late 1940s and early 1950s God, through various means, fanned the smoldering embers of the missionary spirit into a burning flame.

Missionaries from other churches shared their reports with EMCers; occasionally these got mentioned in an early German language Conference magazine. In several of our churches, groups of people felt burdened to share the gospel abroad. In 1945 Susanne Plett, from Landmark, went to Bible school in Winnipeg and then to Bolivia. In 1949, Abe Koop, also from southern Manitoba, went to Bible school in Steinbach and went to Brazil. Others followed. This was a major new beginning.

In 1953 the Conference formed the EMC Board of Missions, which now oversees an expanding missionary ministry around the world. Much of the EMC's budget goes to further cross-cultural ministry in many countries. The EMC directly oversees work in Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. EMC Missions also has formal relationships with many other mission agencies, which allows EMCers to serve in many other countries.

Our missions goal is to lead people into a living relationship with Christ, establish them in sound doctrine, and have them function effectively in the church and society. Ministries include evangelism, agricultural assistance, health care, literature, education, and media. Gifts and donations from EMC church members help support personnel, on-going programs, and special projects.

EMC Missions is involved in three types of service programs:

- a) Career missionary service: a person makes a commitment to missionary work as a career, on our administrative fields or with one of our many partner missions, ranging from partial to full support.
- b) Mid-term missionary service: a person serves within our Ascend Internship Program, a six-month to two-year opportunity of learning under the supportive direction of our career missionaries. This type of service assists and contributes to the regular missions programs on the field.
- c) Short-term missionary service: volunteers serve for one to two weeks on teams focussed on prayer, construction, camp work, VBS, and evangelism, assisting the regular missions program on the field.

Each one of us can participate in the EMC missions program. We can pray for workers and their work, for the national churches and its leaders, and for the overseeing Board of Missions. We can give. Regular support of workers,

field projects, and special needs depends upon the faithful giving of God's people.

We also volunteer to serve in missions. If you feel God calling you to serve, make this known to your local church and our missions staff at the national office. Then, get acquainted with the practices and principles outlined in the EMC Missions Handbook. Since the EMC has formal relationships with many mission agencies, give them prayerful consideration. Because education is needed, find out what is required. Most importantly, maintain a healthy spiritual life and be helpfully involved within your local church.

2. CHURCH PLANTING

In 1946 the Western Gospel Mission began—a church planting effort in towns in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and NW Ontario. Some of the main promoters were EMCers. By the time WGM closed in 1961, it had opened the EMC's eyes to wider needs in Canada. Churches were established. The Board of Missions initially guided church planting in Canada, but more recently a Church Planting Task Force gives leadership under the Board of Leadership and Outreach.

The EMC now has congregations in five provinces from BC to Ontario. It is actively working at planting new churches and God is blessing. Local churches and regions of churches are key to our church planting efforts. The EMC's conference budget and the Church Planting Task Force provide help, but much of the vision and effort come from local churches and the regions of which they are a part.

3. EDUCATION

Today within the EMC, education is important—increasingly so. EMC members show their commitment to the Lord partly by preparing to serve better through career and professional training at university, college, seminary, trade schools, and elsewhere. Steinbach Bible College, co-owned by our Conference, prepares people to serve as pastors, missionaries, and church leaders. More EMCers have attended SBC than any other Bible college and continue to do so. We also have representation at Canadian Mennonite University.

With a growing missionary vision and the need for qualified teachers, the need for education continues. Private schools were important in early history and still today. The EMC has a formal relationship with Steinbach Christian High School, which actually covers from kindergarten to grade 12.

With time, the churches also developed programs for better Christian

education. Church family nights, choir, Sunday School and club programs were designed to teach the Word of God. The variety of programs grew to include camps, home Bible study, Vacation Bible School, and others. Many of these programs also teach the Christian faith to those not yet integrated within the Church.

The Board of Church Ministries is engaged in education and publication within our Conference, assisting with a range of resources and services. It is concerned both about our future (youth) and our past (archives). Its magazine *The Messenger* is published monthly, alternating in print and digital formats, to assist in educating and connecting Conference churches. The subscription price for EMC members and adherents is funded by church contributions.

4. CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

We work together as a Conference in missions, education, relief, social concern, and social justice. Together we accomplish much more than we can as individual churches. Conference office staff members help to coordinate these ministries.

