

*Alliance of
Mennonite Evangelical
Congregations*



Purposes & Principles



AMEC Principles & Purposes

As amended 2010

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The Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations
Chartered 2002

AMEC Alliance

P O Box 424
Bally PA 19503



Purposes and Principles

The Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations
is an affiliation of committed Christians
who partner as congregations and individuals
to carry out the Great Commission,
provide biblical fellowship and mutual accountability
in the unity of Christ,
embracing an Evangelical identity
and an Anabaptist perspective.

I. Our Commitment

1. In order to maintain a Biblical, Anabaptist and Evangelical heritage, we purpose to develop a partnership as a voluntary association of congregations in alliance with one another, with a common commitment both to the doctrinal foundation of evangelical orthodoxy and to the worthy tenets of historical Anabaptism. Through this alliance, characterized by a unity based on Truth, a context is provided for identification, fellowship, accountability, ministerial credentialing, and cooperative efforts to enable affiliated congregations to faithfully fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. By “*Evangelical*” we mean, among other things, a commitment (a) to the Bible as the inerrant and authoritative Word of God; (b) to the need for every human being to repent of sin and come to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; and (c) to the divine mandate that the church take this message of salvation (the “*evangel*”) to all who have not yet believed.

3. By “*Anabaptist*” we mean, among other things, a commitment of Believers (a) to discipleship as the heart of true Christianity; (b) to Believer’s Baptism and the church as a voluntary and disciplined community; and (c) to the ethic of Christian love and nonresistance in human relationships, all under the authority of the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures.

II. Composition of the Alliance

1. The Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations (AMEC) is a fellowship comprised of committed Christians in committed Congregations of North America who embrace an evangelical identity within the bounds of the orthodox, apostolic teachings of Scripture, teachings which were re-affirmed in the ministries of the biblical Anabaptist reformers.

2. Congregations who through their constituted leadership affirm the Statement of Doctrine without reservation and endorse the ***Principles and Purposes*** of AMEC, are welcome to join the Alliance as ***Member Congregations*** and partner with others for the cause of Christ Jesus and His Kingdom.

3. Individuals who affirm the Statement of Doctrine and are committed to the ***Purposes and Principles*** of the Alliance but whose congregations may not yet be affiliated may be received as ***Associate Members at Large*** of the Alliance until such time as their congregations choose to affiliate.

4. An ***“Associate Congregation”*** status may be provided for those congregations who can commit to the biblical convictions and theological foundations of the AMEC Alliance and affirm without reservation the Statement of Doctrine (expressed in Sections IV, V, & VI), but

(1) who may still be in process of determining the steps they may need to take in changing relationships with their past or present affiliations or ministry involvements or

(2) who are still seeking and discerning consistently biblical means for partnering relationships with those of like mind and shared faith in Christ Jesus or

(3). Who are committing to the Purposes and Principles of the AMEC Alliance but, based on their own ethnic or language identities, desire to retain their current affiliation with another appropriate Evangelical Christian group.

Application for Associate Congregation status shall be handled by the Executive Council in accordance with the By Laws, Article III.

5. Persons who are members of an AMEC congregation but who wish to be more personally supportive or actively involved may apply for an ***Individual Partner Member*** status.

6. Member Congregations, Members at Large and Associated Congregations will relate to one another in geographical regions and may organize themselves at that level to implement the purposes of AMEC regionally, affirming the principles and adapting the organizational pattern of the AMEC Alliance to their local setting. (See: IX. Operation & Function)

III. The Purpose of the Alliance

The purpose of the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations is to Partner in order to faithfully Preserve, Promote and Propagate the Biblical Christian Faith as Believers from an Evangelical Anabaptist perspective, providing biblical fellowship, credentialing and mutual accountability to enable congregations, guided by the Holy Spirit, to pursue their objectives of missions, evangelism, discipleship, nurture, and biblical ministries of witness and reconciliation, committed to a unity in Christ based solely on the truth of the Scriptures and summarized in a basic Statement of Doctrine.

IV. Statement of Doctrine

The Statement of Doctrine expresses, as a summary of our Faith, the essentials of the Gospel and the basis of our Unity in Jesus Christ. It is affirmed as the convictions of the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations (AMEC).

1. **We believe** the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative, written Word of God.

2. **We believe** there is one God, Sovereign, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and eternally existent in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3. **We believe** that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh, at once fully divine and fully human. We believe in His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious and atoning death on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, His present ministry of intercession, and His personal return in power and glory.

4. **We believe** that human beings were created in the image of God but rebelled against God and are therefore fallen, lost, estranged from their creator, and in need of salvation.

5. **We believe** that only those who, by grace through faith, receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are converted, born again of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.

6. **We believe** in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit who convicts persons of sin, brings them to repentance, enables the Christian to pursue a life characterized by personal holiness and faithful discipleship in obedience to Jesus Christ, and gives "spiritual gifts" to the church which enrich worship, provide for spiritual oversight, and enhance effectiveness in witness.

7. **We believe** that the church, the "body of Christ," is composed of all those of every nation who through saving faith have entered into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. We further believe that the church is at the

very center of God's cosmic purpose, and that He has committed to the church and every member of it the task of making Christ known throughout the world.

8. *We believe* that local congregations of baptized believers exist to equip the body of Christ through such means as worship, teaching, fellowship and prayer to spread the Gospel of Christ; to extend the influence of the Kingdom of God in the world; and to turn themselves outward to their local communities in evangelistic witness and compassionate service. We further believe that the quality of “body life” among believers in caring congregations is essential for effective evangelism and outreach.

9. *We believe* that the reality of sin in the human heart results in suffering, injustice, strife, and moral decay in society.

10. *We believe* that, in Jesus Christ, the way of love and reconciliation is revealed as God's way for His people and that the people of God are called to value the sanctity of human life, alleviate suffering, reject retaliation and personal vengeance, work for peace in all relationships, and to live as responsible stewards of all of God's creation.

11. *We believe* that God instituted marriage and the family at the beginning of human history. Right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship, which is a covenant between one man and one woman for life, and the family formed from such a union is the God-ordained context for the birth and nurture of children.

12. *We believe* in the resurrection of all people, those who are saved unto the resurrection of everlasting blessedness with the Lord, and those who are lost to eternal separation from God.

