

The Mennonite Church

Collected and Edited by Scott Shifferd Jr.

History:

- The Handbook of Denominations reports, **“Dating from the 1520s in Central Europe, these Protestants take their name from Menno Simmons (ca. 1496-1561), an early Dutch leader of the ‘Radical Reformation.’ ‘Radical’ in yearning to get to ‘the roots’ of the biblical manner of living, they rejected the ‘magisterial Reformation’ of Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-64). Called Anabaptists by others, they were treated as outsiders, heretics, and even outlaws by Catholics and Protestants alike. Their concerns were not with proper theology, the sacraments, or liturgy. Rather, they believed themselves called to exemplify godly living based on the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29). Until recently, most (and still some) of those quietly dedicated Christians frowned on involvement in secular activity, refusing to take oaths, bear arms, vote, or hold public office. [...]**

The first Anabaptist congregation of historical record was organized at Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525 by those who disagreed with Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) in his readiness to forge a union of church and state. **They also denied the scriptural validity of infant baptism and hence were labeled Anabaptist, or Rebaptizers.**

Anabaptist congregations were organized in Holland by Obbe Philips (ca. 1500-68) as early as 1534. Philips baptized Menno Simons in 1536, and Simons, a converted Roman Catholic priest, organized so many Anabaptist congregations that his name became identified with the movement. Simons’s writings, which emphasize pacifism, continued to influence the Mennonites. Their pacifism and rejection of the state religion brought severe persecution, and the number of martyrs might have been much greater had it not been for the haven offered by William Penn (1644-1718) in the American colonies” (Mead, Frank S and Hill, Samuel S. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. 11th ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. P.213-214).

- **The population of the Mennonite Church U.S.A. is about 125,000** (Mead, P.221). There are 11 Mennonite separations presented in the Handbook of Denominations of which one is the Amish (Mead, P.213-223).
- An organization representing the beliefs of Mennonites and Amish called Menno-Hof states, **“The word ‘Anabaptist’ means ‘to rebaptize.’ Sixteenth century Anabaptists rebaptized adults who had received the sacrament of infant baptism. This name was attached to a group of believers who called for voluntary, adult baptisms at a time when the state called for infant baptism.**

The Anabaptists sought to restore the church to reflect Christendom of the first three centuries after the time of Christ. They believed the church had been corrupted by state control, which demanded all citizens be baptized as infants. Infants upon baptism were registered as citizens while the rebaptized Anabaptists were persecuted and martyred as heretics by both the government and state church” (“Who We Are – the Anabaptist Story.” *Menno-Hof*. 10 Apr 2012. <mennohof.org/>).

- About **the Amish**, the Handbook of denominations reports **their population to be over 80,000.** **“The Amish movement within the ranks of the Mennonites takes its name from Jacob Ammon (ca. 1656-c. 1730), a Swiss Mennonite bishop of the late seventeenth century who insisted on strict adherence to the confession of faith, especially in the matter of shunning excommunicated members. The literalism brought about a separation in Switzerland in 1693.**

Early Amish immigrants to the U.S. concentrated in Pennsylvania and spread into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Nebraska, and other western states and into Canada. Many Amish, distinguished by their severely plain clothing, are found in the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church and Old Order Amish Mennonite Church. They are still the literalists of the movement, clinging tenaciously to the Pennsylvania Dutch language and seventeenth-century culture of their Swiss-German forebears.

They oppose the use of automobiles, telephones, and higher education and are recognized as extremely efficient farmers” (Mead, P.215).

- The Handbook of Denominations states, **“The Old Order (*Ordnung*) Amish hold to the old traditions of the Amish movement more strictly than do the so-called Church Amish. For example, their ‘plain dress’ requires the use of hooks and eyes instead of buttons or zippers, and members do not own automobiles.**

It is impossible to give precise membership statistics since the Old Order is not a denomination in the usual sense of the word. There are no church buildings because believers worship in private homes. **Moreover, there are no conferences. Members do not believe in missions or benevolent institutions or centralized schools; some, however, do contribute to the missions and charities of the Mennonite Church.** There are nearly 900 Old Order Amish districts, each averaging 100-150 members, with approximately half that number baptized” (Mead, P.223).