The churches of the EMC are grouped into nine regions. Many of them sponsor their own regional gatherings, youth events, and ministerial meetings. A member appointed by each region represents it on the EMC's General Board, which provides broader oversight to the EMC. The Conference moderator presides over the General Board meetings and Conference Council meetings. The chair of the Board of Leadership and Outreach presides over the Conference Ministerial meetings.

Twice a year church delegates meet in a Conference Council session to hear reports and give direction to the varied ministries of the Conference. Constructive criticism, advice, and endorsement are given to projects of Conference-wide interest. These programs are financed by the gifts received from local churches, by individual members, and through estate funds.

B. Historical Developments

1. FROM GERMANY/HOLLAND TO POLAND

People who were part of the Anabaptist Reformation suffered terrible persecution and thousands were killed. To escape the persecution, Anabaptists fled, settling in secluded places. The majority found a haven in the swamps of the Vistula delta of Poland. Here they prospered, for their skills at draining the land soon made them valuable to the nobles on whose land they farmed. Gradually, through the 250 years that they lived in this

area, their prosperity brought increasing hostility from their neighbours.

As well, Anabaptists refused to pay the taxes levied to support the state church since they did not participate in it. Their pacifist beliefs also led them to refuse to pay military taxes. Then under Frederick the Great, part of Poland became part of Prussia (now Germany); the entire climate changed and Anabaptists found themselves once again a hated minority.

The new Prussian rule placed more pressure on Anabaptists to pay civil and church state taxes and in 1774 brought further pressure to bear on Anabaptists with an edict prohibiting land purchases without royal permission. A later law specifically prohibited Anabaptists from buying land not owned by Anabaptists. As a result there began to be increasing fear of renewed persecution.

2. FROM PRUSSIA TO RUSSIA

In 1762–63 Catherine II of Russia invited Germans and other Europeans, including Anabaptists in Prussia, to settle in Russia. It was an attractive alternative. They were offered complete religious freedom, exemptions from military service, and land. The renewed threat of persecution, military involvement, and the inability to secure more land in Prussia became the incentive to a large migration to southern Russia (now Ukraine).

3. THE BEGINNING OF THE SMALL CHURCH (*KLEINE GEMEINDE*)

Though the move proved to be good economically, spiritual life in the Anabaptist church declined. Klaas Reimer, who had been elected a minister in Prussia in 1801, joined the many new Anabaptist immigrants in Russia in 1804. He was appalled at the lack of spiritual life in the churches. The church had become lax in church discipline and condoned questionable practices such as card playing, smoking, and drinking. The church had also become too closely aligned with the Russian government as shown by their contributions to the cost of Russia's fight against Napoleon. Reimer also felt uneasy about the use of force employed by local Anabaptist police as they enforced colony regulations.

This prompted Reimer and several others, in 1812, to begin meeting separately for worship services and by 1814 to organize as a separate church. The others mockingly called this minority group the Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*), a name that the group itself soon accepted; they saw it as indicating the true nature of the faithful church in a hostile world. In 1952 the Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*) changed its name to *Evangelical Mennonite Church* (EMC) and in 1959 the word *Church* was replaced by *Conference*.

4. FROM RUSSIA TO NORTH AMERICA

The group grew slowly, with various factors threatening the disintegration of the newly formed church. There were also new pressures looming in Russia. By 1866 Russia wanted Anabaptist schools to teach the Russian language and become assimilated into the culture. The German-speaking Anabaptists resisted. In the 1870s a universal military service was imposed and Anabaptists were included, contrary to an earlier agreement.

By 1874 there were two groups of the Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*) in Russia. Both groups decided to immigrate to North America, with one group settling in the USA (Nebraska) and the larger group in Canada (Manitoba). Again the desire to have religious freedom was a major factor in the decision to migrate.

5. EARLY STRUGGLES IN CANADA

Shortly after the migration of the Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*) to the United States and Canada in 1874–75, morale was low and leadership was weak. John Holdeman, from Kansas, was invited to speak in Manitoba and his dogmatism, revivalism, and emotionally expressive Christianity appealed to people who felt emotionally dry in the context of dull legalism. About one-third of members in Manitoba (including some key church leaders) and a significant number in the USA left to form Holdeman congregations.