13. *We believe* that, in the fullness of time, God will bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. Principles to Guide our Purpose

Believing the Bible to be fully infallible and continually authoritative, as we unite as an Alliance of Congregations we purpose to become and remain:

1. Biblically Rooted on the Foundation of Christ Jesus

A Radical Christianity - A Growing Christian Life

2. Biblically Orthodox in the Unchanging Truth of Christ Jesus

Defining the Standards - Defending the Faith

3. Biblically Evangelical in the Saving Grace of Christ Jesus

Proclaiming the Good News - Partnering for the Gospel

4. Biblically Anabaptist as Faithful Disciples of Christ Jesus

Conforming to the Master - Citizens of His Kingdom

5. Biblically Obedient to the Great Commandments of Christ Jesus

Worshipping Truly - Practicing His Love

6. Biblically Mandated by the Great Commission of Christ Jesus

Extending the Kingdom - Ambassadors for the King

7. Biblically Faithful in the Worldwide Body of Christ Jesus

A Holy Building - A Prepared Bride

VI. Affirmations of Scripture for Today's Concerns

To promote clarity in understanding and to avoid confusion in our world, we believe it is essential for our generation to address several specific areas of concern where we believe the Scriptures speak clearly to issues which impact both the church and the society at large. In so doing, we wish to set forth at the outset the position on these issues which all congregations desiring membership in the new affiliation will be expected to affirm. In some cases, these statements will simply expand upon a particular doctrinal declaration already set forth in the Statement of Faith above. In other cases, these statements speak to matters in which the application of doctrinal truth affects the behavior of believers in the church, in the home, and in the society at large.

1. Holy Scriptures

We affirm our commitment to a high view of Scripture as the written Word of God. We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments have been inspired, i.e. "breathed out," by God and thus bear the character of the God Who breathed them. For this reason, we do not hesitate to use terms such as inerrant, infallible, authoritative, altogether true and altogether trustworthy in describing the text of scripture.

2. The Triune God

We affirm our commitment to the traditional understanding of the nature of God as Triune, one self-existent essence revealing and expressing Himself in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are distinct in function but equal in power and glory.

3. The Person of Jesus Christ

We affirm both the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ. By this we mean that He was both fully God and fully man. Before His incarnation He was eternally with God the Father and was God. In His incarnation, He was miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit without a human father and was born of a virgin. In His earthly existence He lived a life of sinless perfection and perfectly revealed the invisible God.

4. The Substitutionary Atonement

We affirm our belief in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as substitutionary atonement for the sins of the world. By this we mean that Jesus, as God in human form, did for us sinners what we could never do for ourselves in that He satisfied God's righteous demand that a penalty be paid for human sin. We hereby endorse, as a full and comprehensive statement of the true nature of the Christian Gospel, the statement entitled: "*The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration*" (©1999 by the Committee on Evangelical Unity in the Gospel, P O Box 5551, Glendale Heights, IL 60138).

5. Love, Peace and Nonresistance

We affirm our commitment to the Anabaptist distinctives of love and nonresistance in all human relationships. By "nonresistance" we mean: not using evil to resist evil, nor using evil means to seek retaliation. We desire to promote peace and justice rather than retaliation and vengeance as the way of Jesus in relationships between individuals as well as nations, yet we recognize that genuine peace can be realized only where there is a common commitment to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. While the pursuit of peacemaking through political means may serve a humanitarian purpose, we believe that Christian peacemaking involves the proclamation of the Gospel through which people may be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

6. The Kingdom of God

We affirm our commitment to the Kingdom of God and to a theology of the Kingdom. That is, we believe Christians are living expressions on earth of God's rule in heaven. Our primary allegiance is to Jesus Christ our King, and that commitment influences the way we live in the world and relate to the culture around us. Eschatologically, we believe the Kingdom of God exists as an "already-but-not-yet" reality. That is, while Jesus came to inaugurate the Kingdom, and while Christians live now under the rule and authority of God, there is still more to come at the final consummation of the Kingdom when Jesus will return to the earth in power and glory, God's people will be free from the power and presence of sin, and the Kingdom of Satan will be judged and condemned to everlasting destruction.

7. Family and Marriage

We affirm our commitment to the family as a key element in God's plan for spiritual growth and emotional stability. We believe that the marriage of a man and a woman is a beautiful picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His bride, the church. We commit our energies and our influence to combat those forces which undermine the sacredness of the marriage covenant and weaken the fiber of Christian homes and families. We affirm

the biblical ideal of monogamous, heterosexual marriage—one man for one woman until death. We believe that divorce is a violation of God's original intent for marriage, and we affirm the biblical prohibitions concerning divorce and remarriage. We reject any suggestion that homosexual activity can be consistent with the will of God for a believer, and we affirm our belief that sexual activity is reserved for a man and woman within the bonds of marriage.

8. Relationships and Roles

We affirm our commitment to the principle of the essential equality of men and women in Christ as well as to the traditional understandings of the Bible's teaching on the subject of leadership, authority, and spiritual headship. We recognize the sovereignty of God in His distribution of spiritual gifts to men and women as He wills, but we reject the idea that leadership and authority are matters of gifting exclusively. We acknowledge that misunderstanding and misapplication of the headship principle have sometimes been an obstacle to women in the exercise of their spiritual gifts. At the same time, however, we reject the idea that essential equality and the exercise of gifting demand that we do away with role-distinctions in the home and in the church. We affirm our commitment to the biblical principle of spiritual leadership by men in the church and in the home. Within this affiliation, credentialing for positions of spiritual oversight and authority in member congregations will be limited to spiritually qualified males. (We endorse the more comprehensive summary of the biblical teaching on this subject: "*The Danvers Statement*", produced by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, P O Box 7337, Libertyville IL 60048, or: www.cbmw.org.)

9. Accountability and Discipline

We affirm our commitment to the principle of loving discipline and mutual accountability in the body of Christ. We propose the institution of a body of leaders, representing all member congregations in this new affiliation, who will be vested with responsibility for the spiritual oversight of this new affiliation and with commensurate authority to act appropriately in dealing with congregations who depart from conscientious adherence to the statement of faith and practice.