God, Christ, and the Spirit:

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, **“We believe that God exists and is pleased with all who draw near by faith. We worship the one holy and loving God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally”** (“God.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 11 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- Regarding Jesus, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. confesses, **“We acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only Son of God, the Word of God incarnate.** He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. As fully human and tempted as we are, yet without sin, he is the model human being. As fully divine, he is the one in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. During his earthly life, Jesus had an intimate relationship with his heavenly Abba and taught his disciples to pray ‘Abba, Father.’ He is the image of the invisible God, and ‘all things have been created through him and for him, for he is before all things’ (“Jesus Christ.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- Regarding **creation**, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, **“We believe that God has created human beings in the divine image. God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation”** (“The Creation and the Calling of Human Beings.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 11 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- Concerning **evolution**, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. reports, **“The Confession quoted above does not take a position on the age of the universe, nor does it support a particular mode of creation. Mennonites today show some variation in the details of what they believe, but there would be virtual unanimity in affirming that the created world is in both intricacy and grandeur the unfathomably great work of a God whose care for all creation endures to the end of time”** (“Creationism and Evolution.” *Who Are the Mennonites?* 11 Apr 2012. <thirdway.com/menno/glossary.asp?ID=28>).

Scriptures: *God:* Gen. 1:1-2, Psa. 110:1, Isa. 9:6, 48:16, 61:1, Mic. 5:2, Matt. 12:46-47, 13:55-56. 28:19, Luke 3:22, John 1:1, 14, Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom. 8:9, 9:5, 15:30, 2 Cor. 3:17, 13:14, Phil. 2:5-8, Col. 1:15-20, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3:18, 1 John 4:2; *Creation:* Gen. 1:26-27, **Exo. 20:11**, Matt. 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-8, Luke 11:50-51, Rom. 1:20.

Christ's Words and the Scriptures:

- The Handbook of Denominations reports, **“Mennonite beliefs are based on a confession of faith signed at Dordrecht, Holland, in 1632.”** There are eighteen articles of doctrine laid down (Mead, P.214).
- **“The Dordrecht Confession was adopted at a conference of Pennsylvania Mennonite ministers in 1725 as a Mennonite statement of faith.** In 1921, Christian Fundamentals was adopted. A confession adopted in 1963 sought, without attempting to make the body into a creedal church, to set forth the major doctrines of Scripture as understood in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. [...]

In 1995, General Conference Mennonites and members of the Mennonite Church adopted a new Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. The confession is the most recent in a series of historical Anabaptist faith statements, beginning with the **Schleitheim Articles**, written in 1527” (Mead, P.221).

- **“The Amish affirm the eighteen articles of faith written in the *Dordrecht Confession*, a Dutch Anabaptist confession of faith written in 1632.** Candidates for baptism review these articles of Christian faith, which also include articles on distinctive Amish beliefs such as non-violence, excommunication, and shunning” (“Beliefs.” *Amish Studies*. Elizabethtown College. 11 Apr 2012. <www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Beliefs.asp>).
- The **Mennonite Church U.S.A.** states in their Confession of Faith (1995), **“We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life. We seek to understand and interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the church.**

We believe that God was at work through the centuries in the process by which the books of the Old and New Testaments were inspired and written. **Through the Holy Spirit, God moved human witnesses to write what is needed for salvation, for guidance in faith and life, and for devotion to God.**

We accept the Bible as the Word of God written. God has spoken in many and various ways through the prophets and apostles. God has spoken above all in the living Word who became flesh and revealed the truth of God faithfully and without deception. We also acknowledge the Scripture as the fully reliable and trustworthy Word of God written in human language. We believe that God continues to speak through the living and written Word. **Because Jesus Christ is the Word become flesh, Scripture as a whole has its center and fulfillment in him.**

We acknowledge the 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” (“Scripture.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).

- Concerning **the work of the Holy Spirit**, the Mennonite Confession of Faith (1995) states, “At Pentecost, God began to pour out the Spirit on all flesh and to gather the church from among many nations. As a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the church praises and worships God and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. **By the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all Christians are called to carry out their particular ministries. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church comes to unity in doctrine and action. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the church preaches, teaches, testifies, heals, loves, and suffers, following the example of Jesus its Lord.**

The Holy Spirit calls people to repentance, convicts them of sin, and leads into the way of righteousness all those who open themselves to the working of the Spirit. Scripture urges us to yield to the Spirit, and not to resist or quench the Spirit. **By water and the Spirit, we are born anew**

into the family of God. The Spirit dwells in each child of God, bringing us into relationship with God. Through the indwelling of the Spirit, we are made heirs together with Christ, if we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him. **The Spirit teaches us, reminds us of Jesus' word, guides us into all truth, and empowers us to speak the word of God with boldness**" ("Holy Spirit." *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).

