

Decrees
for to Keep
for the
Pilgrim
Mennonite
Conference
of the
Church of Jesus Christ

2021

ABOUT THESE DECREES

Before the Pilgrim Conference was formulated, the ministry of the churches which later became this conference penned the following words:

“We respect the traditions and practices of the Mennonite Church that are expressions of the precepts and principles of the New Testament. We recognize however, that it is possible for traditions to creep in that actually prohibit spiritual advancement and growth. Mk 7:4,8. The only true standard whereby one may discern the validity of traditions is the Word of God. To blindly adhere to traditions of the past that have no biblical basis, or to recklessly abandon traditions that have well expressed biblical principles will rob us of spirituality and guarantee apostasy.

“We believe the church has a mandate to make applications to the teachings of the Eternal Word of God. Mt 16:18-19; Acts 15. The church should continue to examine new practices, inventions and innovations, and weigh these by the principles of the Word of God to determine their value, or their detrimental influence. That which is basically wrong should be prohibited. That which is good will still need direction. Where no biblical principles are violated or jeopardized, the church may safely conclude the issue is within the realm of Christian liberty. Rom 14; 1 Cor 8.”

This continues to be our vision today.

The Pilgrim Mennonite Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this conference to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to promote a life of obedience to the Word of God with respect to the Mennonite heritage. It is our goal to disciple believers into dedicated obedience to the Lordship of Christ. See Eph.4:11-16.

It is the purpose of this statement of "Decrees For to Keep" (Acts 16:4) to plainly set forth standards that are applications of the principles found in God's Word and to show the Scriptures from which they originate.

Scriptures such as Matt.16:18, 19; Acts 15&16; Php. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6-16 and Heb. 13:7, 17, 24 teach that it is God's will that the Church raise up practical standards of living for the Children of God in every generation. Having this direction we hold forth these standards in the fear of God and without apology before men. It is our desire that those who choose to identify with this conference may find holy direction in these perilous times when the world is running to excess of riot (1 Pet. 4:4).

It is the goal of these decrees to magnify the principles of the Eternal Word of God. We believe it is the Word of God that imparts life, light, and conviction to the soul (Psa. 119:130 and Heb. 4:12). For Biblical principles to be honored, they must be put into practice (John 7:17). Practices kept without regard to the Bible principle from which they originate, eventually degenerate into empty form, and finally will actually keep one from the Truth (Mark 7:1-13). The intention of this statement is to emphasize the Divine principles, and then to give the practices that express those principles, so God's Holy Word receives the utmost glory.

This statement of Decrees For to Keep was formulated and adopted by the ministerial body of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference in September of 1991 with final revision made 2016. Revisions made in 1995, 2000, 2004, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2021.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

This statement of Christian Doctrine was adopted by the Mennonite Church in 1921 at Garden City, Missouri.

This statement we accept as our creed. We also have an appreciation for the Schleithem (1527) and Dortrecht (1632) Confessions of Faith.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

ARTICLE I

Of the Word of God

We believe in the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible as the Word of God; that it is authentic in its matter, authoritative in its counsels, inerrant in the original writings, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Ex. 4:12; 2 Sam. 23:2; Psa. 12:6; 119:160; Jer. 1:9; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20,21.

ARTICLE II

Of the Existence and Nature of God

We believe that there is but one God, eternal, infinite, perfect, and unchangeable, who exists and reveals Himself in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Deut. 6:4; Psa. 90:2; Gen. 17:1; Psa. 147:5; 139:7-12; Isa. 40:28; 57:15; Mal. 3:6; Gen. 1:2; Heb. 1:8.

ARTICLE III

Of the Creation

We believe that the Genesis account of the Creation is a historic fact and literally true. Gen.1:1,21,27; Ex. 20:11; Mk. 10:6-9; Heb. 1:10; 4:4; 11:3.

ARTICLE IV

Of the Fall of Man

We believe that man was created by an immediate act of God, in His own image and after His likeness; that by one act of disobedience he became sinful in his nature, spiritually dead, subject to physical death and to the power of the devil, from which fallen condition he was unable to save himself. Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7,16,17; Eph. 2:1-3,12; Jno. 6:44; Rom. 5:6.

ARTICLE V

Of Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin - the perfect God-man; that He was without sin ... making the only adequate atonement for sin by the shedding of His blood, thus reconciling man to God; that He was raised from the dead, ascended to glory, and "ever liveth to make intercession for us". Jno. 1:1,14,18; Heb. 1:8; 13:8; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20-25; Isa. 53:5,6; 2 Cor. 5:14,21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:22,24; 3:18; Rom. 5:8-10; Matt. 28:6; Acts 2:24; 10:39-41; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:20; Acts 1:11; Eph. 1:19,20; Rev. 1:18; Col. 3:1; Heb. 6:20; 1 Jno. 2:1,2; Heb. 7:25.

ARTICLE VI

Of Salvation

We believe that man is saved alone by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ; that he is justified from all things on the ground of His shed blood; that through the new birth he becomes a child of God, partaker of eternal life, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Eph. 2:8; Rom. 3:20-26; Acts 13:38,39; Jno. 1:12,13; 3:4,8,16; 5:24; Eph. 1:3.

ARTICLE VII
Of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit; that He convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment; that He indwells and comforts the believer, guides him into all truth, empowers for service, and enables him to live a life of righteousness. Acts 5:3,4; 2 Cor. 3:3,17; Jno. 16:7,8,13; 1 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:1-4.

ARTICLE VIII
Of Assurance

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to know that they have passed from death unto life; that God is able to keep them from falling, but that the obedience of faith is essential to the maintenance of one's salvation and growth in grace. 1 Jno. 3:14; 5:13; Rom. 8:16; 2 Cor. 12:9; Jude 24,25; Rom. 16:25,26; 1:5; Gal. 3:11; Jno. 8:31; 2 Pet. 1:5-11.

ARTICLE IX
Of the Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ, composed of all those who through repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been born again and were baptized by one Spirit into one body, and that it is her divinely appointed mission to preach the Gospel to every creature, teaching obedience to all His commandments. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18; Acts 20:21; Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; 16:31; Gal. 3:26; 1 Cor. 12:13; Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8.

ARTICLE X

Of Separation

We believe that we are called with a holy calling to a life of separation from the world and its follies, sinful practices, and methods; further, that it is the duty of the Church to keep herself aloof from all movements which seek the reformation of society independent of the merits of the death of Christ and the experience of the new birth. 1 Pet. 2:9; Tit. 2:11-14; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 12:1,2; Eph. 5:11; 1 Jno. 2:15-17; 2 Thess. 3:6; Acts 4:2; Jno. 3:3,6,7.

ARTICLE XI

Of Discipline

We believe that the Lord has vested the Church with authority in accordance with Scriptural teaching: (1) to choose officials, (2) to regulate the observance of ordinances, (3) to exercise wholesome discipline, and (4) to organize and conduct her work in a manner consistent with her high calling and essential to her highest efficiency. Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5-9; 2:15; Matt. 28:19,20; 18:15-18; Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 13:17; Acts 1:15-26; 14:21-23.

ARTICLE XII

Of Ordinances

We believe that Christian baptism should be administered upon confession of faith; that the Lord's Supper should be observed as a memorial of His death by those of like precious faith who have peace with God; that feet washing as an ordinance should be literally observed by all believers; that Christian women praying or prophesying should have their heads covered; that the salutation of the holy kiss should be duly and appropriately observed by all believers; that anointing with oil should be administered to the sick who call for it in faith; that marriage between one man and woman is a divine institution dissoluble only by death, that on the part of a Christian it should be "only in

the Lord" and that consistency requires that the marriage relation be entered only by those of like precious faith. Luke 22:19,20; 1 Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 18:8; Jno. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 16:20; Jas. 5:14-16; Mark 10:6-12; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39; Amos 3:3.