10. Mission and Service

We affirm our commitment to evangelistic mission and the fulfillment of Jesus' "Great Commission" as the heart of the church's relationship to the world. While we encourage acts of compassion such as social ministries and relief efforts, we believe that the primary work of the church in the world is to declare the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and to invite all persons everywhere to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We

recognize that fruitful evangelism will involve both *proclamation* and *demonstration*, and that meaningful “body life” within caring congregations is essential to effectiveness in evangelistic witness. (For a comprehensive statement on the significance and dimensions of Mission and Evangelism, we endorse: *The Lausanne Covenant* adopted July 1974 at the *International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland.*)

VII. Differing Applications among Believers

The foregoing section summarizes those areas of faith and practice which we believe to be essential to the testimony of Christ which God is calling us to exhibit in AMEC, though it is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. In addition to the delineation of essential matters, we acknowledge areas of belief and practice where differences can exist among believers within the parameters of biblical orthodoxy. In these areas and within these parameters, we acknowledge the variety of expressions that currently exist in the body of Christ, and we recognize the likelihood of differences among our member congregations in many of these areas.

Members of the Alliance will seek to be united on the statements of affirmation while recognizing possible differences in the way Evangelical Believers apply these Truths to understanding or conduct.

1. Concerning the Doctrine of Creation

We affirm our belief in the creation of the universe by an intentional, personal, and supernatural act of God. Further, we reject the idea of any form of macroevolution (including so-called “theistic evolution”) as an explanation for the origin of the universe. Within those parameters, however, we acknowledge that evangelical Christians differ as to the specific interpretation of the language in the creation account in Genesis 1 & 2.

2. Concerning the Doctrines of Eschatology

We affirm our belief that Jesus Christ will return to the earth in power and glory at the end of this age. We acknowledge a variety of interpretations among evangelical Christians regarding the specific details associated with the second coming of Christ, the final judgment, and the consummation of all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

3. Concerning the Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

We affirm our belief that the Bible teaches both God's sovereignty and human responsibility. We acknowledge differences among evangelical Christians as to which of these truths should be prior in any attempt to understand this important concept. We recognize that the belief systems

historically known as Calvinism and Arminianism both represent honest attempts to understand the relationship between sovereignty and responsibility, and both fit within the framework of Christian orthodoxy.

4. Concerning the Ordinances of the Church

We affirm our belief in the practice of two symbolic acts as “Ordinances” which the church is to observe until the return of Christ: Believers’ Baptism and the Lord’s Supper or Communion, which were established by Jesus with further instruction regarding their observance in the apostolic letters of the New Testament. This use of the term “Ordinance” is in a different sense than being “ordained” for Christian ministry or describing marriage as “ordained” of God. In addition to ordination for ministry or marriage, we acknowledge that some branches of the Mennonite Church have historically classified several other practices as “ordinances of the church,” such as anointing with oil and prayer for the sick, footwashing, and the devotional head covering for women. While we recognize a case has been made from Scripture for these practices, and we encourage serious consideration of the Bible’s teachings in these areas, we acknowledge a fundamental distinction between Baptism and Communion and these other practices. We further recognize that differences exist among evangelical Christians as to the appropriate place or meaning of some of these practices in the life of the church but we strongly encourage continued discernment of the application of all of Scripture for clear witness in today’s world.

5. Concerning Spiritual Gifts, the Work of the Holy Spirit, and Public Worship

We affirm our belief in the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit of God in the church and in the lives of individual believers. We acknowledge wide variation among evangelical Christians as to the particular ways in which the Spirit manifests Himself and His power in the church and in the world. This same variety extends to the style and content of public worship, including music preference, design of buildings, and times of services.

6. Concerning the Sanctity of Human Life, Abortion, and Capital Punishment

We affirm our commitment to the sanctity of human life and to the belief that life begins at conception. We oppose abortion while we recognize that, in certain extreme cases, some fellow Believers perceive medical procedures, which may prevent the continuing development of the unborn, may be necessary in order to save the life of the mother. We are united in recognizing the importance of standing up for the interests of the unborn though we recognize differences among evangelical Christians as to how best

to go about promoting or defending those interests and what tactics are appropriate. We also acknowledge differences among evangelical Christians on the role of the state concerning capital punishment and the manner in which it is exercised. As Anabaptist Christians, with a commitment to justice and to nonviolence, we encourage all believers to carefully examine their convictions in these areas and to adopt a position that is both just and consistently values life.

As with Sections IV and VI covering essentials, this listing of areas where we recognize differences among evangelical believers is illustrative, not exhaustive nor comprehensive. The Bible remains our Final Authority and as the Word of God we are bound to submit our minds and will to it whenever it is clearly discerned.

VIII. Membership Agreements and Understandings

The Alliance shall be comprised of Member Congregations who through their constituted leadership are in agreement with the Statement of Doctrine and Principles of AMEC and have completed the application process, affirming the Membership Purposes and Guidelines; and of Associate Members at Large who as individuals not in a Member Congregation, are likewise in agreement and have completed an application for individual membership.

As members we agree to comply with the following understandings:

1. We affirm the right of the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Churches (AMEC) to govern itself. The governing convictions of AMEC are expressed in a Statement of Doctrine. The Statement of Doctrine derives its authority from the Bible. The governing convictions of AMEC are specifically spelled out in the constitution and bylaws. If a conflict arises between biblical interpretation and either the Statement of Doctrine or the constitution and bylaws, AMEC will choose to follow the Scriptures (Acts 5:29).

2. As an organization, AMEC recognizes that all human beings are created by God, (Genesis 1-2). For our congregations located in the United States of America we recognize that citizens of the United States have been granted rights by the United States Constitution regardless of race, gender, religion, age or disability. Similar rights and protections are afforded persons to whom our congregations minister in Canada. We recognize the obligation placed on us by Romans 13:1-7 to respect and obey human government, to be law abiding citizens, and to respect the civil rights of those with whom we disagree (Romans 12: 9-21). We do not believe that any kind of physical or

psychological acts of violence toward those of different points of view are to be engaged in or tolerated by members of the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations.

3. Striving to be responsible before God and one another, we hereby state our convictions concerning matters of specific concern. The following are specifically highlighted so anyone seeking membership in or participation with congregations associated with AMEC may completely understand the convictions and practices that the Alliance embraces.

