



Church Constitution & Confession of Faith

North Oak Community Church Constitution Affirmed: November 1985

Revised: November 1991, June 1996, September 2000,
July 2001, June 2011, October 2015, June 2018, June 2020

Article I: Name

The name of this church shall be: North Oak Community Church of Mennonite Brethren of Hays, Kansas.

Article II: Purpose

Believing that Jesus Christ instituted the local church for the purpose of uniting believers, we hereby commit ourselves to establish a church in this community where people can assemble for worship, spiritual fellowship, preaching of God's Word and service to God and Man. We also commit ourselves to instruction in the Christian lifestyle in its relationship to God, family, church and the world.

We further commit to encourage, promote and participate in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel for the redemption of the unsaved both in our community and the world.

Article III: Affiliation

This church is a member of the Southern District Conference, the U.S. Conference, and the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America. This church shall give both spiritual and material support to projects and activities of the above-named conferences as the Lord prospers and makes it possible.

Article IV: Statement of Faith and Conduct

Our beliefs define not only what we think, but how we live. As a Mennonite Brethren church, we affirm the "Confession of Faith of the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (2015)." [See Appendix.]

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God. It speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of North Oak Community Church's (NOCC) faith, doctrine, policy, and discipline, our Elder Board is NOCC's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Article V: Membership

We believe that we are commanded to assemble together with other Bible-believing people for Christ-centered worship. This is a vital aspect of our growth as children of God, set apart from the world for nurturing, encouragement, and discipline by His Word. To be a member of a church is to make a public promise to live according to the Word and to support the work of the congregation. In the Bible this is called a covenant. Membership, which is encouraged for all baptized believers, is an expression of a solemn and joyful commitment and involvement with one another in covenant relationship.

Section 1. Admission & Responsibility of Members

Any person who desires to unite with the Church as a member shall be interviewed by representatives as designated by the Elders. This testimony shall include the basis of their salvation, their baptism as a believer, their doctrinal beliefs, and their commitment to Christian living. All applicants for membership shall be required to complete an application declaring agreement in writing to the Constitution, including Article IV, and shall be required to attend a membership class—or in unusual personal circumstances its equivalent as determined by the Elders—before their acceptance into membership by affirmation of the congregation.

The responsibilities of church membership are summarized in the “Confession of Faith of the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches” (2015). [See Appendix.]

Section 2. Rights of members

Every active member in this church is entitled to participate in all the general activities of the church and is eligible to hold any office for which he or she is qualified. Members, 18 years of age and older, may vote in any business meeting and church election.

Section 3. Release of Membership and Participation

a) Transfer - Any member in good standing may, upon request, have their membership transferred by letter to another church. Such a transfer is issued to the church, and not to the individual. If a member moves to another locality, the church recommends a transfer by letter to an evangelical church.

b) Removal - If a member ceases to participate in the witness and ministry of the church, the elders should contact them personally. If the inactive member wishes neither to become actively involved nor to transfer their membership to another church, the elders and deacons may vote jointly to remove them from the membership of the church. A member is able to renounce their membership voluntarily if they no longer wish to be a member of the church. A notice in writing must be submitted to the church to self-terminate a membership. A member may not self-terminate membership if they are notified in person by an elder that they are being dealt with for actions requiring the church disciplinary process.

c) Exclusion - If a member is found not walking according to the principles taught by Scripture, they must be admonished in brotherly love and sincerity. Where private counseling fails, the church leadership shall exercise redemptive discipline. If warnings are disregarded and the attitude of rebellion and estrangement persists, the offender is formally excluded from the fellowship of the church. Believers, however, must continue to pray, practice love and compassion toward the erring one in order to win them back to the Lord's will. When they repent, the church will forgive, reinstate them in fellowship and encourage them in the Christian life. Matt. 18:15-35

d) Dismissal for Disruptive Behavior - The Church, acting through its authorized agents, may forcibly eject from a service or other Church activity those who are disruptive or engage in other inappropriate behavior, whether or not they are members. Concerns regarding conduct of non-members that would provide grounds for discipline of members, that remain unresolved between the parties directly involved, may be referred to the Elders. If, upon consideration of the matter, the Elders, in their sole discretion, deem that the proper functioning, unity, or purity of the Church body requires it, the offending person(s) may be temporarily or permanently excluded from attendance or other participation in services or other activities of the Church, or such attendance or participation may be made subject to compliance with conditions imposed by the Elders.