ARTICLE XIII

Of Restrictions

We believe that all Christians should honor, pray for, pay tribute to, and obey in all things those who are in authority in state and nation, provided however, that should instances arise in which such obedience would violate the higher law of God "we ought to obey God rather than man"; that Church and State are separate, and while believers are to be subject to, they are not a part of the civil, administrative powers; that it is contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles to engage in carnal warfare; that Christians should "adorn themselves in modest apparel ... not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array"; that the swearing of oaths is forbidden in the New Testament Scriptures; that secret orders are antagonistic to the tenor and spirit of the Gospel; and that life insurance is inconsistent with filial trust in the providence and care of our heavenly Father. 1 Pet.2:13,14,17; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1,2; Acts 5:29; Matt. 22:21; Mark 10:42-44; Jno. 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Tim. 2:9,10; 1 Pet. 3:3-5; Matt. 5:34-37; Jas. 5:12; Jno. 18:20; Eph. 5:11,12; 1 Jno. 3:17; Gal. 6:10; Jer. 49:11; Eph. 1:22,23.

ARTICLE XIV

Of Apostasy

We believe that the latter days will be characterized by general lawlessness and departure from the faith; that on the part of the world "iniquity shall abound" and "evil men shall wax worse and worse"; that on the part of the Church there will be a falling away and "the love of many shall wax cold"; that false teachers shall abound, both deceiving and being deceived; and further, that present conditions indicate that we are now living in these perilous times. 1 Tim. 4:1,2; Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Tim. 3:1-5,13; 2 Pet. 2:1,2,10; Matt. 24:11,12; 2 Thess. 2:3.

ARTICLE XV

Of the Resurrection

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the bodily resurrection of all men, both of the just and the unjust - of the just to the resurrection of life, and of the unjust to the resurrection of condemnation. Jno. 20:20,24-29; Luke 24:30,31; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; Acts 24:15; Jno. 5:28,29; 1 Cor. 15:20-23.

ARTICLE XVI

Of the Coming of Christ

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of our Lord as the blessed hope of the believer; that we who are alive and remain, together with the dead in Christ who will be raised, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and thus ever be with the Lord. Jno. 14:2,3; Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:44; Heb. 10:37; Tit. 2:11,13; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

ARTICLE XVII

Of the Intermediate State

We believe that in the interval between death and resurrection, the righteous will be with Christ in a state of conscious bliss and comfort, but that the wicked will be in a place of torment, in a state of conscious suffering and despair. Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:1-8; 1 Thess. 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:9.

ARTICLE XVIII **Of the Final State**

We believe that hell is the place of torment, prepared for the devil and his angels, where with them the wicked will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire forever and ever, and that heaven is the final abode of the righteous, where they will dwell in the fullness of joy forever and ever. Matt. 25:41,46; Jude 7; Rev. 14:8-11; 20:10,15; 2 Cor. 5:1,2; Rev. 21:3-8; 22:1-5.

DECREES FOR TO KEEP

ARTICLE I CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

2 Pet. 1:5 "...add to your faith, virtue..."

1. Devotional Life

Matt. 22:37,38 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

Matt. 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Man's basic and most important relationship is with God through the new birth experience. This relationship grows through Bible reading, worship, prayer, and praise. From this springs his life of daily obedience and service for God and humanity. The Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, emphasizes the importance of a constant right relationship with God. Our Master Himself spent much time in communion with His Father. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles show by their example and teaching the blessing and necessity of personal communion with God. Men of God in history who were successful in their service to God made it their priority to spend much time in prayer and personal Bible reading.

Deut. 17:19,20 "...he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren..."

Psa. 1:2 "...his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night..."

The Church recognizes that the complexity of life in modern civilization endangers the personal quiet time with God. Therefore, in view of the importance of devotional life in a fast-moving age, it is urged that the ministry personally experience a daily walk with God. They shall also conduct meaningful devotional periods in the church services, leaders in related church activities shall give devotional life its proper emphasis, and good devotional congregational singing shall be encouraged. The daily family worship period shall be promoted and maintained in each family. The importance of personal Bible reading should be held forth to the brotherhood (1 Tim. 4:13-16). Personal devotional life with God is to be considered of more importance than Christian service.

There are a number of things that make a devotional life more difficult to maintain and therefore need to be guarded against. Among these we name the following: the abundance of non-religious literature as news media, magazines, and light-reading, and the breaking up of family devotional life through the influence of present day industrialism and communication technology.

May our churches and homes seek to strengthen devotional life in order to meet the negative conditions of the day.

2. Love and Compassion

John 13:35 "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Rom. 13:9,10 "...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Throughout the New Testament and especially in Jesus' teachings we discover an emphasis of loving our fellow man. We have love when *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts"* (Rom. 5:5), and it will be demonstrated in outward expressions. These should include rendering

assistance as may be required in times of distress or want, remembering those who labor among us and are over us in the Lord, and doing good unto all men. As believers exercise Christian charity, they will be able to "admonish one another" without critical and judgmental attitudes, and will exercise patient forgiveness toward all men (Rom. 15:14; Matt. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4:31-5:2; 1 Pet. 3:8-12; 4:8; 1 John 4:7-12).

3. Contentment and Stewardship

Luke 12:15 "...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Matt. 6:19-20 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."

Matt. 6:24 "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Heb. 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have..."

We recognize that all earthly possessions belong to God (Gen. 14:19-20). Therefore we are stewards and not owners of these material goods (Psa. 50:10).

The threat of materialism is a serious challenge to true spirituality in our day. We sense this in a keen way when we compare the warnings against seeking riches in the New Testament with the materialistic emphasis of seeking wealth and prosperity in our culture. When God blesses with added wealth, members are directed to find ways to share with others for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, and avoid excessive accumulation of material wealth (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Jas 1:9-10).

The following guidelines are presented as a means of helping the believer sense when materialism is influencing him in a course away from God.

1. When devotional life and the family altar are pushed out of his schedule, one is busier than God ever intended him to be (Matt. 6:33).

2. When disagreements over material possessions begin to cause strife, envy or bitterness (Luke 12:13-16).

3. When one begins to strap himself with debt in order to achieve a better life style (Rom. 13:8).

4. When giving is done grudgingly so that more and more of one's finances are kept for self (2 Cor. 9:6-10).

5. When one has an unthankful attitude toward present blessings, and an unwholesome craving for more (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Extravagance in any form is not consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures. Therefore, we urge that our members refrain from useless and wasteful expenditures of money in their homes, on their persons, or in their living, and recommend that in all things, they seek to give a good account of their stewardship as faithful servants of Christ (Luke 12:13-30; 16:1-13).

4. Humility

1 Pet. 5:5 "...God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Dan. 4:37 "...and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Inasmuch as the Bible condemns pride in such strong language referring to its disastrous results to nations, peoples, and individuals, and holds forth the blessings of humility; the church seeks by the grace of God to be free from denominational pride, and personal or ministerial emulation and rivalry. Rather, we desire to express humility in church life, in the building and equipping of our meeting houses and homes, in our possessions, in our dress, and in our relationships one to another (Rom. 12:16). Material prosperity (Pro. 28:11), educational advancement (1 Cor.

8:1), and success in various endeavors may cause one to be lifted up in pride. May we labor and pray that we will not lose the blessing of the Lord because of a sense of self-sufficiency and social importance.