A. The desire of AMEC for the Body of Christ is wholeness in all moral choices and behaviors. Therefore, we want to speak a clear and loving word concerning sinful practices and behaviors. Such practices and behaviors as listed below (B.) are destructive to this wholeness. It is the intention of AMEC to be involved in ministries of transformation, believing that transformation is truly possible under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

B. We believe that any congregation, congregational member, or pastor who is practicing behavior that the Scripture would identify as sexually immoral shall not be granted membership in this Alliance. Scripture outlines some of these behaviors in 1 Corinthians 5:9, 6:9-10, and Galatians 5:19-21.

C. Members or congregations affiliated with AMEC that are found to be engaged in these sinful practices and/or characteristic behaviors will be asked to repent of their sin and cease from the practices or behaviors. If such practices or behaviors are not ended, the Alliance or its regional Associations can dismiss the member or congregation from membership in accordance with the procedure of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). The termination process shall be on a case-by-case basis with the prayerfully applied guidance of the Scriptures (i.e., Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18; Matthew 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-4; and Galatians 5:19-21.) Congregations which permit or advocate these sinful practices or characteristic behaviors shall be disfellowshipped from AMEC until such time as true repentance accompanied by a change in practice is evident.

IX. Operation and Function

1. **Congregational Autonomy.** It is understood that AMEC does not intend to usurp or replace the functions, responsibilities or biblical autonomy of member congregations or their leadership but rather seeks to assist and enable the congregations to carry out and fulfill their God-ordained Callings, Commissions and Conduct.

A. In addition to the commitments to the doctrines and principles described in this document and which the congregations of the Alliance hold in common, individual congregations may wish to define in more detail their particular emphases and practices or choose to be more specific on certain theological positions, based on their biblical understanding and in keeping with their spiritual heritage for the sake of clear witness in their own communities.

B. This autonomy of a congregation, however, does not imply autonomy from the Authority of Scripture and its clear teachings, nor should it prevent the receiving of biblical counsel and loving appeal of fellow believers given for the sake of mutual accountability in the Body of Christ.

2. Regional Associations. Wherever in a given area, a sufficient number of Member Congregations or Associate Members of the Alliance find it possible to meet regularly for fellowship, provide encouragement and maintain mutual accountability, a regional Association or an affinity group may be developed to carry out the purposes of the Alliance in specific regions.

A. Regional Associations may be organized with their own guidance committees as deemed necessary or helpful and may include involvement with local institutions, regional ministries and area opportunities. For the purpose of mutual edification and partnership in mission, Regional Association will communicate with the Alliance regularly, sharing their vision and burdens, and reporting on their ministries.

B. Regional Associations shall maintain their commitment to the doctrines and biblical principles of the Alliance and have responsibility on behalf of the Alliance in credentialing Christian workers and fostering accountability of leadership.

X. Cooperation and Fraternal Relations

1. AMEC is open to cooperating where Biblically appropriate with other Believers and Christian organizations who hold to the essential truths and foundational teachings of the Holy Scriptures, though in some matters, such as polity or the application of these truths, they may hold to differing convictions, so long as these do not violate the standards of God's written Word.

2. AMEC congregations may choose to maintain appropriate fraternal relationships or ties with bodies or programs with which they have historic ties or had previous relationship in the past, providing these do not result in compromise of basic biblical convictions or principles or confuse a clear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Where possible, as opportunities and resources permit, the Alliance will seek to assist other Evangelicals believers in coming to better understand the role the biblical Anabaptist movement had in developing biblical evangelicalism, and at the same time help other Anabaptists discover and recover the evangelical convictions that were at the heart of our Anabaptist heritage and identity.

XI. A Heritage of Faith and Faithfulness

We receive with gratitude the biblically based theological heritage of faith expressed in earlier Statements of Belief, Confessions of Faith and Catechisms of our spiritual forbears. Specifically we commend the foundational statements of *The Schleithem Confession* (1527), *The Dordrecht Confession of Faith* (1632) and *The Mennonite Articles of Faith* (1766) as worthy and helpful guidelines, still relevant for our convictions and the application of the Scriptures to Christian living in our generation as “Congregations of Christ”.

We affirm with the Reformers, including the evangelical Anabaptist Reformers that, based on the Authority of Scripture alone, our eternal salvation is by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

We commit ourselves to pass on to coming generations a renewed understanding and deep appreciation of the missionary vision, the evangelistic zeal, and the passion for truth of the Anabaptist Reformers who passed on to us their Christ-centered, biblical faith as such great cost.

Menno Simons outlined “*The True Signs by Which the Church of Christ May be Known*” when he wrote: “*Those true signs are:*”

1. *An unadulterated, pure doctrine.*
2. *A scriptural use of the sacramental sign (baptism and communion).*
3. *Obedience to the Word.*
4. *Unfeigned brotherly love.*
5. *A bold confession of God and Christ (even in the face of persecution).*
6. *Oppression and tribulation for the sake of the Lord’s Word.”*

We confess, by the Grace of God, as congregations and as Christians, we are called to no less.





Article I. Name

This organization shall be named: The **Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations**.

Article II. Purpose

1. This organization shall exist for the purpose of maintaining a partnership in order to faithfully preserve, promote and propagate the Biblical Christian Faith as Believers from an Evangelical Anabaptist perspective, providing biblical fellowship, credentialing, and mutual accountability to enable congregations, to pursue their objectives of missions, evangelism, discipleship, nurture, and biblical ministries of witness and reconciliation, committed to a unity in Christ based solely on the truth of the Scriptures and summarized in a basic Statement of Doctrine.

2. This purpose is summarized in the statement:

<p>The Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations is an affiliation of committed Christians who partner as congregations and individuals to carry out the Great Commission, provide biblical fellowship and mutual accountability in the unity of Christ, embracing an Evangelical identity and an Anabaptist perspective.</p>
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Article III. Membership and General Meetings

1. Membership in the Alliance is of three types: (1) Congregational Membership, hereafter called AMEC Congregations; (2) Individual Membership, hereafter called AMEC Associates or AMEC Members at Large; and (3) Congregations with an Associate Status, hereafter called AMEC Associate Congregations.

2. Congregations which endorse the stated "*Purpose and Principles*" of The Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations (hereafter called "the Alliance") and affirm without reservation the Statement of Doctrine (expressed in Sections IV, V, & VI) shall be eligible for Congregational Membership as AMEC Congregations.