Section 4. Non-member Attendees

a) Non-members are welcome to attend all programs, events, and services of the church. Non-member attendees are encouraged to embrace a covenant relationship with North Oak Community Church by formally joining the church as delineated in Article V, Section 1. If a non-member continues attending worship services and activities, and calls on church leaders for counsel and support without joining the church, the elders will assume their agreement with “Confession of Faith of the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches” (2015) [See Appendix], which will guide the church’s relationship with the non-member.

b) Non-members may participate in many areas of service except in positions of substantial teaching influence, governing responsibility or public visibility. Non-members shall not serve as pastors, elders, deacons/deaconesses, or ministry team leaders. Non-members may serve in remaining areas of leadership if they complete an application and it is approved. The application includes a signed statement of faith in Jesus Christ and agreement with the "Confession of Faith of the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches" (2015). [See Appendix.]

Article VI: Lead Pastor

Section 1. Duties and rights

- a) The lead pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the church. He shall preach the Gospel, oversee the administration of the ordinances, watch over the church family, promote the spiritual growth of the church, lead the church into evangelization, organize and develop the church's strengths for the best possible service to the glory of God.
- b) The lead pastor shall be responsible for the administration of the church and supervision of the paid ministry and support staff.
- c) The lead pastor shall be a voting member of the elders, except in matters relating to his role as lead pastor and his personal benefits. He may attend the meetings of all other church organizations, boards and committees in an advisory capacity. The pastor shall serve in an advisory capacity at all church business meetings.
- d) The lead pastor shall approve all special services, speakers, or singing groups before presentation to the congregation.

Section 2. Qualifications to be eligible to serve as pastor

- a) Be of unquestionable Christian character and set an example of conduct and devotion to the spiritual welfare and unity of the church, following the principles set forth in the New Testament such as I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- b) Consider the responsibility for the welfare of the church above all personal ambitions.
- c) Be in harmony with the doctrine, statement of faith, policy and practice of North Oak Community Church.
- d) Be alert to the needs of the individual members as well as to the whole church and give himself to the meeting of those needs.
- e) Possess the ability to keep the information and work of the elders, as well as personal counseling confidential where necessary.
- f) To be academically qualified to preach and teach the Word of God and principles within Scripture. II Tim. 4:2
- g) To be licensed or ordained through the Faith and Life Commission of the Southern District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Section 3. Calling a pastor

When it is necessary to call a lead pastor, this church shall prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to engage a qualified person. A committee shall be appointed by the elders and shall be responsible to guide the church in the selection of another lead pastor. The committee shall investigate the merits of each candidate; however, only one candidate shall be considered officially by the church at one time. The call of a lead pastor shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of all votes cast at any regular or special business meeting. A secret ballot vote is required.

Section 4. Evaluation

The lead pastor's ministry shall be evaluated and reviewed annually by the elders. Every third year the members of the congregation shall evaluate and affirm the ministry of the pastor. It is understood that these evaluations should be done in a spirit of honesty and spiritual brotherhood.

Section 5. Termination

- a) A lead pastor may dissolve the pastoral relationship by giving two month's notice of such intention or less if it is mutually agreeable with the elders and deacons.
- b) The church may initiate termination of the lead pastoral relationship by calling a congregational meeting to consider the question. Such a meeting can be called by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the elders, or by a petition submitted to the elders signed by twenty-five per cent (25%) of the current voting membership and approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the elders.
- c) A simple majority of the votes cast by secret ballot at a congregational meeting shall be sufficient to cause termination. In such case, the lead pastor shall be entitled to one month's salary after the date of termination set by the congregation.
- d) In the case of a major moral, ethical or doctrinal issue, the elders may place the lead pastor on administrative leave.