Attempts were made at times to foster relationships between members in Nebraska (and some who had moved to Kansas) and Manitoba, but eventually the U.S. group gave up its Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*) identity. Some joined what is now known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches or in Kansas started what today is known as Emmanuel Mennonite Church. As early as the 1890s in the Steinbach, Man., area some families and young people, looking for a more progressive faith, joined the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church (now Cornerstone Fellowship Church).

In the late 1940s a large group of the Small Church (*Kleine Gemeinde*) from southern Manitoba left for Mexico. They felt threatened by the public school system as well as the perceived threat of accepting wrong values and practices. Organizational ties were maintained between the churches in Canada and Mexico until 1955. Currently there are many friendship ties between the EMC in Canada and the *Kleine Gemeinde* Church in Mexico and Belize, but no formal ties.

6. THE CHURCH PROSPERS IN CANADA

From the 1940s through to today the EMC continues its development into

a Conference that looks far beyond its early cultural roots and the borders of Manitoba. The Western Gospel Mission (1946-61) showed aggressiveness in church planting that we can learn from. During that same time the EMC developed its own Board of Missions (1953) and our workers now serve in many countries. Missions is now part of the DNA of our Conference.

One of the delights of our recent history is that the EMC is now spread across five provinces. The 1960s, for instance, saw many churches established in more Canadian provinces—it was a key period of church planting in the EMC. Decades later, church planting remains a passion within the EMC today. Symbolic of our desire to reach out while retaining an Evangelical Anabaptist faith, most churches no longer use the term Mennonite in their local name.

Churches have been established since the 1980s in southern Ontario and in northern and southern Alberta among German-speaking Mennonites who have come to Canada. They are often the descendants of Anabaptists who had previously left Canada. In the 1990s ministries were started and churches planted among Hispanic peoples. The Church Planting Task Force welcomes further opportunities to establish new churches.

The EMC's annual conventions have been held in all its nine regions, hosted graciously and skilfully by local churches. Showing how we are committed together to serve and reach out, the EMC has a Conference budget, of national and international concerns, to which all local churches are to contribute. Behind the budget's lines of numbers are many challenging ministries that meet desperate human needs in many communities and countries. While some people might describe our Conference as small, our Conference budget (national and international) is large. Together, in both Canada and wider, we serve in a multitude of ministries that seek to change the world for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Many changes have happened within the EMC. Today we are a Conference of churches that has multiplied in members and churches, grown in ministries and social involvement, and is keenly aware of Jesus and our need to serve him together.

C. Conclusion

As we face challenges, God has called us as individuals, as churches and as a Conference to faithfully serve Him in our generation. Let us joyfully and sacrificially give ourselves, our abilities and our resources so that many people will turn to Christ in our generation and serve him in the Church and in society in ways that reflect the Kingdom of God.

D. EMC 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 Church.

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.

Deuteronomy 6:5–6; Joshua 1:8; Nehemiah 8:5–6; Psalm 119; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Mark 7:13; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 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.

Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalms 90:2; 96:10; 139:7–12; 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 44:6; 57:15; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 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.

Psalms 19:1–4; 47:1–9; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 6:9; John 3:16; 14:8–9; Acts 17:28; Romans 1:20; 8:15; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 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, 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.

Isaiah 7:14; 53:5–6; Matthew 1:20–23; 28:6; John 1:1–4; Acts 1:10–11; Romans 3:25–26; 5:8–10; 6:6–8; 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 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.

Genesis 1:1–2; John 16:7–8, 13; Acts 1:8; 5:3–4; Romans 8:9, 26; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4–11; Galatians 4:6; 5:22–23; Ephesians 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.

Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 38–39; Psalms 8; 33:6–9; 136:5–9; Jeremiah 10:12–13; Mark 10:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–17; Romans 11:33–36; Hebrews 1:1–3; Revelation 4:11

4. THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

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.

Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7; Exodus 20:12–17; Psalm 139:13–16; Acts 17:24–29; Galatians 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

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 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.

Genesis 3:1–5; Job 1–2; 1 Peter 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.

Matthew 4:1–11; 25:41; Luke 10:17–21; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 6:10–18; Colossians 1:13; 2:14–15; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 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 transformed 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.