3. Individual Believers who likewise are committed to the *Purposes and Principles* of the Alliance and affirm the Statement of Doctrine without reservation, but whose congregations are not yet affiliated with or fully participating in AMEC, shall be eligible for individual AMEC Associate membership as Members at Large.

4. An “Associate Congregation” status may be provided for those congregations who can commit to the biblical convictions and theological foundations of the AMEC Alliance and affirm without reservation the Statement of Doctrine (expressed in Sections IV, V, & VI), but

(1) who may still be in process of determining the steps they may need to take in changing relationships with their past or present affiliations or ministry involvements or

(2) who are still seeking and discerning consistently biblical means for partnering relationships with those of like mind and shared faith in Christ Jesus or

(3). Who are committing to the Purposes and Principles of the AMEC Alliance but, based on their own ethnic or language identities, desire to retain their current affiliation with another appropriate Evangelical Christian group.

A. Congregations applying for “Associate Congregation” status should have sufficient agreement among their leadership team and discern that there is adequate unanimity within the congregation to be able to make an good faith commitment to the “purposes and principles” of AMEC. Applications for Associate Congregation status shall be prayerfully discerned by the AMEC Board of Elders on a case by case basis, using adequate interviews and consultations with all parties involved. [The Alliance Executive Council shall function as the AMEC Board of Elders until a distinct separate Board shall be formed in its own right.]

B. Associate Congregations are welcome to participate in the various programs and activities of the Alliance at both the regional or national levels and are encouraged to identify themselves with the Alliance in their work and witness in their respective communities. However, should there be voting by AMEC members on matters of doctrine and theological issues, members of Associate Congregations may be granted a voice in discussions but voting shall be limited to congregations that are committed as full Member Congregations.

C. Persons who are members of an Associate Congregation may serve on Alliance Boards or Commissions or a Regional Committees if they meet the same commitment expectations that apply to Individual Associate Members.

D. Associate Congregations shall be encouraged to consider moving to full Member Congregation status as soon as their circumstances and relationships can make that feasible.

5. Provision shall be made, in conjunction with the General Meetings, for AMEC Member Congregations, Associate Congregations and individual Associate Members as Members at Large to reaffirm their commitment to the *Purposes and Principles* of the Alliance at least every four years.

Article IV. Location

In order to serve its member congregations and associate members the organization of the Alliance shall initially be based on Singer Avenue, Paradise, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with the mailing address: **Box 424, Bally, PA 19503**, and be incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Offices may be appropriately relocated upon decision of the Executive Council. **(As of 2011 an office is located at 20 Front Street, Bally PA 19503)**

Article V. Executive Officers

1. The Officers of the Alliance consist of a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and two Members-at-Large.

2. The President and Vice President shall be elected from among the Ordained Ministers of the Gospel. The one Member-at-Large shall be selected to represent the AMEC Congregations, and the other Member-at-Large selected to represent the AMEC Members at Large.

Article VI. Organizational Entities

1. An **Executive Council** shall be constituted to provide for coordination between the three Ministry Teams as well as to arrange for such other committees or ministry teams as may be deemed necessary for the ongoing effectiveness and health of the Alliance. The Executive Council shall give guidance in maintaining vision while providing oversight of the growth of the Alliance, enabling communication, and exploring inter-agency cooperation and fraternal relationships with like-minded groups.

2. The Executive Council shall be comprised of the six Executive Officers which are a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and two Members-at-Large. One representative from each AMEC Regional Association shall be invited to be part of the Executive Council, participating in person or via phone or Internet communication.

3. Three entities shall be constituted to provide guidance as Ministry Oversight Teams, in their particular areas of organizational function, namely: a **Board of Elders**; a **Missions Commission**; and a **Management Committee**.

4. The **Board of Elders** of at least four [4] and not more than seven [7] ordained men who have served in pastoral ministry for at least seven years, shall be empowered to provide guidance for credentialing leadership, safeguarding doctrine, providing oversight of ministerial matters, leadership development, and accountability procedures. The Alliance President shall serve as an ex officio member of the Board of Elders.

5. The **Missions Commission** of at least four [4] and up to eight [8] members shall be formed to encourage and counsel the Alliance membership in faithfulness in implementing and promoting Great Commission ministries including guidance for evangelism and church extension in home communities, trans-culturally and internationally. At least one elected member of the Executive Council shall serve as an ex officio member of the Missions Commission.

6. The **Management Committee** of at least three [3] and up to six [6] persons, plus the Alliance Treasurer, shall provide guidance in the stewardship of resources and finances, and overseeing institutional and staff relationships and record keeping, so as to enable the Alliance to carry on its agreed upon ministries and functions.

7. Additional Officers, Boards and Committees and Executive Staff positions may be selected or established as the need arises and so long as they help fulfill the stated purposes of the Alliance.

Article VII. Meetings and Voting Privileges

1. General Meetings of the Alliance shall be held in connection with a biennial Conference for the purpose of conducting necessary business, selecting leadership, reporting on financial matters, reviewing ministry activities, and affirming member congregations' commitments to the Alliance.

A. Initially, the Biennial General Meeting shall meet in the even numbered years; this meeting shall be announced to the membership at least sixty [60] days prior to convening.

B. Arrangements for the Biennial Conference shall be made by an appropriate Planning Committee(s) appointed by the Executive Council. Major program elements and key speakers shall be discussed with the Board of Elders prior to final confirmation.

C. Any person who is a member in good standing of an AMEC Congregation shall have floor privileges when attending the Biennial Conference and other business sessions and is entitled to a voice vote when such is exercised.

D. Any individual AMEC Member at Large has floor privileges at the Biennial Conference and other business sessions and is entitled to a voice vote when such is exercised.

E. Representatives of AMEC Associated Congregations shall have floor privileges; voting guidelines or limitations expressed elsewhere in these by-laws (Article III, 4, B.) shall apply on general business matters and motions.

2. Special Meetings may be called by the Alliance leadership or at the request of Twenty Per Cent (20%) of the Member Congregations, provided that, in either case, adequate notice of thirty (30) days in advance is given to Member Congregations, Members at Large and Associated Congregations.

3. At General or Special Meetings, at least Fifty Per Cent (50%) of the Member Congregations shall be represented, either by presence or by proxy, to constitute a quorum for the transacting of business or conducting of elections.