Humility will also express itself in pursuing kingdom usefulness instead of self interests (Matt. 23:10-12; Jas. 4:6,10; Pro. 6:17; Dan. 4:37).

5. Christian Speech

Matt. 12:36,37 "...every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shall be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Jas. 4:11 "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."

Members shall refrain from foolish, profane, or vulgar talk, and from vain and idle gossiping. All shall use their conversational powers in a way that is edifying, uplifting, and strengthening (Pro. 15:2; 18:7; Eph. 4:29,31; 5:4; Col 4:6 2 Tim. 2:16).

6. Moral Purity

Matt. 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"

The Christian life, purity and getting to heaven cannot be divided. Purity in heart suggests a purity of mind that will help one to be pure in actions. Purity in action will be an asset to the purity of others and will enhance our Christian testimony.

Petting (impure courtship conduct) (1 Thess. 4:3-6), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22), bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16), incest (Lev. 20:17), pornography (Matt. 5:28), fornication (1 Cor. 6:18) and adultery (1 Cor. 6:18) constitute sins against God and one's body. We also believe that God created mankind as male and female and that

transgenderism is outside His will (Gen 1:27; Mk 10:6; Rom 9:20).

Being forgiven, cleansed and delivered from these sins is our only hope of heaven.

We promote a healthy social reserve between the genders and hands off policy for courtship. We encourage parents to guide their youth through moral temptations including masturbation.

7. Honesty

Eph. 4:25 "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour..."

Personal holiness involves honesty in speech and business life. Bearing false witness (Deut. 19:16-21, Pro. 6:19), spreading false reports, pretending we are something we are not and denying things we are guilty of (2 Kgs. 5:22-25), justifying the wicked and condemning the righteous (Pro. 17:15), and all deliberate misrepresentations are an abomination unto the Lord. *Rev. 21:8 "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"*

8. Faith and Trust

Psa. 118:8 "It is better to put trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." See also Matt. 6:24-34 & Luke 12:22-30.

The mentality and outlook of the Christian is entirely different from that of the natural man. Since his life is in God's hands, the Christian refuses to worry and chooses to trust issues of life in the hands of the Almighty One. This finds an outlet of expression in many ways.

Insurance: We believe the child of God will not need to depend on the world's methods of securities. Members are encouraged to look to the Lord for protection and care, rather than to insurance companies (Isa. 57:13).

Health Care: While we do not object to consistent therapeutic care and the proper use of herbs (Gen 1:29), we believe the primary source of healing is in God. We encourage our membership to keep the practice of anointing with oil and laying on of hands as a meaningful part of Christian experience (Jas. 5:14-16).

Forms of health care that rely on occult powers shall be strictly avoided. We sense the danger of any health practice where there is no scientific explanation.

9. Obedience

Matt. 7:21 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

The Christian is one who makes continual choices to do whatever God desires of him. God's will for the believer is revealed in His Word. No Christian may feel comfortable living in disobedience to God's revealed Truth.

God also has a divine will for each of His children (Isa. 30:21; John 21:22). As His children, all details of our lives are in the hands of our Father, and we are committed to live our lives to His choosing.

10. Personal Evangelism and Christian Service

Mark 1:17 "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

The New Testament teaches that the believer is to share the Gospel with the lost and seek every opportunity to advance the cause of the kingdom of heaven. Members who give no evidence of a burden for the lost should be challenged as to the genuineness of their Christian commitment.

Luke 9:26 "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he

shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels."

Members shall not be ashamed of the Lord Jesus or practical expressions of discipleship (Rom 1:16).

Every member shall seek to be involved in the various service opportunities of the church (Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

11. Respect for the Sanctity of Life

Gen. 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Gen. 9:6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

1 Joh 3:15 "... and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Pro 12:10 "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

The Bible teaches that man is created in the image of God and therefore all human life shall be regarded as sacred. Governments are given responsibility to carry out capital punishment to restrain evil doers (Gen 9:6; Rom 13:3-4)

The Bible teaches that animals were formed by God out of the ground (Gen 2:19) and should be treated with regard. However they are not formed in God's image and are created to be used to benefit human needs (Gen 9:2-3). Paul also spoke against those who in the latter days would teach against eating of meats and therefore promote vegetarian lifestyles etc. (1 Tim 4:3, 4). We reject such end-time teaching. The distinction our present society has established between sentient (with feelings) and non-sentient (without feelings) beings is a false standard.

We therefore believe the Christian's efforts will be to preserve and protect human life. All forms of murder shall

be carefully avoided, including but not limited to birth control methods that may cause abortion, creating more life than might be utilized (IVF and embryo implants procedures), induced abortions, careless operation of machinery or vehicles, and euthanasia.

While we encourage efforts to save life, we also encourage our members to accept death at God's hands when radical medical interference could only postpone its imminency.

Deu 29:29 "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

12. Temperance

The dictionary defines temperance as "an avoidance of extremes in one's actions, beliefs, or habits". Related words that give definition to temperance are, restraint, self discipline, self-control, and soberness. Opposites are words like excess, gluttony and greed.

The whole life of Christ exemplifies a life of temperance, and it is a fruit of the Spirit Gal. 5:23. In the courtroom Paul preached the need for righteousness and temperance to Felix, Acts 24:25. Peter tells us to add temperance to our knowledge, and patience to our temperance. 2 Peter 1:6

Regrettably our generation will be known for its lack of temperance in many ways. Some of the ways it is obvious is in overeating, excessive use of sugar and caffeine addictions which are harmful to the our bodies.

Working, sleeping, speaking, eating, expressing strong emotions etc should be done in moderation. Gluttony is a sin spoken against in scriptures. Luke 21:34 (surfeiting), Prov 23:2 and 21

Our members shall keep it a part of life to consider that we are God's temple and He dwells and walks in us and our bodies should give evidence of His Presence.

We believe overeating to be harmful to our health like other vices that need to be repented of and forsaken.

ARTICLE II

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Matt. 16:18 "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

1. Membership

Acts 2:47 "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The church consists of penitent, believing, obedient members (John 3:1-16; 1 John 5:1). We believe membership in a local assembly of disciples is a New Testament requirement for believers. For new believers baptism is the proper means of entry into the body.

Matt. 28:20 "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."

The ministry responsible for the instruction of applicants should be diligent in giving thorough teaching on the way of salvation, help in living the Christian life, and preparation for Christian service.

After a period of such instruction, applicants shall be examined to learn whether they are at peace, are penitent, believing, and willing to submit to the evangelical doctrine of nonconformity and nonresistance and these decrees of the church. Upon such evidence and with the counsel of the congregation they shall be received into the church upon confession of faith and water baptism.

Acts 18:27 "And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." See also 2 Cor. 3:1-3 and Rom. 16:1-2.

When members move from one bishop district to another, or from another church fellowship, they shall present membership letters of standing from the congregation from which they came.

When applicants come from other denominations and are satisfied with their believer's baptism, or come from churches that will not give a church letter, they will be received by confession of faith.

2. The Counsel Service

1 Cor. 11:28 "But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

1 Cor. 5:12,13 "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

The congregation shall be instructed to examine themselves before communion to learn if they are at peace with God and their fellow man and are willing to work in harmony with the decrees of the church. All members desiring to commune should give their counsel. The following Scriptures will be helpful to be used in this counsel service; Matt.18:1-22; 5:21-26; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 1 Cor. 3; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4; Col. 2.