Scriptures: Luke 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 10, 12:13, 2 Cor. 1:1, **Eph. 2:20, 3:3-5**, Col. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:15, 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18), **2 Pet. 1:16-21**, 3:15-16, 1 John 1:1-4.

Way of Salvation:

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, "**We believe that, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers salvation from sin and a new way of life to all people. We receive God's salvation when we repent of sin and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.** In Christ, we are reconciled with God and brought into the reconciling community of God's people. We place our faith in God that, by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, we may be saved from sin to follow Christ in this life and to know the fullness of salvation in the age to come. [...]"

When we hear the good news of the love of God, the Holy Spirit moves us to accept the gift of salvation. God brings us into right relationship without coercion. Our response includes yielding to God's grace, placing full trust in God alone, repenting of sin, turning from evil, joining the fellowship of the redeemed, and showing forth the obedience of faith in word and deed. When we who once were God's enemies are reconciled with God through Christ, we also experience reconciliation with others, especially within the church. **In baptism we publicly testify to our salvation and pledge allegiance to the one true God and to the people of God, the church**" ("Salvation." *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012.

mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/).

- About **baptism**, the Mennonite Church says, "**Baptism by water is a sign that a person has repented, received forgiveness, renounced evil, and died to sin, through the grace of God in Christ Jesus.** [...]"

Baptism is for those who are of the age of accountability and who freely request baptism on the basis of their response to Jesus Christ in faith. [...]"

The church may baptize by pouring, immersion, or the sprinkling of water (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Acts 2:17; Tit. 3:5-7)" ("Baptism." *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).

Scriptures: Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, John 6:53-56, 16:7-13, **Acts 2:38**, 3:19, 8:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:3-7, Col. 2:11-12, 1 Tim. 2:4, 1 Pet. 3:21, 2 Pet. 1:10, 3:9, 1 John 1:5-2:6.

Church Government:

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, "We believe that the church is the assembly of those who have accepted God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." ("The Church of Jesus Christ." *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012. mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/).
- The Mennonite Church states, "The church calls, trains, and appoints gifted men and women to a variety of leadership ministries on its behalf. **These may include such offices as pastor, deacon, and elder as well as evangelists, missionaries, teachers, conference ministers, and overseers.** The character and reputation of leaders is to be above reproach. [...]"

[Commentary] **We also see a threefold pattern emerging in the New Testament: bishops, elders, and deacons. In the Mennonite tradition this threefold pattern can be found as well**" ("Ministry and Leadership." *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).