Isaiah 53:4–6; 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 away. Faith and obedience are essential in maintaining this assurance and growth in grace.

John 8:31–32; Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 3:10–14; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; 1 Peter 1:3–9; 1 John 3:14; 5:11–13

8. DISCIPLESHIP AND NONCONFORMITY

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.

Matthew 4:16–22; 28:19–20; Mark 8:34–35; Acts 11:26; Romans 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 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

Isaiah 53:3–9; Matthew 5–7; Mark 9:50; John 18:36; Romans 12–13; Ephesians 2:14–18; Philippians 2:3–4; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 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 and make a commitment

to Jesus Christ by faith are baptized into his church by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Matthew 6:16; 28:18–20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:38–39, 42–47; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:25–29; Ephesians 1:19–23; 4:1–6, 11–16; Colossians 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.

Matthew 25:31–46; Romans 12:1–2; Galatians 6:1–2; Colossians 3:12–17; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 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.

Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:36–47; 10:47–48; 18:8; 22:16; Romans 6:1–4; 1 Corinthians 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.

Matthew 26:26–29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:17–34; Ephesians 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 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.

Daniel 12:2; Matthew 22:29–32; Luke 16:19–31; 23:43; John 5:28–29; 20:20, 24–29; Acts 24:15; Romans 8:19–23; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 1:19–26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20:11–15

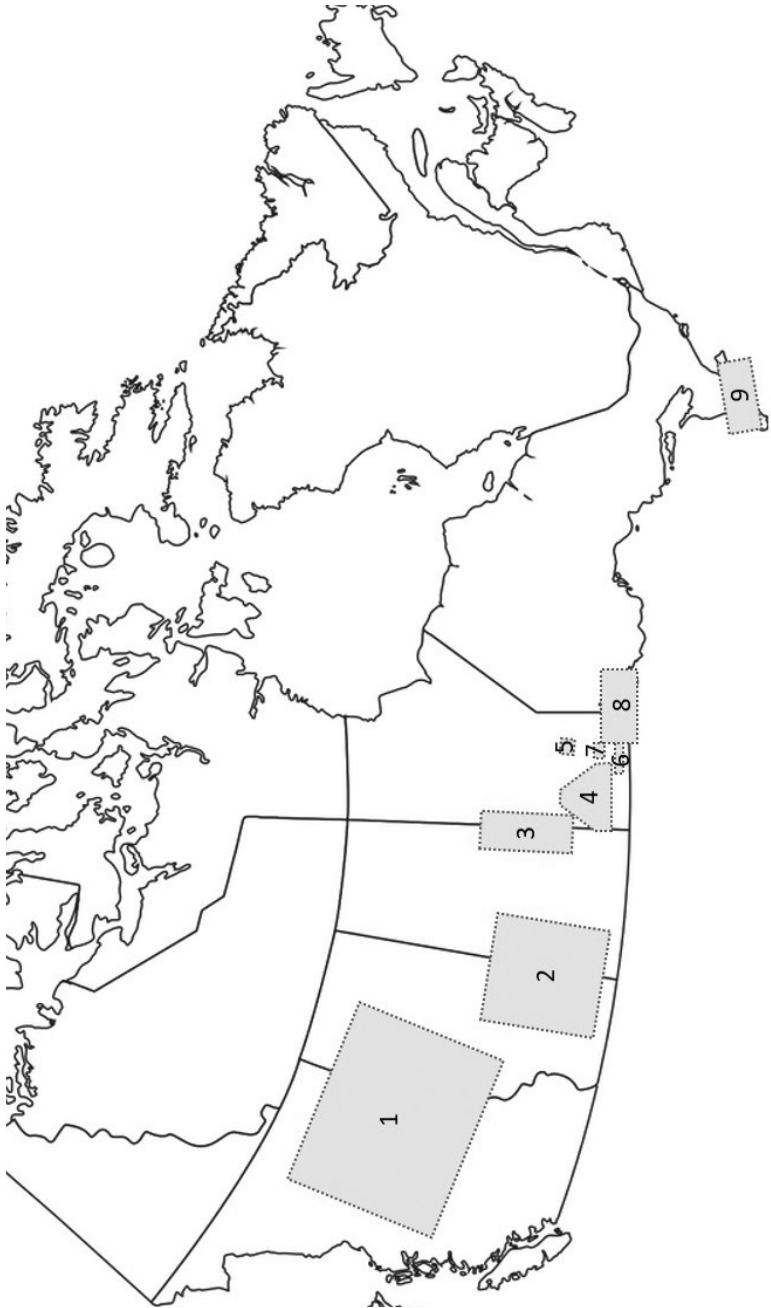
13. THE RETURN AND FINAL TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