3. Confession of Sin

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Jas. 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Confession of sin shall be made personally to God. The Scriptures also teach that we should freely confess our failures to each other. Inasmuch as sin influences the lives of other individuals and also brings reproach upon the Name of Christ, the church holds that where individual relationships and influence are involved, the involved persons should make suitable confession one to another and in the church when necessary to acquire peace in accordance with the teaching of Matt. 5:23,24; 18:15-20.

1 Tim. 5:20 "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

Sins such as fornication, adultery and other immoral involvements, drunkenness, substance abuse, persistent worldliness and pleasure seeking shall be confessed publicly in accordance with the principles of such Scriptures as Josh. 7:19; Acts 5:1-11 and Pro. 28:13.

4. Support for Congregational Activities

Heb. 10:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

When members are unfaithful in church attendance, or willfully absent themselves from communion, they shall be visited and admonished. If, after receiving such admonition given with patience and love, they still refuse to support the church, they forfeit their membership.

Members shall support the activities of their own denomination rather than give active support to groups who do not uphold the doctrines of nonconformity, nonresist-

ance, believer's baptism, and separation of church and state (Eph. 5:6,7,11).

5. Personal Offenses

Eph. 4:2,3 "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

When grievances or offenses arise between members, the members involved shall observe Matt. 18:15-18 and Matt. 5:23,24. No bishop, minister or deacon shall act upon a complaint before the aforementioned Scriptures have been complied with.

6. Christian Service Opportunities

Matt. 28:19,20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world (age Gk.). Amen."

1 Cor. 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The brotherhood should participate in and promote such activities for teaching, fellowship, and Christian service that are consistent for the spiritual benefit of the brotherhood, and for the carrying out of the great commission of our Lord in giving the Gospel to the world. These activities include Sunday School, Bible Schools, instruction meetings, missionary meetings, chorus, young people's meetings, revival meetings, tent meetings, cottage meetings, jail services, tract distribution and such like.

Evangelists and all church workers shall be Spirit filled, consistent members who are in the order of the church and shall be approved by the local ministry.

7. Education

Acts 22:3 "...brought up...and taught according to the perfect manner of the law...and...zealous toward God..."

The education of our children in a wholesome Christian atmosphere is a Biblical imperative. We believe the church should assist parents in fulfilling this responsibility by sponsoring Christian day schools with a Bible-based curriculum (Psa. 111:10; Deut. 6:6,7).

We recognize there are dangers in institutional higher education because of its emphasis on secularism and humanism. When education is needed for a specific vocation, we encourage proper counsel and accountability. (1 Cor. 1:18-31; Col. 2:3,8).

Spiritual life and consistency shall be primary qualifications for all school personnel. The church should encourage periodic instruction for teachers and administrators, to promote a Scriptural philosophy of education, and to encourage academic competence.

In order to maintain separation of church and state, our schools shall not accept government subsidies.

8. Singing

Ps 100:2 "Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing."

Eph. 5:19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord..."

Since the New Testament teaches individual relationship with the Lord and since the Holy Spirit is given to every believer giving him joy which may be expressed in singing, and since spiritual life and devotion are promoted by participation, we will have congregational singing in all our regular worship services (Col. 3:16).

We choose a cappella singing in our services because it patterns after the accepted practice in the synagogue and early church. This has also become a part of the historic Anabaptist, Mennonite heritage.

Group singing may be engaged in for personal enjoyment and inspiration in our homes, for the benefit of the sick and aged, as a Christian testimony in street meetings, in institutions such as jails, hospitals and charitable homes, and in a school setting. Chorus and school programs may be shared in their local setting.

9. Seating Arrangements

Matt. 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Phil. 4:8 "...whatsoever things are pure...think on these things."

Due to the temptations and distractions that mixed seating may present, we will follow the practice of segregated seating for worship services. Weddings and funerals may be considered exceptions since these services usually involve families as a unit.

10. Posture in Prayer

Eph. 3:14 "...I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

In order to encourage humility before God, and in keeping with Scriptures such as Psa. 95:6, Phil. 2:10, Luke 22:41, and Acts 20:36 we will continue the practice of kneeling prayer in our regular worship services.

ARTICLE III CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

1 Cor. 11:2 "...keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you."

1. Baptism

Acts 2:38 "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Baptism is an outward testimony of an inner New Birth experience and shall be administered upon confession of faith (Acts 8:12; Acts 10:44-48; Matt. 28:19,20).

We understand pouring to be the scriptural mode. Compare Acts 10:45 with Acts 11:15,16.

2. Communion

1 Cor. 5:7,8 "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

In order to preserve a holy communion we maintain the practice of close communion. Members may participate who: give evidence of a saving faith in Christ, are living in harmony with their fellow man, and are willing to abide by these decrees. Communion is observed semiannually. We advocate a time of prayer and fasting previous to communion (Luke 22:1-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Since communion speaks primarily to our relationship with our crucified, resurrected and returning Lord (1 Cor. 11:26), members shall not abstain from communion as a means of emphasizing criticism toward others in the brotherhood (Num 9:13.) In order that the church may be kept pure, concerns are welcomed anytime when they are registered with the ministry in a manner consistent with Scriptures such as Matt. 18:15 and Eph. 4:15-17.

3. Feet Washing

John 13:14 "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

As an expression of fervent charity within the brotherhood, and as an act of obedience to Jesus' teaching in John 13:1-17, feet washing is observed immediately after communion.

4. Marriage

Eph. 5:31,32 "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

2 Cor. 6:14. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" See also Heb. 13:4; Pro. 18:22; 19:14.

The Bible teaches that marriage was designed by God to be the union of one man and one woman for life. The church sanctions Christian marriage when both are believers and live a non-conformed and nonresistant life. Our members shall find their companions among those of like faith.

The bishop in whose district the bride has her membership shall direct the planning of the wedding and officiate in the marriage ceremony.

Weddings shall be conducted in a manner consistent with principles of Christian simplicity and avoid all vain display. Further direction is given in a booklet of wedding standards.

The goal of Christian marriage is a God-centered home where relationships become a priority and children are welcomed as the Lord's heritage (Psa. 127:3).

Mark 10:11,12 "And he saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery

against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. See also Matt. 5:31,32; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:1-3; and Eph. 5:22-33.

In light of the teaching of these Scriptures in relation to divorce and remarriage to another person, no member may be involved in any marriage affected by such a relationship. Members may not initiate a divorce (Matt. 5:32).

5. The Christian Woman's Veiling

1 Cor. 11:3,5 "...the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man...every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head..."

We recognize the divine order of headship as taught in 1 Cor. 11:1-16; 1 Tim. 2:12; and 1 Cor.14:34-38.

Every sister shall be appropriately veiled at all times for a constant testimony that she accepts her position as a Christian woman. The Bible teaches that it is the properly covered head (not just the wearing of an article labeled "covering") which is the sign of the Christian woman in God's divine order.

The covering application to be honored at all times is a two piece type of sufficient size so the bottom comes below the bun to the neck and the front comes forward to a position (on top of the head) in front of the ears. The front piece shall be at least 1½" wide. The hair shall not be cut and shall be free from current worldly arrangements which do not express a spirit of meekness and sobriety.

6. Christian Salutation

Rom. 16:16 "Salute one another with an holy kiss".

The salutation of the holy kiss should be observed and practiced by the believers, brethren among brethren and sisters among sisters, as an expression of "fervent charity".

It should be practiced when meeting for worship as well as when meeting for social fellowship and not only when observing the other ordinances (1 Pet. 4:8; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

7. Anointing with Oil

Jas. 5:14 "...let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord..."