Article VII: Associate Pastors

- 1) The church may call such pastoral associates as shall be considered necessary for the most effective ministry of the church, such as pastors for evangelism, music, Christian education, or youth.
- 2) The procedure for selecting and terminating such associates shall be the same as that for the lead pastor.
- 3) The associate pastor(s) shall be recommended to the church for selection upon the affirmation of the lead pastor.
- 4) The associate pastoral duties and privileges shall be stipulated in writing by the elders and shall be carried out under the supervision of the lead pastor.

Article VIII: Elders

Section 1. Number

The elders shall consist of the lead pastor (a voting member) and a goal of three other members. Additional members may be added as needed.

Section 2. Procedure

Candidates for the position of elder are to be submitted to the nominating committee by the congregation. The nominating committee shall review the present list of official members of the congregation, and make recommendations to the present elders for review. If there is a majority affirmation of a person who has been recommended as an elder, that person will be contacted by one of the elders, and given a description of the elder's responsibilities, and asked to prayerfully consider the opportunity. If the candidate agrees to be presented to the congregation for affirmation, he shall be presented to the church at least 2 weeks prior to the annual meeting and must be affirmed by two-thirds (2/3) majority of all votes cast at the annual business meeting.

Section 3. Term

The term of office for elders shall be two (2) years. An elder may serve three (3) consecutive terms. An elder who has served three consecutive terms will be eligible to be nominated again after not serving as an elder for one or more years. Elders elected to fill an unexpired vacated position may thereafter serve three (3) complete terms. To the greatest extent possible, terms of

elders shall be staggered to allow for continuity and balance of membership. The elders may make adjustments in terms to accomplish this objective.

Section 4. Qualifications to be eligible to serve as an elder

- a) Be of unquestionable Christian character and set an example of conduct and devotion to the spiritual welfare and unity of the church, following the principles set forth in the New Testament such as I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- b) Consider responsibility for the welfare of the church to be above all personal ambitions.
- c) Be in harmony with the doctrine, statement of faith, policy and practices of North Oak Community Church.
- d) Be alert to the needs of the individual member as well as to the whole church and give himself to the meeting of these needs.
- e) Possess the ability to keep the information and work of the elders confidential where necessary.
- f) Be chosen from the male membership of the church who have been active participants for at least two (2) years.
- g) Be in harmony with the doctrine, statement of faith, policy and practices of North Oak Community Church.
- h) Be alert to the needs of the individual member as well as to the whole church and give himself to the meeting of these needs.
- i) Possess the ability to keep the information and work of the elders confidential where necessary.
- j) Be chosen from the male membership of the church who have been active participants for at least two (2) years.

Section 5. Duties and responsibilities of elders

- a) As shepherds they are primarily responsible for the protection of the church's doctrine and mission. In the spirit of Proverbs 11:14b, all elder decisions shall be made by consensus, with the exception being in legal matters pertinent to the state of Kansas whereby Roberts Rules of Order will apply.
- b) As shepherds they are primarily responsible for the protection of the church's doctrine and mission. In the spirit of Proverbs 11:14b, all elder decisions shall be made by consensus, with the exception being in legal matters pertinent to the state of Kansas whereby Roberts Rules of Order will apply.
- c) Be responsible for the following areas of church life: 1) worship; 2) discipleship; 3) evangelism; and 4) stewardship.
- d) Pray for the congregation, and deal with the spiritual needs of the congregation as a whole and as individuals.
- e) Establish committees as necessary. An elder may serve on each of these committees.
- f) Should an unexpired elder or deacon term be vacated, the elders may appoint a member who meets the qualifications to serve until the next annual business meeting. The appointment shall be reported to the members.

Section 6. Chair

The elders shall annually elect a chair to preside at their regular meetings.

Section 7. Termination

In the case of a major moral, ethical or doctrinal issue, the elders may place the elder on administrative leave.

Article IX: Deacons and Deaconesses

Section 1. Number

The deacons shall consist of a goal of three members. Additional members may be added as needed.

