



CHURCH TOGETHER STATEMENT GRACE AND TRUTH

PURPOSE/REASON:

- We affirm our denomination's vision that "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world" (see Purposeful Plan, pg 2).
- We affirm "Scripture as the authoritative source and standard for preaching and teaching about faith and life, for distinguishing truth from error, for discerning between good and evil, and for guiding prayer and worship" (see Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 4, pg 21).
- We affirm the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective as our "statement of faith for teaching and nurture in the life of the church" and recognize its role in providing guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture, offering guidance for belief and practice in the midst of changing times, and building unity within and among churches (see Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Introduction, pg 8, 9).
- We affirm that "through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers salvation from sin and a new way of life for all people. We receive God's salvation when we repent of sin and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord" (see Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 8, pg 35).
- We affirm that "the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. [Through Jesus], the church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families" (see Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Commentary on Article 19, pg 74).
- We affirm that "God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (see Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 19, pg 72).
- We affirm the Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) statements describing "homosexual, extramarital, and premarital sexual activity as sin," and "calling for the church to be in dialogue with those who hold differing views," to be the teaching position of our Church.

The Forbearance in the Midst of Differences resolution affirmed by the delegate body at the MC USA Convention in Kansas City (2015) says we are "to offer grace, love, and forbearance toward conferences, congregations, and pastors in our body who, in different ways, seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ on matters related to same-sex covenanted unions." The following resolution expresses how we, member congregations of Franconia Mennonite Conference, seek to be faithful to Jesus and the Scriptures on these matters.

STATEMENT:

- 1. We commit to making our churches places of radical hospitality, inviting and engaging all people regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, lifestyle, or socio-economic status.**
 - a. God desires to bring transformation to all people; therefore, we will welcome all people and call all people to repentance and holy living.
- 2. We call ourselves, individually and corporately, to repent of all sin.**
 - a. We confess that we are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God. We recognize that while we don't all struggle in the same ways, we are all in need of the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus.
 - b. We confess our failure to provide balanced, biblical teaching on healthy sexuality, marriage, singleness, and celibacy.

- c. We confess that topics such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, lust, pornography, and sexual abuse have far too often been neglected in our discussions of human sexuality.
- d. We confess that our churches have not always been safe places for LGBTQ persons and that many have been hurt by our lack of grace, compassion, and Christ-like love.
- e. We confess that we have failed to remain in dialogue with those who hold differing views. We have not been intentional enough about cultivating relationships with those in our conference with whom we disagree.

In all these areas, we humbly repent, seek God's forgiveness, and commit to action. We desire to be communities of faith that are full of grace and full of truth.

- 3. We uphold our existing policy that pastors holding credentials in Franconia Mennonite Conference may not perform same-sex covenant ceremonies** (see *A Polity for Ministerial Leadership*).
 - a. Pastors in Franconia Mennonite Conference who perform a same-sex ceremony will have their credentials reviewed according to existing conference guidelines (see *On Giving and Receiving Counsel: a process of discernment for a Franconia Conference credentialed leader alleged to be acting at variance with the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).
- 4. We uphold Franconia Mennonite Conference's existing policy to not credential persons living in same-sex relationships, and call on conference churches not to hire persons living in same-sex relationships to serve in pastoral leadership.**
 - a. Franconia Mennonite Conference churches who hire persons living in same-sex relationships to serve in pastoral leadership will have their membership in the conference reviewed according to conference guidelines.
- 5. We commit to a time of prayer and fasting for the purpose of listening to God's voice on these matters, recognizing that it is only through the unifying power of the Spirit that we can discern his will.**