

*This month we continue in our series on the Covenant Brethren Church fellowship of congregations. Initial information was shared in a congregational gathering on December 1, 2019. Recent developments have advanced further the Covenant Brethren organization. This Statement of Faith was developed by an editorial team composed of Mike Rath (chair, pastor, Drayton Plains Church in Michigan), Dean Garrett (pastor, Emmanuel Church, Huber Heights, Ohio), Roger Myers (pastor, Brandt's Church, St. Thomas, PA), Eric Brubaker (minister, Middle Creek Church, Lititz, PA, & BRF Secretary). The team was assigned to update the Brethren Card (the summary of Brethren beliefs and practices that has been used for nearly 100 years). This statement was reviewed with input at the September and November 2019 large CBC meetings at Winchester and Antioch, VA. It was approved by the CBC leadership group on February 1, 2020. All congregations applying for CBC membership and all ministers receiving CBC credentials must affirm the Statement of Faith. --Pastor Myers*

## **Covenant Brethren Church Statement of Faith**

The Brethren movement began under the leadership of Alexander Mack, Sr. in 1708 in Schwarzenau Germany as a natural outgrowth of the Anabaptist and Pietist movements following the Reformation. Circumstances have often required us to declare to the world and to other Christians what we understand the Word of God to teach on various subjects. In order to inform those who might desire to know more particularly what we understand the Scriptures to teach, we set forth the following summary on basic topics.

### **BELIEFS**

#### **1. The Bible<sup>1</sup>**

We believe the original writings of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are fully inspired by God, and are without error and completely trustworthy. We believe that God has faithfully preserved His Word throughout all generations and that it is fully authoritative and final. We believe it is our ultimate source for all information about Almighty God, the world He has created, and is our sole rule of faith and practice.

#### **2. God<sup>2</sup>**

We believe there is only one Almighty God eternally existent in three distinct, co-equal and co-eternal Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth and sinless life, and in the sin-pardoning value of Christ's shed blood and death on the cross. We believe in Christ's bodily resurrection from the tomb, His ascension to glory and His personal and visible return to the earth. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling a Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

#### **3. Salvation<sup>3</sup>**

We believe that all people are created in God's image. Because of Adam's disobedience to God's command, Adam and all people have fallen into sin, have a sin nature, and are separated from God. God, who is rich in mercy, has made one provision for the salvation of people, which is faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the satisfactory payment for sin. The gospel is the good news that God will receive to Himself all persons who, with penitent heart, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead: of the believer to the eternal blessedness of the saved, and of the unbeliever to the eternal suffering of the lost.

#### **4. The Church<sup>4</sup>**

We believe that all persons who have received God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ constitute the Church. The Bible defines the Church as those who have been called out of the world to be God's special people, the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. The mission of the Church is both external and internal and includes both word and deed. Externally, the Church is to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a sinful humanity and to impact its community for the glory of God as His representatives in the world. Internally, the Church is to teach believers the whole counsel of God which includes encouragement to live a holy life and accountability to one another.

### **AFFIRMATIONS WE HOLD TO**

---

<sup>1</sup> Psa. 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:1-2; Deu. 6:4; Isa 43:10-11; Mat. 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; Acts 5:3-4; John 8:58; John 10:30; 2 Cor. 13:14

<sup>3</sup> Gen 1:26-27; Gen. 9:6; Isa. 59:2; Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 1:18-32; John 3:14-21; John 14:6; John 19:30; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Tim 1:15; Tit. 3:4-7; Mat. 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:20-26; Acts 1:11; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:4-15; Rev. 21:1-22:5

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 4:12; Rev. 21:19; Mat. 28:19-20; Rom 12:1-2; Eph. 1:4; Eph. 5:27; Mat. 18:15-20

1. We affirm that God has established particular roles and relationships for the good of human society. We affirm the sanctity of marriage and that God's pattern for marriage is revealed at creation. God created one biological<sup>5</sup> male and one biological female and blessed their union through marriage. God has ordained sexual intimacy to be a sacred gift enjoyed only by a man and a woman within the holy covenant of marriage. Any other form of sexual intimacy is sin and is something from which God desires to free His children.<sup>6</sup>

2. We affirm the sanctity of all human life from conception until death.<sup>7</sup>

## **AFFIRMATIONS WE STRIVE TOWARD**

### **(With Congregational Liberty)**

1. We affirm the importance of daily devotions for the individual, and family worship in the home.<sup>8</sup>

2. We affirm the importance of taking care of the fatherless, widows, poor, sick and aged, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

3. We affirm that believers are called to live a life of non-conformity to the standards and behaviors which characterize the world.<sup>10</sup>