Section 2. Procedure

Candidates for the position of deacon are to be submitted to the nominating committee by the congregation. The nominating committee shall review the present list of official members of the congregation, and make recommendations to the present elders for review. If there is a majority affirmation of a person who has been recommended as a deacon, that person will be contacted by one of the deacons, and given a job description of the deacon's responsibilities, and asked to prayerfully consider the opportunity. If the candidate agrees to be presented to the congregation for affirmation, he/she shall be presented to the church at least two (2) weeks prior to the annual meeting and must be affirmed by two-thirds (2/3) majority of all votes cast at the annual business meeting.

Section 3. Term

The term of office for deacons shall be two (2) years. A deacon may serve three (3) consecutive terms. A deacon who has served three consecutive terms will be eligible to be nominated again after not serving as a deacon for one or more years. Deacons elected to fill an unexpired vacated position may thereafter serve three (3) complete terms. To the greatest extent possible, terms of deacons shall be staggered to allow for continuity and balance of membership. The elders may make adjustments in terms to accomplish this objective.

Section 4. Qualifications to be eligible to serve as a deacon

- a) Be of unquestionable Christian character and set an example of conduct and devotion to the spiritual welfare and unity of the church, following the principles set forth in the New Testament such as Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.
- b) Consider responsibility for welfare of the church to be above all personal ambitions.
- c) Be in harmony with the doctrine, statement of faith, policy and practices of North Oak Community Church.
- d) Be alert to the needs of the individual members as well as to the whole church and give of himself to meeting these needs.
- e) Possess the ability to keep the information and work of the deacons confidential where necessary.
- f) Be chosen from the membership of the church who have been active participants for at least one (1) year.

Section 5. Duties and responsibilities of deacons

- a) Be responsible for assisting elders in the following areas of church life: 1) worship; 2) discipleship; 3) evangelism; and 4) stewardship.
- b) Pray for the congregation, and deal with the physical needs of the individual members of the congregation.
- c) Establish committees as necessary. A deacon may serve on each of these committees.

Section 6. Termination

In the case of a major moral, ethical or doctrinal issue, the elders may place the deacon or deaconess on administrative leave.

Article X: Elders/Deacons

Section 1. Purposes

Elders and deacons shall meet together to communicate their responsibilities, vision, and strategy.

Section 2. Committee reports

The elders shall present reports of their responsibilities at the regular meetings.

Section 3. Committee responsibility

An elder or deacon may be a member of each committee.

Article XI: Elected Offices

Section 1. Moderator

- a) The elders/deacons shall elect a moderator from their membership annually.
- b) The moderator shall preside at all church business meetings and shall carry out the agenda as prepared by the elders. In his absence the elders may appoint a moderator during their absence.
- c) The moderator shall preside at each monthly meeting of the elders/deacons.
- d) The moderator shall have a working knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order governing business sessions.

Section 2. The church clerk

- a) The clerk shall be appointed annually by the elders from the church membership. Term of office shall be one (1) year.
- b) The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all church business meetings. These records shall be available to members of the church at any time.

Section 3. The church treasurer

- a) The finance committee shall be responsible for recommending a treasurer from the church membership for affirmation by the elders. Term of office shall be three (3) years, with the option to reappoint.
- b) The finance committee shall be responsible for the deposit of all monies in a bank designated by the finance committee.
- c) The treasurer shall, by the order of the church finance committee, be responsible for all disbursements. All disbursements will be made by check.
- d) The treasurer shall be a member of the finance committee.
- e) The treasurer shall be bonded.

Article XII: Committees

Section 1. Nominating committee

- a) Purpose - 1) solicit nominees for elders and deacons; 2) verify their qualifications; 3) make recommendation to the elders for affirmation.
- b) Number - The nominating committee shall consist of four (4) members, plus one elder.
- c) Term - The term of office for the nominating committee members shall be for one (1) year, beginning the first Sunday in March.
- d) Qualifications - Members of the nominating committee shall be adult members of the congregation.
- e) Selection – The Nominating Committee will be selected by the elders.
- f) Procedure – Potential candidates for the position of elder or deacon are to be submitted to the Nominating Committee by the congregation. The Nominating Committee shall review the present list of official members of the congregation and make recommendations to the elders for review.

Section 2. Other committees

Elders and deacons shall, as they deem necessary, have the authority and responsibility to create, staff and dissolve other committees to fulfill the ministry of the church.