According to James 5 we believe our members should feel free to avail themselves of the privilege to call for anointing with oil accompanied by the prayer of faith for healing (Jas. 5:13-18; Mark 6:13).

ARTICLE IV

SEPARATION AND NONCONFORMITY

Rom. 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world..."

1. The Lord's Day

1 Cor. 16:2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store..."

In light of the Bible teachings in Gen 2:2-3; Ex. 30:8-11; Ex. 23:12; 31:13; 34:21; 35:2,3; Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22, we believe that it is God's will that there be a day set apart for devotion and worship. In honor of our Lord's resurrection (Matt. 28:1), the birth of the church on Pentecost (Acts 2:1 & Lev. 23:15-21), and the apostolic practice (1 Cor. 16:2 & Acts 20:7), we believe the first day of the week (Sunday) should now be that day (Col. 2:14-16, 2 Cor. 3:7).

The Lord's Day shall be made a day of devotion and worship. Church services and Sunday Schools shall be regularly attended. Feasting (Luke 21:34) and pleasure seeking shall be strictly avoided.

Members shall avoid labor, business, and buying or selling on the Lord's Day as much as possible. Both young and old shall be taught how to keep the Lord's Day holy and

exercise themselves constantly in showing reverence for God's house and all that pertains to it (Isa. 58:13; Rev. 1:10).

2. Funerals

1 Thess. 4:13,18 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope...Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Gospel simplicity and economy should characterize our funerals. Flowers shall not be used in our funeral services.

3. Automobiles

Luke 16:15 "...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

Inasmuch as our automobiles, as well as all our possessions, are gifts from God, they should be in keeping with Biblical modesty and separation. The more expensive cars, sports cars as well as sports features on regular cars, and all striped tires shall be avoided. The basic color shall be one tone. The appearance of all our vehicles and the use of them should always glorify God (1 Cor. 7:31).

4. Christian Attire

Luke 8:35 "Then they . . . found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. . ."

The New Testament gives several commandments that teach acceptable Christian dress choices: 1 Tim 2:9,10; 1 Pet. 1:14; 3:3,4; 5:5; Rom. 12:1,2. The Old Testament, as well, shows us that God had definite dress requirements for His people: Gen. 3:21; Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 22:5; Isa. 3:16-26; Isa. 47:1-3.

These Scriptures teach us the following principles:

A. Christian Dress shall be Modest

1 Tim. 2:9 "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. . ."

Since the Bible gives the command to "adorn in modest apparel", it can be expected that the practical choices of Christian dress will be modest. Scriptural modesty has at least two applications (a.) the body will not be shamefully exposed, but rather covered and (b.) the clothing itself will be neither bold, showy or loud in colors or patterns nor abbreviated or tight. Modest apparel complements humility in countenance, reverential fear toward God, and soundness of the mind. Modest apparel is a testimony of a disciplined and humble heart.

B. Christian Dress shall be without Ornamentation

1 Tim. 2:9,10 ". . .not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

1 Pet. 3:3,4 "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

In the creation of the human body, the Lord placed a natural beauty. In the creation of new life in Christ, there are hidden beauties in the inner life. The Lord desires that the new inner life beauty is the prominent display of His people. Because of this truth, the Scriptures denounce placing ornaments or decorations on the human body, in the hair, or on the clothing. Adorning the body with gold (or any precious metals) or pearls (or any valuable gems) is a direct violation of these commands. To honor the Scriptural commandment to avoid ornamentation calls each one of us to consider our own choices and to lay them before the Lord with the question, "Am I choosing these things to bring

attention to God and His Word or is this for my glory and pride?"

C. Christian Dress shall not be conformed to Fads and Fashions

1 Pet. 1:14. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:"

Rom. 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The changing fads and fashions of today are controlled by the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). A distinctive or prescribed standard for our dress can help us to avoid the changing fads and fashions so common in our culture. The clothing industry places a high emphasis on change. We desire to reap the blessings of stewardship, humility and peace which can be had by those who reject society and its peer pressures and its persistent changes in the clothing industry. A distinctive standard also can guard against the accumulation of many varieties of dress and shoe options which changing fads bring into our wardrobe.

With these principles in mind: **For our brethren:**

Shirts: Because of the immodesty of tight or form fitting wear, we ask our brethren to refrain from wearing pullover or tee shirts. Bright colors or feminine colors such as pink or lavender shall be avoided. Also, except for work uniforms, shirts shall not advertise brands, themes and other statements in writing or pictures. Dress shirts shall be long sleeved and appear to be a solid modest color. Casual shirts shall avoid bold patterns or bright colors.

Pants: In order to avoid the immodesty of our culture, pants shall be full cut rather than tight fit and be full length. Also, we call our brothers to choose formal rather than casual

look. The casual or intentionally streaked, extremely baggy pants, faded or torn choices available in society violate the simplicity of the modesty principle. The traditional look of lighter shirt and darker trousers is to be honored in all dress and casual wear.

Neckties and bow ties in menswear are also considered to be an ornamental extra and shall be avoided. Our brethren shall wear a plain suit. Head wear worn for weather protection shall be consistent with the principles of separation. Other clothing, footwear and headdress shall not be of fashionable, sporty, or Western styles. Men's hair shall be groomed generally within the natural hairline and regularly trimmed. Extreme and fashion styles such as military buzz cuts, long bangs, or sideburns, etc. shall be avoided.

For our sisters:

The standard application for dress is the basic cape dress. To honor the modesty principle, dresses shall be loose rather than form fitting, neck lines shall cover rather than reveal, sleeves shall easily come below the elbow, and hem lines shall reach to at least midway between the knee and the ankle.

Fabric choices shall not be sheer, bold (contrasting colors), or large print.

Likewise, fashionable hairstyles, the intertwining of the hair in ornament, and hair barrettes are also ways that one can unrighteously draw attention to oneself and shall be avoided.

The basic dress pattern with a cape satisfies the fashion dilemma and God's standard of modesty. Patterns should be chosen with Godly wisdom "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Care should be taken to maintain a simple pattern free of such influences. Even with an application like the cape dress, it is possible to generate fashions and fads within our own community.

The non-ornamented people of the Lord shall forsake ornamental extras on their clothing such as lace, ruffles, smocking, contrasting fabrics in both colors and prints. Ornamental sleeve endings and collars, fitted waists, and tight skirts are all illustrations which can take away from the intended simplicity and modesty which the basic cape dress is intended to declare.

The shoes for our sisters shall not follow the unhealthy and sensual designs of the world, such as heels over 1¼" high, low cut and exposed heels and toes.

Fashionable headdress, ornamental scarves, etc. shall not be worn.

The full cape maternity dress shall follow the same principles as the cape dress meeting the Biblical standard of modesty in being a loose-fitting garment. The prescribed pattern is available in a separate document.

For all members:

Members who choose to expose their bodies in an immodest manner (such as modern swim wear) are subject to censure.

The wedding band or ring shall not be worn. Watches shall not be of gold appearance. Watchbands shall be black or of a subdued dark color and shall not be trimmed with gold or silver. Ornamental pins and other extras shall be eliminated.

While eyeglasses are a necessary tool for many people, our culture uses eyeglasses to complement and adorn. The eyeglasses we choose should be styles that are not given to body adornment.

Clothing designers use name brand labels and logos to appeal to a godless society. There is a worldly identity statement made when people choose to display fashion designer name brands and logos. A Christian will not choose to display popular and fashionable designer clothing names and logos on his body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

The choices we make concerning outer garments for cooler weather need to also follow the Biblical principles of nonconformity, separation, and modesty. Loud designs, bright or neon colors, and designer label coats are not consistent with these principles.