4. When a Ballot Vote is deemed appropriate by the President or the Chairman of a business session, (1) AMEC Congregations shall be entitled to cast five [5] votes per congregation plus one [1] vote for every thirty [30] active members or portion thereof; (2) AMEC Associates are entitled to one [1] vote per individual.

A. By action of the gathered body of delegates present, a particular vote may be limited to voting by the AMEC Congregation representatives, if the action is deemed to have bearing only on the member Congregations.

B. When a ballot vote is duly called for, the Chair of the business session shall honor such a request.

C. For Ballot Votes, Proxy Votes may be cast on behalf of AMEC Congregations or AMEC Members at Large who are unable to attend in person, provided they have designated in writing a person or persons to carry such Proxy Votes on their behalf. AMEC persons otherwise qualified to vote are permitted to carry up to twelve [12] Proxy Votes in addition to their own individual or congregational vote(s). Votes cast on behalf of one's own AMEC Congregation shall not be considered as Proxy Votes, even if the person is casting more than one [1] vote for their Congregation.

D. When a Roll Call Vote is duly requested on matters of special significance or importance, the Chair shall arrange for such a

registering of votes by AMEC Congregations, and if applicable, by Individual Members at Large. Roll Call votes should always be preceded by a special season of prayer. Consideration should be given for providing adequate time for congregational representatives to consult with each other if they wish, before registering their votes on behalf of their Congregation.

E. On the recommendation of the Board of Elders or at the request of five[5] ordained pastors, for matters primarily concerning credentialed persons or ministerial issues, a special voting procedure may be used that distinguishes the votes of credentialed persons and the votes of lay delegates. Prior to this special vote being cast, the required percentage of plurality shall be determined for each particular case.

5. When the nature of business sessions is such that parliamentary procedure can assist in giving member Congregations and Associates opportunity to take part in an orderly manner, Roberts Rules of Order or a similar guide shall be followed, provided it is used in a spirit of Christian brotherhood and brotherly love.

6. Persons attending the Alliance Biennial Conference sessions as guests, visitors representing from sister Christian bodies, or representatives of partner Agencies may be granted non-voting floor privileges by action of the assembled Conference.

Article VIII. Finances

1. As a non-profit, charitable religious organization, the Alliance shall be duly registered so as to be able to receive contributions, donations, assets and bequests for the furtherance of its Christian ministries and mission and to issue appropriate receipts for the same. The designations of giving by a donor shall be honored whenever possible, unless such designations conflict with the *Purposes and Principles* of the Alliance, in which case the circumstances shall be discussed with the donor and if a mutually acceptable alternate designation cannot be found, the gift shall be returned to the donor.

2. Necessary operating and development expenses of the organization shall be met by voluntary contributions from Member Congregations, Associate Members and others who share the vision and support the purposes of the Alliance.

3. All financial transactions shall be duly recorded and financial reporting shall be made available by the Treasurer of the Alliance to Member Congregations on a regular basis, not less frequently than in annual written

reports to membership. Executive leadership shall see to it that adequate auditing of financial records is maintained and the auditors' reports shall be available to the Alliance membership upon request.

4. In the event of dissolution of the Alliance, existing funds and assets shall be transferred to such evangelical Anabaptist organization(s) or mission(s) that are deemed to hold similar purposes and objectives. Apart from meeting normal operating expenses and costs, no officer(s) or member(s) shall accrue personal financial reward or personal profit from such dissolution.

Article IX. Regional Associations

1. Wherever three or more Member Congregations or Associate Members of the Alliance are in geographical proximity to enable occasional gathering for fellowship, mutual accountability and encouragement in their Christian ministries, Regional Associations may be constituted to carry out the *Purposes and Principles* of the Alliance in their specific regions.

2. Communication between the Alliance and the Regional Associations shall be maintained for mutual benefit. Reporting on the ministries and goals of Regional Associations shall be part of the biennial General Meetings.

Article X. Credentialing

1. Provisions shall be made for granting and recognition of appropriate Credentials for Christian Ministries and Pastoral Leadership. The Standards for such Credentials shall be established and maintained by the Alliance in keeping with its *Purposes and Principles*. Though these Credentials shall be considered as held by the Alliance, the respective Regional Associations shall process and arrange for the granting of the credentials in the individual cases.

2. The processing of the Credentials by a Regional Association shall be considered as acting on behalf of the full Alliance. The records of credentialed persons shall be maintained under the Secretary of the Alliance.

Article XI. Elections and Terms of Service

1. A process of nominating shall be established upon the recommendations of the Executive Council in consultation with the Board of Elders, taking into consideration individuals' spiritual gifts and Christian experience, their openness and commitment to the vision and mission of the Alliance and the balance of representation from various areas of the

Alliance constituency. Until such a process is in place, the standing Executive Committee will arrange for the initial elections.

2. Terms of elected positions on the Executive Council and the three Ministry Teams shall be four [4] years with half being elected each Biennial Conference. To establish the cycle of terms at the outset, half of the nominees shall be elected for a two year term and the remainder for four year terms.

3. Unless otherwise mutually agreed upon, terms of service in elected or appointed positions shall begin at the conclusion of the business session in which elections, affirmations or appointments took place. They shall continue through the final business session of the Conference in which new elections take place. When persons choose to resign, adequate notice should be given whenever possible, to enable a replacement to be prayerfully selected.

4. Where possible a transition meeting for each ministry oversight team is encouraged, during which out-going office holders and in-coming office holders meet together for communication, clarification and orderly transition of responsibilities.

5. All official Secretarial Minutes and Treasurer's Records of the Alliance and its respective Boards, Commissions and Committees shall be duly transferred at the completion of terms of service in these respective offices. An appropriate copy of official transactions shall be placed in an agreed upon archival location.

Article XII. By-Laws

1. Long term additions to the organizational framework shall be approved in the manner of by-laws. Organizational development and adoption of future by-laws shall be in keeping with the expressed beliefs and intent of the published "*Purposes and Principles*" of the Alliance. [A Constitution incorporating the By Laws and other policy and polity matters shall be developed as a Charter during the early years of the Alliance. Each Member Congregation, during this chartering period, shall be entitled to have two voting representatives participate in the Constitutional design meetings.]