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

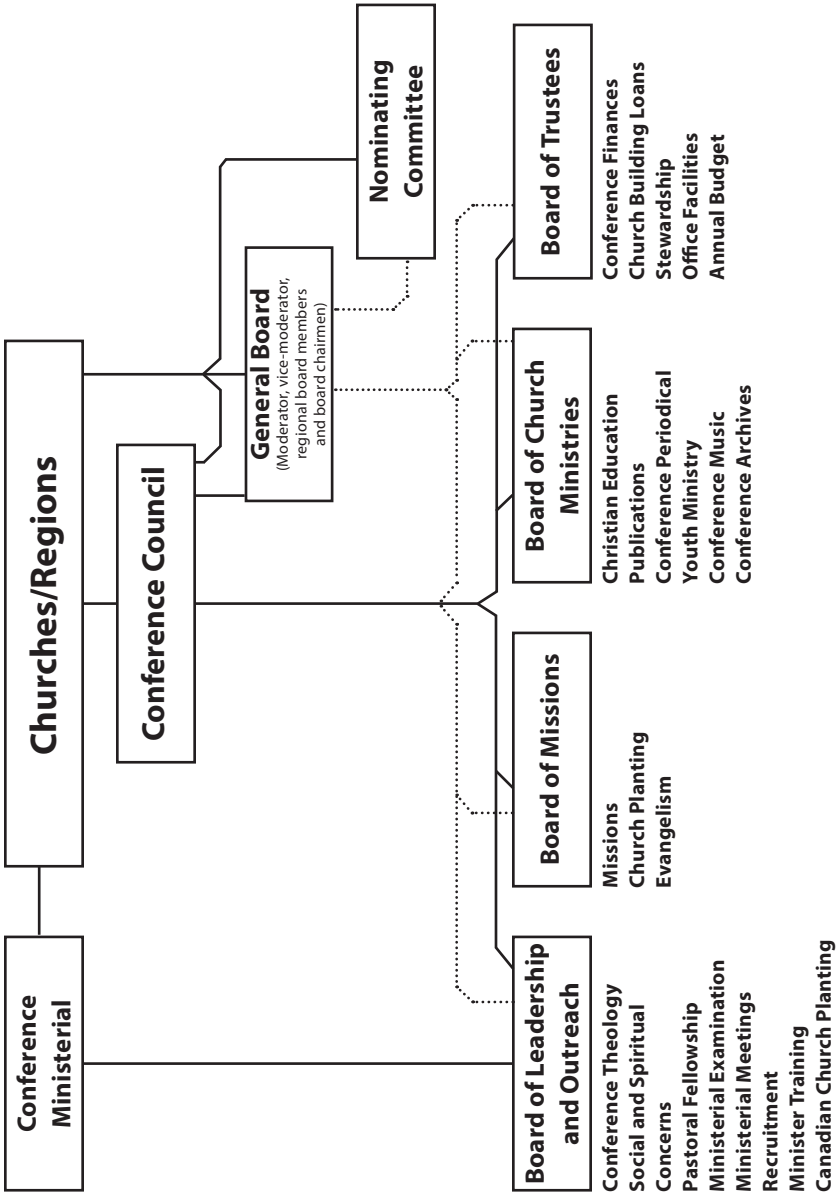
Matthew 25:31–46; John 14:1–6; Acts 1:11; Romans 8:12–15; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; 2 Peter 3:10–13; Revelation 20–22