Section 3. Committee meeting quorum

At least fifty percent (50%) of the committee members must be present to conduct official committee business.

Article XIII: Church Year

Section 1. Fiscal year

The church fiscal business year shall begin on July 1.

Article XIV: Business Meetings

Section 1. Time

- a) The dates for Business Meetings will be set by the elders in accordance with Kansas Corporation requirements, which stipulates an annual meeting.
- b) Business Meetings - 1) may be called by the elders; 2) may be called by twenty-five percent (25%) of members and affirmed by three-fourths (3/4) of the elders and deacons; 3) at least two weeks notice shall be given for all business meetings.

Section 2. Procedure

- a) Moderator—shall preside over business meetings.
- b) Church Clerk - 1) shall take the minutes of all official business meetings; 2) shall provide a written report of the minutes of the previous business meeting.
- c) Published agenda - All official business to be presented or recommended for action shall be posted on the church bulletin board and made available to members at least two weeks prior to any business meeting. The elders shall be responsible for the selection of business items for posting and publication, and for establishing the order of business.
- d) Quorum - Quorum shall constitute the eligible voters in attendance at any business meeting in order to conduct official business.
- e) Operating Procedure - All official church business meetings shall be conducted by Roberts Rules of Order.
- f) Eligible Voters—all members who have reached the age of eighteen (18).
- g) Method of voting - Voting may be either by a show of the hands, voice vote, or written ballot. The use of written balloting may be initiated by the wishes of the moderator, the person making the motion, or an individual voting member.

Section 3. Additional business requiring church approval

- a) Financial-The finance committee, in cooperation with the elders and deacons and standing committee chairs, shall be responsible for preparing the fiscal year budget proposal and presenting it to the church for approval at the annual business meeting. Recognizing that new opportunities and challenges may make it necessary or desirable to modify the approved budget, guidelines for approving expenditures that fall outside the budget line item authority will be made part of the budget proposal and approved concurrently by the church. Deviations from the approved annual budget not specifically granted by the guidelines shall be referred to the church for action by the elders and deacons.
- b) Accountability-To ensure compliance with the approved guidelines, the finance committee shall track all expenditures and revenues and periodically, or on request, report same to the church, elders, deacons, and committee chairs.

c) Building - All minor modifications to the buildings, ground or property of the church must be approved by the building and grounds committee. Major modifications to the physical plant must be recommended and approved by the building and grounds committee and approved by the church.

Article XV: Incorporation of North Oak Community Church

Section 1. Officers:

- a) President - The church moderator shall serve as president of the corporation.
- b) Secretary - The church clerk shall serve as secretary of the corporation.

Section 2. Annual meeting

- a) The annual Business Meeting, which is to be set by the elders, will serve as the annual corporate meeting.
- b) The moderator and secretary shall be elected to their corporate offices at the annual business meeting.

Article XVI: Amendments

Section 1. Initiation

An amendment to the constitution may be initiated by any of the following:

- a) Elders.
- b) Individual members receiving affirmation by the elders.
- c) Petition signed by twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting membership.

Section 2. Adoption

- a) Presentation - Proposed amendments to the constitution must be submitted, posted and published at least 30 days prior to the business meeting during which the church vote will be taken.
- b) Approval - Amendments must be approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast.

Article XVII: Dissolution

In the event that North Oak Community Church ceases to function, all church buildings, grounds and property shall become the property of the Southern District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

APPENDIX

Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith

Last approved: 2015

Introduction

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

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

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

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

The reader should be alert to the following literary conventions adopted for this confession. Scripture references are listed at the conclusion of each article. These references are not meant to be exhaustive nor do they serve primarily as proof-texts for the articles. Pronouns referring to God are uniformly upper case to remind the reader that the use of the masculine pronoun is a

convention of human language. God is neither male nor female; human male and female are created in the image of God. A more complete commentary and pastoral application of the Confession is available from Kindred Productions. A liturgical version of the Confession, *Confessing Together*, is also commended for use in congregational worship. (Revised and updated from the 1999 Confession of Faith Introduction)

Article 1: God

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

God the Father

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

God the Son

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

God the Holy Spirit

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

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

Timothy 6:15-16; II Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 12:7-11; I Peter 2:21-25; I John 2:2; Revelation 5:5-6, 9-10.