4. We affirm that divorce is outside the original plan of God. When marital problems arise God's plan is for confession of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

5. We affirm seeking peace in human relationships and oppose the taking of human life by all forms of violence.<sup>12</sup>

6. We affirm a lifestyle characterized by godly self-control. We oppose a lifestyle characterized by intemperance and ungodly living.<sup>13</sup>

7. We affirm that believers should settle all disputes in a godly manner, seeking counsel from the church whenever problems in relationships arise. We oppose going to secular courts, especially against our Christian brethren.<sup>14</sup>

8. We affirm that a believer's word should always be an expression of truth. We oppose the taking of oaths as a means of verifying one's truthfulness.<sup>15</sup>

9. We affirm that believers should live lives characterized by openness and honesty. We oppose memberships in organizations requiring secrecy as a condition of membership.<sup>16</sup>

10. We affirm that believers are to be good stewards of all the resources, skills, talents, and other abilities with which God blesses them. Such blessings should be utilized for His glory and the good of others. We oppose all activities which tend to waste and misuse what God has entrusted to the believer's care.<sup>17</sup>

11. We affirm that believers are to be modest in their appearance as a testimony to their faith in Christ. We oppose extravagant or immodest appearance.<sup>18</sup>

12. We affirm that all believers are called by God to a life of ministry. We also affirm that God calls and sets apart individual believers to fulfill specific servant-leadership roles and responsibilities for the good of the congregation. We affirm that congregations have a responsibility to identify, encourage, and assist those whom God has chosen for the set apart ministry and to aid and support them in their work.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Biological refers to the chromosomes: a man has one X and one Y chromosome; a woman has two X chromosomes. This cannot be changed by surgical procedure.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 1:27-28; Gen. 2:18-25; Deu. 5:18; Mat. 5:27-28; Mat 19:3-9; Mar. 10:1-12; Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 18-20]; 1 Thes. 4:3 Heb. 13:4

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; Psa. 139:13-16; [Jer. 1:5] Psa. 116:15; Exo. 20:13

<sup>8</sup> Eph. 6: 18-20; Philp. 4:8, 9

<sup>9</sup> Acts 6:1-7; Luke 10:30-37

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 12:1-2; Jam. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16

<sup>11</sup> Deu. 5:18; Pro. 19:14; Mat. 5:27-28; Mat. 19:3-9; Mar. 10:1-12; Heb. 13:4

<sup>12</sup> Exo. 20:13; Mat. 5:21-22, 5:43-44; Mat. 7:12; Rom. 12:18-21; Rom. 13: 8-10

<sup>13</sup> Pro. 14:29; Pro. 15:18; Pro. 16:32; Gal. 5:19-26; Eph. 5:18; Tit. 2:2-3; Jam. 1:19-20

<sup>14</sup> Mat. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-9

<sup>15</sup> Pro. 10:19; Mat. 5: 33-37; Eph. 4:25; Jam. 5:12

<sup>16</sup> 2 Cor. 6:14-18

<sup>17</sup> Gen. 1:28; Mat. 5:16; Mat. 25:14-30; Rom. 12:17; Rom. 14:12; 1 Thes. 5:21-22; Heb. 4:13; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Pet. 4:10

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 1 Tim. 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6

<sup>19</sup> Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; Jam. 5:14; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:4-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Acts 18:3-4; 20:33-34; 28:30-31; 1 Cor. 9:18; 2 Cor. 11:8-9; 12:18; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:7-12

## PRACTICES

The Brethren, since our founding, have embraced distinctive practices and perspectives on practical living as a result of their study of the Word of God. We practice baptism of penitent believers by trine immersion.<sup>20</sup> We practice foot-washing<sup>21</sup>, love feast<sup>22</sup>, communion<sup>23</sup>, and the Christian greeting.<sup>24</sup> We practice proper appearance in worship<sup>25</sup>, anointing for healing in the name of the Lord<sup>26</sup>, and the laying on of hands.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Word of God is our ultimate authority for faith and practice. These summary statements are presented to the reader for their careful consideration and study, and in the hope that they clarify our understanding of how the teaching of God's Word can be effectively lived in daily life. May these beliefs, affirmations, and practices undergird and guide us as we covenant together to honor God, to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to live as ambassadors of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world until He returns.

---

<sup>20</sup> Mat. 28: 19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:27

<sup>21</sup> John 13:1-20; 1 Tim. 5:10

<sup>22</sup> Luke 22:20; John 13:4; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Jude 12

<sup>23</sup> Mat. 26:26-30

<sup>24</sup> Acts 20:37; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor. 11:2-16

<sup>26</sup> Jam. 5:13-18; Mark 6:13

<sup>27</sup> Acts 8:17; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14