Constant change has the potential to move God's people into a gradual acceptance of that which would be a violation of Bible principle. A distinctive standard also can guard against the accumulation of many varieties of dress and shoe options which changing fads bring into our wardrobe.

Shoes worn for casual wear shall be dark in color. Dress shoes shall be black. Leg wear shall be worn in public life. Leg wear shall be subdued dark colors, (black, brown, navy, charcoal etc). For formal dress, leg wear shall be black. Sandals shall not be worn in public life.

It is Godly to choose stewardship over extravagance, both in the kinds of dress we choose and the size of our wardrobe. The Christian ought to remember that there are many more needs that could be blessed with our resources more than our own personal dress and the images we portray with our choices.

5. Dressing our Children

Parents should dress their children according to the above-mentioned Bible principles and teach them the serious results of following worldly practices and vanities prevalent today (Rom. 8:12,13; 12:2).

ARTICLE V NONRESISTANCE

Matt. 5:39 "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil..."

1. Political Involvements

John 18:36. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my

servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

The church does not approve of members taking part in politics or serving in any capacity that is not in harmony with 2 Cor. 6:14-18, John 6:15 and Rom. 13:4,5 (compared with Rom. 12:19-21).

According to Rom. 13:3,4 the government is responsible to suppress evil in the world and to punish the evildoer. Therefore we ask our members to refrain from voting and serving as jurors.

2. Military Service

2 Cor. 10:4 "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Study also: Matt. 5:21; Rom. 12:19; 1 John 3:14-16.

We understand the Scriptures teach nonparticipation in military service in any form. Since all service under the military arm of the government, whether combatant or non-combatant, serves the purposes of carnal warfare, members who go into military service or training forfeit their membership.

3. Lawsuits

Matt. 5:25 "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him..."

Matt. 5:39-40 "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also."

When members are sued at law, they shall seek to make an out of court settlement. If such settlement cannot be reached, members shall be willing to go beyond the demands of the court to satisfy the offended. In all of these

procedures, care should be exercised that the testimony of Christ be preserved.

If members sue at law or take the bankruptcy law, they fall under censure (Matt. 5:25; Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 6:1-7).

4. Duties Toward the Civil Government

Rom. 13:1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

Members should at all times pray for their rulers (1 Tim. 2:1-3), and maintain an attitude of submission to the government under which they live, whether the demands made by the said government seem reasonable or unreasonable (Rom. 13:1-5; Titus 3:1). However, when the requirements of earthly authorities conflict with the requirements of Scriptures, we should unhesitatingly obey God (Acts 5:29). We believe that tax monies belong to the government. According to Matt. 17:24-27, Matt. 22:21, and Rom. 13:6-8 we are required to pay our taxes, whether they are imposed as either a tribute or a custom. We further believe that the government is solely responsible for the use of its monies.

5. Swearing of Oaths

"Swear not at all." Matt.5:33-37, Jas. 5:12. Our communication shall be yea, yea, and nay, nay. The affirmation shall therefore be used when an affidavit or declaration is required.

6. Protests

Pro. 21:1 "The king's heart is in the hand of the of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it withersoever he will."

We uphold the Bible teaching of doing good unto all men (Gal 6:10). Therefore, members are not permitted to take

part in protest demonstrations or in the so called peace movement.

7. Assault Rifles and Weapons Permits

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

1Thessalonians 5:22 "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

John 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Inasmuch as assault weapons are made for the purpose of carnal warfare and are part of the tactical weapons industry our members shall refrain from the use, ownership, sale and manufacturing of assault-style weapons. Likewise members shall be certain that any weapons permit obtained shall not state that it is for self-defense.

ARTICLE VI

CHRISTIAN SELF DENIAL

Luke 9:23 "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

1. Pleasure Seeking

Titus 2:11,12 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" See also Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:17-24; 2 Tim. 3:4; 1 Pet. 4:1-4; 1 John 2:15-17.

Members shall not indulge in the world's methods of pleasure seeking, amusements and entertainments, patronizing or taking part in fairs, parades, circuses, moving picture shows, theaters, drama, public bathing resorts, organized contesting ball teams, dancing, card parties, races, various forms of gambling, and such like.

2. Social Activities

Luke 8:14 "... and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

1 Cor. 13:11 "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

In light of the fact that excessive social activities will choke out spiritual growth and productivity, and play activities primarily are for children, we present the following guidelines:

- a. Parents shall give direction to their young persons social interests (Eph. 6:1-4).
- b. We discourage group use of public athletic facilities.
- c. In preparation for the Lord's day, we should refrain from late Saturday evening social activities. Because of the sacredness of the Lord's day we should refrain from gatherings for group play activities on Sunday.
- d. Late night and after church service gatherings for physical play activities are discouraged.

3. Vocations

Titus 3:14 "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."

In order to make the testimony of the church as clear and positive as possible, we urge that the brotherhood engage in such employment and follow such vocations as are helpful to physical and spiritual well being, and in harmony with spiritual principles (1 Cor 10:31).

4. Tobacco, Alcohol & Substance Abuse

1 Cor. 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost..."

Since the production and use of tobacco seriously affects our Christian witness and because of the harmful effects on the body, members shall abstain from the use, distribution, and production of tobacco.

Members are not allowed to manufacture, use, sell or distribute intoxicating drinks. All other substance abuse is also forbidden (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; Isa. 5:11; Hab. 2:15,16; 1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:13).

5. Unequal Yoke

2 Cor. 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..."

Membership in secret societies, labor unions, and taking out life insurance are forbidden because in many ways such memberships necessitate transgressing the teaching of the Scriptures as related to the unequal yoke. Business partnerships involving unbelievers should be avoided.

6. Government Subsidies

1 Cor. 12:26 "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;"

Gal. 6:10 "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

We believe the church should rise to her Christian stewardship privileges and obligations. Members should therefore not need to receive government subsidies, or social security benefits and are encouraged not to do so.

7. Radio, Television, and Entertainment Movies

1 Cor. 15:33 "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Because of the effectiveness of the radio to propagate evil and increased end time deception thereby destroying true spirituality in the home and church, its use is not permitted among our brotherhood. The use of a private system for business shall be considered an exception. Also, we sense the dangers of the news media such as daily papers and magazines in the home.

Due to the evils of television, brethren and sisters who are responsible for the sale and use of the same, forfeit their membership. Receiving commercial broadcasts through any other means is also forbidden.

Because of the objectionable and entertaining content of most video mediums, VCR tapes, DVD movies and online movies shall not be used except for situations where business or specific use training is needed. Due to the stewardship principle and the conditioning effect of modern technology, we sense the dangers of excessive spending in such areas as cameras, camcorders, stereos, home computers, etc. (Psa. 101:3; Psa. 1:2).

8. Computer use, World Wide Web and CB Radio

Rev. 18:3-5 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

1 John 2:15-16 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of

the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

World Wide Web and Technology Use — In light of the dangers involved with globalism, end-time commerce, easy access to evil, mass production and promotion of sinful content, and all its associated spiritual hazards and addictions common to man via the World Wide Web; we expressly and unashamedly forbid unfiltered, unaccountable, Internet usage. Precautions shall be taken to prevent unfiltered/unlimited access to the web on all devices.

We also expressly forbid the use of technology for unrighteous Internet browsing, idle time wasting, and other uses in disobedience to the Scriptures. For the spiritual good of our homes, we forbid the use of the computer and other “smart” devices for entertainment as playing computer games, due to their detrimental social and captivating effects. Also we do not allow personal social networking due to the breakdown of gender reserve, the surrender of privacy, and the shallow relationships it fosters. We wish to use technology in such a way that it is our tool, and not our toy (Rom. 6:2,7; 2 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 4:1-5; Rom. 13:12-14; 2 Pet. 2:7,8 etc.)