Article 2: Revelation of God

God's Self-Revelation

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

The Written Word of God

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

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

Article 3: Creation and Humanity

Creation

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

Humanity

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

The New Creation

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

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

Corinthians 3:18; II Corinthians 4:6; II Corinthians 5:16-19; Galatians 3:28; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 1:4, 9-10; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:8-11; Revelation 21:1-5; Revelation 22:13.

Article 4: Sin and Evil

Sin and Its Consequences

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

Principalities and Powers

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

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

Article 5: Salvation

God's Initiative

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

God's Plan

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

Humanity's Response

Though Jesus entered a world ruled by sin, He chose not to submit to its allure and broke its domination. Through His obedient life, His death on the cross and His glorious resurrection, Christ triumphed over Satan and the powers of sin and death, opening the way for all people to

follow. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, people turn from sin, entrust their lives to God, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and join the family of God. All who receive Christ are born again, and have peace with God, and are called to love one another and live at peace with their neighbor. Those whom God is saving no longer live for themselves for they have been set free from sin and called to newness of life.

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

Article 6: Nature of the Church

Called by God

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

Body of Christ

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

Worship

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

Fellowship and Accountability

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

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

Gifts for Ministry

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

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

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

Article 7: Mission of the Church

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment

We believe the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people. Christ commands the church to make disciples of all nations by calling people to repent, and by baptizing and teaching them to obey Jesus. Jesus teaches that disciples are to love God and neighbor by telling the good news and by doing acts of love and compassion.

The Witness

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

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

Article 8: Christian Baptism

Confession

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

Meaning

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

Eligibility

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

Practice

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

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

Article 9: Lord's Supper

Meaning

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

Practice

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

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

Article 10: Discipleship

Following Jesus

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

United in a Distinct Community

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

Demonstrating True Faith

Jesus teaches that discipleship is the way of self-denial and promises blessing for those who suffer for righteousness. Disciples are to resist worldly values and systems, the sinful nature and the devil. Disciples give generously and reject materialism which makes a god out of wealth. Disciples treat others with compassion and gentleness and reject violence as a

response to injustice. Disciples speak honestly to build others up and reject dishonest, vulgar, and careless talk; they seek to avoid lawsuits to resolve personal grievances, especially with other believers. Disciples maintain sexual purity and marital faithfulness and reject immoral premarital and extramarital relationships and all homosexual practices. To be a disciple means to be true to Jesus in everyday life.

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

Article 11: Marriage, Singleness and Family

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

Marriage

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

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

Singleness

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

Family

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

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

Article 12: Society and State

The State as Instituted by God

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

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

Christian Allegiance in Society

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

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

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

Article 13: Love, Peacemaking and Reconciliation

God's Community of Peace

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

Christian Peacemaking

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

As peacemakers we alleviate suffering, reduce strife, promote justice, and work to end violence and war, that others may see a demonstration of Christ's love. As in other Peace Churches many of us choose not to participate in the military, but rather in alternative forms of service. Because Jesus is Lord, His example and teaching take priority over nationalism and the demands of human authorities.

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

Article 14: The Sanctity of Human Life

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

God values human life highly. Ultimate decisions regarding life and death belong to God. Therefore, we hold that procedures designed to take life, including abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide, are an affront to God's sovereignty. We esteem the life-sustaining findings of medical science, but recognize that there are limits to the value of seeking to sustain life indefinitely. In all complex ethical decisions regarding life and death, we seek to offer hope and healing, support and counsel in the context of the Christian community.

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

Article 15: Stewardship

God's Creation Mandate

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

Responsible Living

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

Generous Giving

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

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

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

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

Work

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

Rest

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

The Lord's Day

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

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

Article 17: Christianity and Other Faiths

Jesus Is the Only Way

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

God's Universal Witness

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

Sovereignty of God

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

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

Article 18: Christ's Final Triumph

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

The Last Days

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

Death

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

Judgment

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

The New Creation

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

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