- This is different from **their Dordrecht Confession of Faith (1632)**, which states, **“Furthermore, concerning deacons, that they, especially when they are fit, and chosen and ordained thereto by the church, for the assistance and relief of the elders, may exhort the church (since they, as has been said, are chosen thereto), and labor also in the Word and in teaching;** that each may minister unto the other with the gift he has received of the Lord, so that through mutual service and the assistance of every member, each in his measure, the body of Christ may be improved, and the vine and church of the Lord continue to grow, increase, and be built up, according as it is proper” (“The Dordrecht Confession of Faith.” *Bible Views*. 21 Apr 1632. <bibleviews.com/Dordrecht.html#IX>).
- The **Amish government** is essentially the same, **“Each church district has its own leaders—always men. Typically, they include a bishop (servant with full powers), two or three ministers (servants of the book), and a deacon (servant to the poor). Guided by the bishop, this leadership team directs the religious life of its district.** The bishop, as spiritual elder, officiates at baptisms, weddings, communions, funerals, ordinations, and membership meetings. Deacons coordinate mutual aid to assist members with financial needs. Both ministers and bishops preach in the Sunday services” (“Leadership.” *Amish Studies*. Elizabethtown College. 11 Apr 2012. <www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Leadership.asp>).
- Under “Denominational Leadership”, the **Mennonite Church U.S.A.** says, **“The church is a variety of assemblies which meet regularly, including local congregations and larger conferences.** This diversity in unity evokes gratitude to God and appreciation for one another. **According to the example of the apostolic church, the local congregation seeks the counsel of the wider church in important matters relating to faith and life, and they work together in their common mission. Decisions made at larger assemblies and conferences are confirmed by constituent groups, and local ministries are encouraged and supported by the wider gatherings. Authority and responsibility are delegated by common and voluntary agreement, so that the churches hold each other accountable to Christ and to one another on all levels of church life”** (“Church Order and Unity.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- **“Acting on behalf of members of Mennonite Church USA in meetings of the Delegate Assembly, delegates determine major policy issues, evaluate the work of the Executive Board and discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of the Assembly”** (“Delegate Assembly.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/delegate-assembly/>).
- Regarding working with other denominations, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, **“After nearly three years of processing throughout the denomination, delegates gathered in San Jose in 2007 strongly voted in favor of Mennonite Church USA joining Christian Churches Together as a full participant. CCT brings together leaders from the various streams of the Christian church: Evangelical, historic Protestant, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Historic Black churches and the Roman Catholic Church.** Two or three Mennonite Church USA leaders attend the annual CCT meetings. During the last two annual sessions, together with other representatives from the Historic Peace Churches, they have hosted a conversation on Jesus’ call to peacemaking for CCT participants” (“Christian Associations.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. 10 Apr 2012.).

Scriptures: Acts 14:26, 20:28, Eph. 1:22, 4:11-12, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:18, 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

Worship and Assembly:

- Regarding **the Lord’s Supper**, the Handbook of Denominations states, **“The Lord’s Supper is served twice a year in almost all Mennonite congregations; in most, baptism is by pouring. Most also observe foot-washing ordinance in connection with the Lord’s Supper, after which they salute one**

another with the 'kiss of peace.' The sexes are separated in the last two ceremonies" (Mead, P.215).

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, "The Lord's Supper points to Jesus Christ, whose body was given for us and whose shed blood established the new covenant. **In sharing the bread and cup, each believer remembers the death of Jesus and God's act of deliverance in raising Jesus from the dead. As we relive this event with a common meal**, we give thanks for all God's acts of deliverance in the past and present, for the forgiveness of sins, and for God's continuing grace in our lives" ("The Lord's Supper." *Commentary: Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- **"The practice of the early church was to celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently, every Lord's day or even daily (Acts 2:46).** The Anabaptists in the sixteenth century also shared the Lord's Supper often as a sign of their renewed covenant with God and each other. **Our churches are encouraged to celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently**, so that they may participate in the rich meanings of this event for the worship and life of the church" ("The Lord's Supper." *Commentary: Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).
- Concerning **washing feet**, the Mennonite Church reports, **"Among our congregations, some practice foot washing, while others have discontinued the practice or have never observed it.** Congregations are encouraged to practice foot washing when it is a meaningful symbol of service and love for each other. 'Washing the feet of the saints' (1 Tim. 5:10) is one way of representing Christ to each other in acts of hospitality, service, and love" ("Foot Washing." *Commentary: Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).
- The **Amish** have, **"Communion services, held each autumn and spring, frame the religious year.** These ritual high points emphasize self-examination and spiritual rejuvenation. **Sins are confessed and members reaffirm their vow to uphold the Ordnung at a council meeting held prior to the communion service.** Communion is held when the congregation is 'at peace'; that is, when all members are in harmony. **The eight-hour service includes preaching, a light meal during the service, and the commemoration of Christ's death with bread and wine. Pairs of members wash each another's feet as the congregation sings. At the end of the service, members give an alms offering to the deacon. This is the only time that offerings are gathered in Amish services"** ("Religious Rituals." *Amish Studies*. Elizabethtown College. 11 Apr 2012. <www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Religious_Rituals.asp>).
- About **church music**, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. reports, "According to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary professor Marlene Kropf, **singing is the most important thing that happens in Mennonite worship.**

We gather as a community by singing, we offer our prayers and praise through song, we proclaim the Word with music, and we leave worship singing. Music is the through-line that holds a service together. **It is our most profound connection with God.**