2. A two-thirds majority of Members voting shall be required to add to, amend or alter the adopted by-laws, provided that notice was given prior to the meeting of the intention of such amendment or alteration.

3. The Statement of Doctrine is not to be handled as a by-law, subject to ordinary amendment, but shall be modified only for the sake of clarity and conformity to Scripture after an extensive process of study and review. At least a three-quarters majority is required to begin such a process and the same majority shall be required to adopt such clarification, at a meeting called for that purpose.

Adopted 9/28/2002, Additions adopted 9/25/2004 and 9/25/2010

Option for Congregational Oversight

This provision adopted 9/25/2010

The provision of an Overseer from outside the congregation as a voluntary or optional arrangement for a given congregation, is encouraged by the AMEC Executive Council. Under this provision when it is requested by a congregation and its leadership team, an Overseer may be assigned to serve a congregation by decision of the congregation and with the approval of the AMEC Executive Council functioning as a Board of Elders. The Overseer serves the congregation as (1.) advisor to the pastor(s) and the congregation, (2.) is available to be a pastor to the pastor, and (3.) may assist in discerning the congregation's vision, life and ministry. His role is not that of an officer, neither of the congregation nor an administrator of the Alliance, but as a resource for biblical counsel, prayer, guidance and encouragement.

The Overseer of an AMEC congregation normally shall be an experienced ordained minister with ministerial credentials affirmed and/or held by AMEC. The meaning of "experienced" is not arbitrarily defined. It is a matter of discernment by the congregation and by the AMEC Executive Council. Specific job descriptions may be developed in each case as agreed upon by the congregation and the Overseer.

The assignment of an Overseer is for a specified term, not exceeding five years, but with the possibility of successive terms. The Overseer's service should be reviewed periodically at the initiative of the senior pastor or the appointing board or committee with appropriate congregational involvement.

Congregations which do not choose the provision of an Overseer from outside their congregation, will continue to be served by the mutual assistance, guidance and accountability of the Executive Council and availability of fellow ministerial colleagues as time and resources permit.

Guidelines for Implementation

Procedure *within* the congregation in the selection of an Overseer is not specified. Generally, those procedures which the congregation finds

internally constitutional and acceptable should be workable. The degree of initiative and processing exercised by local leadership before processing the question with the congregation may vary. But in each case, the AMEC Executive Council should be informed of the procedure which the local leadership plans to follow in processing the question with the congregation.

The request for or selection of an Overseer is a congregational decision with approval of the AMEC Executive Council. In selecting a first-term Overseer, the procedure calls for the following steps:

1. Congregational leadership should communicate to the President or the Executive Director of AMEC the interest of the leadership and/or the congregation in requesting or selecting an overseer. This should be done early enough to allow adequate time for the discernment procedure.

2. The congregational leadership thinks and prays about names of potential Overseers and selects one or more names to be submitted to the Executive Council for approval. This may be done with or without congregational leadership receiving nominations from the congregation.

3. After receiving approval of the nomination(s) from the Executive Council, the congregational leadership will be free to contact the minister or ministers approved by the Executive Council and to work with the congregation in the selection of an overseer.

4. The congregational leadership will report the selection and acceptance of the overseer to the AMEC office.

5. For re-appointment of an Overseer to a consecutive term, the congregational leaders shall communicate the intentions and actions to the AMEC President or Executive Director, with re-appointment being subject to the approval of the AMEC Executive Council.

6. An Overseer is accountable to the AMEC Executive Council in regard to his ministerial credentials and his qualifications to serve as Overseer. He relates with sensitivity to the needs and expectations of the congregation he serves, with his tenure of assignment and reappointment being subject to congregational decision.

7. The provision of Overseer is for the purpose of providing, in response to a congregation's request, a ministry of helping the congregation to develop and maintain vision for life and ministry, advising the pastors and the congregation, being available as a pastor to the pastors, developing wholesome relationships within the congregation and relating to the wider Church within AMEC and beyond.

Additional information may be found on the AMEC web site. A suggested **Job Description** with Guidelines and description of duties for a Congregational Overseer **is available from the AMEC office upon request.**



Guidelines for Credentials

1. Administration of Credentialing

A. A Board comprised of ordained Pastor-Elders, hereafter called the Board of Elders, shall issue credentials for ministry and service in the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations (AMEC) to persons who make necessary application and who qualify for such recognition in keeping with the guiding principles and policies of AMEC. Credentialing is a recognition of the mutual accountability we have within the Body of Christ, a commitment to encourage one another, an agreement to follow biblical standards of ethical conduct and willingness to give and receive counsel.

B. There shall be four levels or types of credentials:

- I. Christian Service Commissioning;**
- II. Christian Ministry License;**
- III. Pastoral Ministry License;**
- IV. Ordination to the Gospel Ministry.**

C. Persons desiring credentials on Levels II, III or IV shall make application to an AMEC Board of Elders through the chairman or secretary of that Board. Persons desiring a Level I credential for Christian Service Commissioning may be processed by the local leadership of an AMEC-related congregation, provided the procedure follows the standards expressed and implied in the AMEC Purposes and Principles.

D. Men ordained to the Gospel Ministry and who have served five years since being licensed for Pastoral Ministry, upon reaffirmation of their ordination vows in a public worship service, shall be designated Pastor-Elders. These men may then be selected to serve on the Board of Elders, which will function as the Credentialing Committee or appoint a Credentialing Committee from within their number. When growth of a regional AMEC Association makes it feasible, a regional Credentialing Committee may be selected from among the Association's own Board of Elders.

E. All individuals holding Christian Ministry Licenses, Pastoral Ministry Licenses or Ordination are members of the AMEC Ministers' Association also known as: *The Shepherd's Fellowship*. Persons holding a Christian Service Commission are welcome to attend the Shepherd's Fellowship activities, as non-voting participants, while their Commissions are active.

F. Members of the AMEC Ministers' Association not serving in an AMEC related ministry or with an AMEC congregation may retain their credentials by an annual report to and approval by the AMEC Board of Elders. They thus retain membership in the Shepherd's Fellowship.

2. Descriptions of the Types of Credentials

I. *The Christian Service Commissioning* is available to persons called by God to Christian service at home or abroad in a supporting vocational role, for a shorter or longer period of service. It represents approval for service for those who do not desire or do not qualify for a Christian Ministry License, or Ordination. It may be granted through a Commissioning Service. A Christian Service Commission does not grant approval for the performance of Ministerial functions as defined by the AMEC Board of Elders.