The bishop board shall hold accountable each local congregation’s ministry to regularly teach and pastor concerning these dangers. Each congregation shall administrate regular Internet accountability among its members under the oversight of the local ministry according to the Word of God and PMC direction. Members unwilling to cooperate or who knowingly violate forfeit their membership.

CB Radio-Because of the evil communications on channel

19, we allow its use only in emergency situations and for directions or orders. Using the CB to circumvent the law is forbidden. Parents shall not allow minors to have access to these units.

9. Music Interests

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Eph 5:19

A. Biblical Principles related to Music

Music, in and of itself, is a language. It is a language that communicates to the deepest recesses of man's being. This is because music is a God-created language. It is a language of worship. Mankind has produced corrupted music which often directs worship to false gods.

Man is a triune being, created as spirit (pneuma), soul (psuche), and body (soma) (1 Thess. 5:23). Music influences man's soul either toward his body and lower nature, or toward God through his spirit. God created us as emotional beings, and in His stated desire that our "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless...". His desire is that we connect with Him emotionally in love, worship and adoration.

When we add lyrics to music, we are joining human language to the language of music. Adding human language allows us to add expression of the desires of our heart in terms that we understand. This results in communicating to God in the form of audible "prayer", but also communicates to others the thoughts and intents of our heart. Combining spirit-edifying music with words that glorify God creates songs that enable us to worship God "in spirit and in truth". As God's children we must discern whether our music appeals to our spirit or our lower nature. We dare not underestimate the power that music has to influence our spiritual well-being.

a. 1 Cor 14:15 "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." From this verse we learn

that our songs ought to cause our spirits to make contact with God in worship and praise, and our minds ought to be directed in the ways of holiness and truth.

b. Col. 3:16 "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The word grace as it is used here carries the thought of sweetness, loveliness, especially the divine influence on the heart, and its reflection in the life. This sets a standard of order and harmony that would rule out the discordant tones of apostate music around us.

c. The general principle of 1 Cor 14:40 "Let all things be done decently and in order." would deal with both the tempo and the rhythm of music.

B. How Can I Honor God with My Music Choices?

In light of the above-mentioned Scriptural principles, we present the following standards for our music interests.

1. Music should build appreciation for the worship hymns and the spiritual songs that have inspired saints throughout the ages (Col.3:16).

2. Music with certain features has a sensual effect on the physical and emotional make up of man. These features include but are not limited to hard rhythms, repetitious lyrics as a regular feature, frequently misplaced rhythm designed to move the body, vocal techniques intended to have sensual appeal, etc. Such characteristics should not be a part of our music. Worldly music of all kinds is strictly forbidden. Certain classes of religious music are worldly trending and therefore spiritually detrimental. Modern "Christian" music often yokes Christian lyrics with the sound of worldly music which includes features like the rock music beat and/or trained soloists that use the pop singing style. A pop singing style is often breathy, has a "moaning" quality, and tends to slide into its pitches. We sense a real need to push back against Contemporary Christian music that has a strong beat or singing style that imitates ungodly singers. Modern "Christian" music such as

"Christian" Rock, Rap, Jazz, Country, and others often yokes Christian lyrics with the sound of worldly music and is forbidden. If it sounds like the world, it is from the world and shall not be part of the Christians diet.

3. We value our heritage of four-part acapella congregational singing and shall maintain this practice in all church, school, and public settings. We believe instrumental accompaniment may have a place in our private and family lives when used with discretion and played in a way that assists us in "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Our music should preserve a foundation of four-part harmony. To assist in keeping melody an integral part of Christian music, all instrumental accompaniment shall be in the background and shall follow a consistent music pattern beat. Instrumental only music that honors the above principles is acceptable music.

4. We do not judge the motives of persons engaged in Christian music ministries, but since music has become such a professionalized and valued element in Christian entertainment, we recognize the possibility of music becoming an ecumenical mixer and its heroes becoming role models. We should avoid the influence of musical groups who are weak in modesty, non-ornamentation of the body, and in other ways do not give outward evidence of endeavoring to lead a separated godly life. 2 John 1:10-11 encourages us not to invite into our house or bid God speed to those who are not adorning the teachings of Jesus. These cautions should guide us in our viewing of music videos and attending concerts or programs. To safeguard against the draw toward professionalism, attendance at ticketed or paid to enter musical events is forbidden.

5. Availability of music has made it increasingly important to maintain accountability in all our music selections. Godly simplicity, accountability, and temperance in music must originate in the home, however church

leaders and fathers must both accept the responsibility to teach and direct all our music consumption.

10. Compliance

2 Thess. 3:6 "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

The above regulations are for the guidance and blessing of the membership. All applicants shall accept the foregoing regulations and conform to them as soon as possible. Those who do not willingly accept them cannot be received into church fellowship.

If members become proud and vain or show evidence of vanity and worldliness, they are to be visited and questioned as to life and conduct. If, after a reasonable time they still remain obstinate, they forfeit their membership.

If members shall willfully and knowingly violate the teachings of the Scriptures as interpreted and applied by the church, such offending members shall be visited and the matter investigated, and if the charge be found true, they shall be requested to come before the church to acknowledge their error and ask for forgiveness. If they refuse to do so, they forfeit their membership. While we encourage love toward those who are disciplined, members who defend them place themselves in the same state.

ARTICLE VII

MINISTRY

Acts 14:28 "Take heed...unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God..."

1. Ordinations

Acts 14:23 "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

We believe the church is an institution divine in its origin, plan, and destiny. We recognize the visible church as a body of believers organized for their mutual edification and for the advancement of the cause of Christ. We recognize her right to choose officials, to regulate the ordinances of the household of God, her authority from Christ to exercise discipline and maintain the standards of faith and practice required by Scriptures (Matt. 16:18-19).

Inasmuch as the apostles filled a vacancy among themselves by the use of the lot as recorded in Acts 1:15-26, and since the use of the lot with prayer and dependence upon God is also advocated in other Scriptures for use in important matters, we believe the use of the lot is a scriptural way of finding God's will and promoting peace and unity in the church (Pro. 16:33).

We believe the ministry is called by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28) and chosen by nominations and the casting of the lot when there are more nominees than needed. When ordinations are called for and are approved by the bishops, the district and the local ministry, the counsel of the brotherhood is asked. If this counsel is favorable, then nominations may be received from the brotherhood. The brethren who receive the required nominations (five for bishop, two or three for minister and deacon) and through examination and instruction give clear evidence of the qualifications given in

1 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 2:2; and Titus 1:6-9 shall share the lot.

2. Bishops

It is the duty of bishops to direct the instruction of applicants for church membership, to baptize the penitent believers, and receive them into the church with the counsel of the church, to administer the ordinances and to direct the suspension or excommunication of the disobedient in accordance with the Word and the discipline of the church (1 Cor. 5).

3. Ministers

It is the duty of ministers to preach the Word of God, to visit the sick, to warn sinners, to comfort the penitent, and to point them to faith in Jesus Christ. He may administer the ordinances in case of emergency when the services of a bishop cannot be secured at the time.

4. Deacons

It is the duty of deacons to visit the sick, and to receive and in consultation with the ministry to distribute charities to the needy members of the church. If difficulties arise in the church, the deacons, upon approval of the ministerial body, shall investigate and endeavor to effect peace and unity. When no minister is present in the regular preaching service or by the direction of the ministry, the deacon shall conduct the service by Scripture reading, exhortation and prayer.