EMC CHURCHES IN CANADA 2019



<p>Region 1: Northern Alberta and B.C. <i>Grande Prairie, Alberta</i> Westpointe Community Church <i>High Level, Alberta</i> High Level Christian Fellowship <i>La Crete, Alberta, and area</i> Hillside Christian Fellowship La Crete Christian Fellowship <i>Burns Lake, B.C.</i> Island Gospel Fellowship <i>Vanderhoof, B.C.</i> Vanderhoof Christian Fellowship</p>	<p>Community Bible Fellowship <i>Creighton, Saskatchewan</i> Northern Fellowship Chapel <i>Endeavour, Saskatchewan</i> Endeavour Fellowship Chapel <i>Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan</i> Pineridge Fellowship Chapel <i>Pelly, Saskatchewan</i> Pelly Fellowship Chapel</p>	<p>Heartland Community Church Prairie Rose EMC Saturday Night Church <i>Pansy, Manitoba</i> Pansy Chapel <i>Steinbach, Manitoba, and area</i> Evangelical Fellowship Church Good News Community Church Ridgewood Church Steinbach EMC Stony Brook Fellowship <i>Fort Frances, Ontario</i> Evangelical Fellowship Church</p>
<p>Region 2: Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan <i>Calgary, Alberta</i> Abbeydale Christian Fellowship Love in Action Christian Centre <i>Coaldale, Alberta</i> Coaldale Mennonite Church <i>Edmonton, Alberta</i> Ephrata Evangelical Church* <i>Picture Butte, Alberta</i> Picture Butte Mennonite Church <i>Redcliff, Alberta</i> Gospel Light Fellowship <i>Taber, Alberta</i> Taber EMC <i>Wymark, Saskatchewan</i> Wymark EMC</p>	<p>Region 6: South-central Manitoba <i>Morris, Manitoba</i> Morris Fellowship Chapel <i>Roseisle, Manitoba</i> Roseisle EMC <i>Rosert, Manitoba, and area</i> Pleasant Valley EMC Rosertort EMC Rosertort Fellowship Chapel</p>	<p>Region 9: Southern Ontario <i>Leamington, Ontario</i> Leamington EMC <i>Mount Salem, Ontario</i> Mount Salem Community Church <i>Stevenson, Ontario</i> New Life Christian Fellowship <i>St. Thomas, Ontario</i> The Forge* <i>Stratfordville, Ontario</i> Stratfordville Evangelical Mission Church <i>Tillsonburg, Ontario</i> The Church of Living Water <i>Toronto, Ontario</i> Glory of Christ Evangelical Church*</p>
<p>Region 3: Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan <i>Birch River, Manitoba</i> Christian Fellowship Church <i>Swan River, Manitoba</i></p>	<p>Region 7: Winnipeg, Manitoba, and suburbs <i>Oak Bluff, Manitoba</i> Oak Bluff Bible Church <i>Winnipeg, Manitoba</i> Aberdeen EMC Braeside EMC Crestview Fellowship Church Fort Garry EMC Kingdom Life Church* Many Rooms Church Community St. Vital EMC Winnipeg Logos Church</p>	<p>Region 8: Southeastern Manitoba and Eastern Ontario <i>Anola, Manitoba</i> Anola Fellowship Chapel <i>Blumenort, Manitoba</i> Blumenort Community Church <i>Kleeefeld, Manitoba</i> Kleeefeld EMC <i>Lorette, Manitoba</i> Prairie Grove Fellowship Chapel <i>Landmark, Manitoba</i></p>
<p>Region 4: Western Manitoba <i>Brandon, Manitoba</i> Ebenezer Christian Church <i>Kola, Manitoba</i> Kola EMC <i>MacGregor, Manitoba</i> MacGregor EMC <i>Portage la Prairie, Manitoba</i> Portage Evangelical Church <i>Siaux Valley, Manitoba</i> Reserve Fellowship Chapel* <i>Treesbank, Manitoba</i> Treesbank Community Church</p>	<p>Region 5: Manitoba Interlake <i>Arborg, Manitoba</i> The ConneXion <i>Mennville, Manitoba</i> Mennville EMC <i>Morweena, Manitoba</i> Morweena EMC <i>Riverton, Manitoba</i> Riverton Gospel Chapel</p>	<p>*Not a chartered EMC church</p>

F. EMC Organization





EMMC

MAKING DISCIPLES | CONNECTING CHURCHES

The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference

A. History

Our story begins with the Anabaptist movement in Holland in the 1530s. The early Anabaptists followed in the path of the Protestant reformers (Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli), but took the reforms further, advocating for believers baptism and non-violence, among other things. Because their ideas were considered radical and disruptive, they were persecuted by all branches of the Church. Groups of Mennonites (named after one of the early leaders, Menno Simons) migrated first to Poland, then later to Russia, seeking a peaceful place to continue their agricultural life and separation from the world. Finally in the late 1800s, some moved to Canada, looking for educational freedom and military exemptions.