Christian Service Commissions are for one to three years depending on the terms or length of the service assignment and are renewed upon the request of the Licensee and approval by the Board of Elders. Such Licenses may be appropriate for short-term service or for a long-term, non-ministerial role in missions or service vocations.

II. *The Christian Ministry License* is available to persons called by God to longer periods of service in a variety of Christian ministries within Congregations, Mission ministries, church-related institutions or para-Church ministries. The Christian Ministry License is the highest credential for those not qualified for or aspiring to a Pastoral role and is normally granted through a Commissioning Service. It represents approval for limited ministerial functions and other duties defined by local churches and approved organizations.

This License may serve persons who are engaged in ministries of evangelism, Christian education, music, chaplaincies, youth or children's ministries, prison ministries, and many types of missionary roles. It also may represent approval for the layman whose ministerial gifts are used by the church at large from time to time, but who does not feel called to a vocational Pastoral role. Normally a person who holds a Christian Ministry License shall function under the guidance of a senior pastor or an approved administrator or supervisor.

These Licenses are issued for one to three years and may be renewed upon request of a Licensee and approval of the Board of Elders. Upon completion of three years of effective ministry a person may request a License which does not need repeated renewal, provided the Board has reviewed and approved the individual's doctrine and ministry. A person who holds a Christian Ministry License and enters another type of work, which is not predominately Christian ministry or service, should submit the Christian Ministry License for termination. It may be re-granted at such time as a work of special significance and purpose for Christian Ministry is resumed.

III. *The License for Pastoral Ministry* is available to men called by God to the Ministry of the Gospel. This License is for those qualified for the role of Pastor who have yet to meet the requirements for Ordination. It represents approval for all Pastoral duties and Ministerial functions as defined by the Board of Pastor-Elders.

This license is issued for one year and may be renewed annually upon request of the Licensee and approval of the Board of Elders. Upon satisfactory completion of two years of effective ministry the man holding a Pastor Ministry License is encouraged to pursue ordination in AMEC. It is expected that a man will have completed the Ordination requirements by the end of five years service in AMEC related congregations or ministry.

A person who holds a Pastoral Ministry License and enters another type of work, which is not predominately Christian service or designed for the exercise of Ministerial functions, shall submit his Pastoral Ministry License for termination. It may be re-granted at such time as appropriate Ministerial functions are again pursued, should other qualifications continue to be met.

IV. *Ordination to the Gospel Ministry* is granted to men who have held a Pastoral Ministry License and effectively served a minimum of two years in an AMEC related church or approved ministry. Ordination represents approval for all Pastoral and Ministerial functions in AMEC at home or abroad with no need for renewal. Ordination credentials, however, are subject to suspension or revocation in matters of discipline, as are the other levels of licensing.

With the exception of persons active in ministry at their retirement, the rights and privileges given to ordained persons should not be misused or misapplied if the person holding such credentials is no longer functioning in a Ministerial capacity. Persons who leave the Gospel Ministry should submit their Ordination for an "inactive status" for the duration of that time. Ordination may be restored to "active status" upon

notice of one's return to Ministerial functions. Persons who are Ordained Ministers at retirement shall be so recognized for life.

3. Transfer, Recognition and Removal of Credentials

A. Ministers coming from another Evangelical Christian denomination or fellowship who desire to have their credentials transferred to or recognized by AMEC shall make application to the Board of Elders on the forms provided. With this application they shall give particulars as to previous credentials, and the reasons for the desired change. A personal interview with the Board of Elders shall be necessary for action in keeping with its guiding principles and policies. Normally a person transferring credentials, though experienced and otherwise qualified, shall serve within AMEC for at least one year before serving on the Credentialing Committee of the Board of Elders.

B. The Board of Elders, following the principles of Scriptural discipline, is given responsibility to oversee disciplinary investigations and actions of credentialed persons. This shall normally be done through a specially appointed committee accountable to the Credentialing Committee. This shall be conducted in cooperation with the congregation, organization or agency with whom the credentialed person serves. Having given due diligence to the findings and counsel of the respective persons or bodies, the Credentialing Committee has authority to suspend or revoke as well as recommend eventual restoration when requirements have been met. Disciplined credentialed persons have the privilege of appeal to the full Board of Elders.

*“...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind
striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel...”*

Philippians 1:27

*“For other foundation can no man lay
than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ.”*

I Corinthians 3:11



Our Biblical Reformation Heritage...

“All who believe with the heart that God is, also believe that He is true, and that therefore none can be saved contrary to His Word. For He is the God of truth, and in Him there is no untruth. His uttered Word abides; it can neither be bent nor broken.

“A genuine Christian Faith cannot be idle, but it changes, renews, purifies, sanctifies, and justifies more and more. It gives peace and joy, for by faith it knows that hell, the devil, sin and death are conquered through Christ, and that grace, mercy, pardon from sin, and eternal life are acquired through Him. In full confidence it approaches the Father in the name of Christ, receives the Holy Spirit, becomes partaker of the divine nature, and is renewed after the image of Him who created him. It lives out of the power of Christ which is in it; all its ways are righteousness, godliness, honesty, chastity, truth, wisdom, goodness, kindness, light, love, peace.

“It sanctifies the body and heart as a habitation and temple for Christ and His Holy Spirit; it hates all that is contrary to God and His Word; it honors, praises, and thanks its God with a faithful heart.

*“For all truly regenerated and spiritually minded conform in all things to the Word and ordinances of the Lord. Not because they think to merit the atonement of their sins and eternal life. By no means! In this matter they depend upon nothing except the true promise of the merciful Father, **given in grace** to all believers through the blood and merits of Christ, which blood is and ever will be the only and eternal medium of our reconciliation; and not works, baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, as said above repeatedly. For if our reconciliation depended on works and ceremonies, then grace would be a thing of the past, and the merits and fruits of the blood of Christ would end. Oh, no, **it is grace, and will be grace to all eternity; all that the merciful Father does for us miserable sinners through His beloved Son and Holy Spirit is grace.**”*

Menno Simons 1541

from *True Christian Faith*, pp. 396,397
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