5. Cooperation

Bishops, ministers, and deacons shall cooperate in the administration of the discipline and in directing the engagements and appointments of speakers for public meetings.

6. Support

According to Acts 20:33,35; 1 Cor. 9: 2 Thess. 3:8; and Gal. 6:6, the ministry shall not be salaried, but should be willing to support themselves as much as possible. The brotherhood should consider it a privilege and a responsibility to share their material blessings with the faithful ministry.

7. Ministerial Transfers and Withdrawals

Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

Titus 1:5 “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”

Heb. 5:4 “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

When an ordained brother moves from his appointed field to another area, his ministry may be transferred upon the agreement of the district ministries and the congregations involved.

In situations wherein an individual ordained man may feel led to relocate organizationally, he would need a 75% favorable vote of his district ministry and his home congregation in order to retain his ordination charge. In the case of a bishop, he would need a 75% favorable vote from the entire conference ministry and his congregations. If an individual leaves without such an approval, our understanding is that his preaching and leadership as an ordained man are inactivated. The group to which he newly identifies may reactivate his ordination status by whatever criteria they may determine.

8. Example and Influence

Inasmuch as ordained brethren and their companions exert an influence in the constituency by their teaching and example, and for the spiritual welfare of the church it is required that they give evidence of willingness to subscribe to and promote the standards herein set forth.

9. Ministerial Discipline

Any ordained brother may be dismissed from office if he gives evidence of unfaithfulness in his Christian life, if he teaches false doctrine, or if he refuses to accept counsel of the district ministry and the bishops.

ARTICLE VIII ADMINISTRATION

1 Cor. 12:5 "...there are differences in administrations, but the same Lord."

1. Conference

We consider a conference relationship necessary so that ordained brethren can be of mutual assistance to each other in continuing to maintain the standards of the Gospel and the evangelical discipline of the Mennonite Church and to promote the general welfare of the Church of Jesus Christ.

From Biblical teaching and examples we believe that both a conferring relationship and congregational councils are authoritative and helpful in their respective spheres (Acts 15:6-16:5; Matt 18:15-20).

The bishops shall plan for conference sessions to be held at least twice a year. Normally this is scheduled for the third Thursday of both April and September. Additional meetings may be called as the need arises.

The brotherhood is invited to attend.

2. Bishop Board

The bishops shall organize themselves as necessary to assist each other to carry out their responsibilities. A 75% affirmative vote of the bishops present is required to consider a matter passed.

When difficulties occur, the persons involved may appeal to the bishops to seek help to resolve the said difficulties.

No complaint may be received unless the rule of 1 Tim. 5:19 be diligently followed.

3. District Boards

Bishops shall organize and direct the ministry of their districts to function collectively in the administration of local interests.

ARTICLE IX WORKING PROCEDURE

Acts 16:4 "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

1. Decrees for to Keep

This statement of Christian doctrine and rules and discipline shall be the working standard of the congregations and ordained brethren of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference.

2. Procedure of Ratification

In keeping with the processes of Acts 15, and the teaching in Matt.16:19, we believe the establishing of decrees to keep to be the responsibility of the ordained brethren of the church.

3. Changes and Revisions

Inasmuch as issues will continue to arise to threaten the spiritual life of the church and because spiritual growth may lead to more scriptural forms of applying principles of the Gospel, any article of this *Decrees for to Keep* shall be open

to review by the ministry of the church at the time of the semi-annual conference.

Suggested changes shall be registered with the bishops and introduced at one conference session. If the proposed changes or suggested additions receive a 75% favorable vote of the conference body, the changes will then be shared with the membership for their suggestions. During the following conference session, a 75% favorable vote of the ministry is needed to ratify a change. The ministry shall keep in mind that the addition of rules is for the express purpose of strengthening the church in her expression of Biblical principles.

BROTHERHOOD, MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AND DEACON WORK

Matt. 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."

Luke 12:22,28 "...Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on... If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Phil. 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

1 Pet. 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Eph. 4:28 "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Gal. 6:2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

2 Cor. 9:9,10 "(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the

sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)"

2 Cor. 8:13-15 "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack."

According to the Scriptures, God has promised to care for the material needs of His children and often He meets those needs through the brotherhood. We believe that God blesses different members of the body with varied gifts for the purpose of bringing blessing to each other in a material and a spiritual dimension (1 Cor. 12: 7-31).

One of the threats that faces this scriptural ideal of working together as a brotherhood is an economic climate that is geared to make the individual feel independent and self sufficient. While persons feel more self sufficient they actually are becoming increasingly dependent on financial establishments that are created to ease economic stress when adverse conditions arise.

On the national scene there is the rise of socialism, where individuals trust more and more in the government to meet their needs. The product of that is that eventually one has greater faith in man than in God. The ultimate test arises in Revelation 13:17 where all economic commerce is tied to identification with the beast and false prophet.

In the business world, the fact that the insurance companies of America dominate so much of this country's wealth indicates the degree to which men trust in them. The degree to which people are involved in the insurance world is measured by the amount of money that is poured into and received from them. This involvement usually gradually increases over an extended period of time.

Because of God's blessing and a revival of vision within the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, we have seen a return to Biblical concepts of the deacon office and of brotherhood sharing. It is our desire that this vision continue and be strengthened that the Lord of Hosts would receive the glory He deserves from His people.

In light of these truths we feel it is very important that the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference rise to her God-appointed opportunity in promoting a true brotherhood in this materialistic age.

We do not favor an approach that is merely another insurance organization with some modifications. But rather we wish to follow the Bible way of caring for and sharing with one who is in need.

The following outline is our approach to this issue:

1. There needs to be continued teaching on the evils and dangers of being involved in worldly organizations (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

2. Continued teaching should be made stressing the importance of trusting in God rather than the organizations and institutions of men (Psa. 118:8).

3. We would encourage members to be willing to bear their own financial losses, acknowledge God's providence in financial successes and reversals, and the desire to help others in need (Jas. 1:9,10).

4. The assistance aspect of the deacon office shall be maintained as it was originally intended (Acts 6:1-7).

5. Deacons shall endeavor to evaluate each situation according to individual need and communicate the desire of the brotherhood to give assistance as needed.

6. The deacon should be supplied with sufficient funds so he can exercise his office. These funds will become available by lifting offerings as needs arise (1 Cor. 16:1,2).

7. All contributions to the deacon fund should be made in a confidential manner (Matt. 6:3) and on a strictly voluntary

basis which would bring a closer degree of equality (2 Cor. 8:14,15).

8. All congregational funds shall be kept by the local deacon in a church account. These accounts shall be subject to regular reports and audits (2 Cor. 8:21).

9. When a need arises that is more than a local congregation can bear, the deacon shall present this need at a district ministers meeting. Upon approval of the ministerial board, district offerings shall be lifted. If the need is still not met, then upon the agreement of bishops, special church wide offerings shall be called for, so the need may be met (2 Cor. 9:5-7; Acts 11:29,30).

10. Local congregations and districts shall be encouraged to offer assistance to spiritual conservative minded congregations other than those of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference, when appeals come for help and they are in a position to do so (Gal. 6:10).

11. We look favorably toward members eliminating all insurance and following this Bible approved way of life. This means not living to the full limits of one's income so we may have something to give to those in need, that we may bear one another's burdens and suffer with the member who suffers (2 Cor. 12:14; Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 12:26).

We believe that God is waiting to bless the brotherhood if we are willing to honor Him in this way.