One of the Mennonite groups which moved to Manitoba was the Sommerfelder, who settled in the Winkler area. During the 1930s, a revival broke out amongst them. Four young ministers were affected by this revival and eventually established a new church with 1100 members. In 1937, they organized as the Rudnerweider Mennoniten Gemeinde. This young group was passionate about missions, establishing new churches in Saskatchewan and sending out their first missionary to Africa.

Further history of the EMMC can be found in “Search for Renewal”, 1987 written by Jack Heppner, and is available at the EMMC Home Office.

In 1959, the Rudnerweider restructured as a conference and became the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC). The next decade saw an expansion of ministries in Ontario, Belize, and Bolivia, as well as in Low German radio. Work among Mennonite immigrants in the US began in the 1970s. A greater involvement among Low German speaking Mennonites in Mexico developed in the 1980s.

In the past few years, some of our missions efforts have matured with the churches in Mexico and Bolivia both establishing their own national conferences. With churches in Belize, Mexico South and Canada

(Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario), regional organization and connections have become more important. This shift has also led to restructuring within the conference boards. Previous ministry councils have been disbanded in favour of one General Board and a General Council made up of representatives from the regions. It has been a season of change. We have reaffirmed our Anabaptist and evangelical roots, and are recommitting ourselves to obeying Jesus' command: "Go and make disciples!"

B. EMMC Confession of Faith

This Confession of Faith was first drafted in 1959. It has been revised several times. The last revision was adopted in 2001.

1. God: We believe in the one holy and loving God, filled with glory, power and wisdom, who lives in eternal Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God, who created and sustains the physical and spiritual universe, desires a relationship with us.

2. Creation: We believe that all persons are made in the image of God with a capacity to make moral choices, and given the responsibility to manage creation. God desires all human life to begin in families where husband and wife are covenanted together under God for life.

3. Sin: We believe that sin is a rejection of God's rule, beginning with the rebellion of Satan and followed by Adam and Eve's deliberate choice to disobey God. Because of sin everyone has fallen short of God's will, creating a conflict with God, self, and others. The penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death.

4. Revelation: We believe that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God, the final authority for faith and life. God's revelation in the Old Testament through creation and the covenant was a preparation for the superior revelation in the New Testament through Jesus Christ.

5. Jesus Christ: We believe in God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, who proclaimed the rule of God, lived a sinless life, died on the cross as payment for our sins, rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and reigns as Lord of all.

6. Salvation: We believe that salvation is a gift of God's grace, received only through personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Believers have forgiveness of sin, salvation from sin, reconciliation with God, and eternal life. Believers have assurance of their salvation as they live in faith and obedience.

7. Holy Spirit: We believe in God the Holy Spirit who gives new life to all who have placed their faith in Christ. The Spirit, who indwells believers, continues to comfort, empower, gift, guide, and unite them to fulfill the mission of the church.

8. Discipleship: We believe that following Jesus as Lord in all of life means that the Christian life is characterized by love, integrity, purity, and simplicity. The believer's commitment to Christ and the global church becomes the standard for discerning the level of participation in society.

9. Church: We believe that the Church is the visible body of believers, the global community of those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Members of the body are covenanted together in local congregations and participate in the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

10. Peace and Reconciliation: We believe that God offers peace and reconciliation to all humanity through the work of Christ on the cross. Followers of Christ's law of love affirm the sacredness of life as they make peace in personal, social, and international situations.

11. Mission: We believe that the mission of the Church is to make disciples in all the world by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in evangelism and compassionate ministries.

12. Christ's final triumph: We believe in the return and reign of Jesus Christ, the final resurrection, the judgment of the unrighteous in hell and the eternal reward of the righteous in heaven.

Further explanation and application of these key confessions of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference can be found in the commentary section of *The Confession of Faith* booklet—available from an EMMC church or the EMMC Office.