Though many Mennonite congregations use instrumental accompaniment on Sunday morning, the human voice is still the most important instrument. Song leaders often direct congregational singing in four parts, with **the whole congregation functioning as a choir does in other traditions.** Mennonites love to sing a wide variety of music – traditional hymns, chants, gospel songs, folk songs, anthems, international music, Celtic songs, and even jazz and rock. We borrow freely from many musical traditions and nurture composers from within our congregations as well. Our main criteria for choosing music is its singability and its fit with the focus and purpose of a worship service" (Kropf, Marlene. "Mennonites and Music." *Who are the Mennonites?* 10 Apr 2012. <thirdway.com/menno/?Topic=160_Mennonites+and+Music>).

- Regarding **the Amish**, “Because **the Amish do not have church buildings**, they hold church services in their homes. **Every other Sunday** the members of the local district meet in the home of one of their members. Services rotate among the homes throughout the year, coming to each household about once a year depending on the number of households in the district. Services may be held in several rooms on the home’s first floor, in the basement, in a barn or in a large shop [...]

Religious services reflect the simplicity and plainness of Amish life. **There are no altars, candles, organs, stained glass windows, choirs, or pulpits.**

Slow, unison singing in German, **without rhythm or instruments**, unites the community together in worship” (“Religious Services.” *Amish Studies*. Elizabethtown College. 11 Apr 2012. <www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Religious_Services.asp>).
- More about **the Amish**, “In 1693, [Jakob] Ammann sought to revitalize the Anabaptist movement. **He proposed holding communion twice a year rather than once, as was the typical Swiss practice. He also suggested that Christians, in obedience to Christ, should wash one another’s feet in the communion service. To promote doctrinal purity and spiritual discipline, Ammann forbade trimming beards and wearing fashionable dress. He administered a strict discipline in his congregations. Appealing to New Testament teaching and the practice of Dutch Anabaptists, Ammann also advocated shunning excommunicated members.** This issue drove a divisive wedge between his followers and other Anabaptists living in Switzerland and Alsace” (“Amish Origins.” *Amish Studies*. 11 Apr 2012. <www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Amish_Origins.asp>).
- Concerning **church music**, the Beachy Amish state, “**We believe musical instruments and accompaniment are contrary to New Testament worship ‘in spirit and in truth’ and will therefore avoid them both in singing and on tapes, etc.**” (“Standard of Practice.” *Constitution and Bylaws of Maranatha Amish Mennonite Churches*. <beachyam.org/maranatha.htm>).
- Another Beachy Amish confession says, “**We believe musical instruments and accompaniment are contrary to New Testament worship ‘in spirit and in truth’ and will therefore avoid them both in singing and on tapes, including the use of harps**” (“Standard of Practice.” *Constitution and Bylaws of Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship Churches*. <beachyam.org/berea.htm>).

Scriptures: Matt. 6:1-18, 15:1-9, 23, John 4:21-24; Acts 20:7, **1 Cor. 4:17, 11:17-34**; 14, 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19; Col. 2:18-23, 3:16; Heb. 2:12, 10:24-25, 13:15-16.

Morality:

- About **abortion**, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, “Led by the Spirit, and beginning in the church, we witness to all people that violence is not the will of God. **We witness against all forms of violence**, including war among nations, hostility among races and classes, abuse of children and women, violence between men and women, **abortion**, and capital punishment” (“Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance.” *Confession of Faith in the Mennonite Perspective*. 11 Apr 2012. <mennoniteusa.org/about/confession-of-faith-in-a-mennonite-perspective-1995/>).
- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. confesses, “In continuity with previous Mennonite confessions of faith, **we affirm that nonparticipation in warfare involves conscientious objection to military service and a nonresistant response to violence**” (“Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance.” *Commentary: Confession of Faith in the Mennonite Perspective*. 11 Apr 2012).

Scriptures: **Matt. 15:19**, Mark 7:20-23, Rom. 1:24-32, 12:9-15:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:16-6:10, Eph. 4:17-6:18, Col. 3-4:6.

Marriage and Divorce:

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. confesses, “**We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.** Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a

covenant made in the context of the church. **According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.** Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children” (“Family, Singleness, and Marriage.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).

- Concerning divorce, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. states, **“Some in the church experience divorce, abuse, sexual misconduct, and other problems that make marriage and family life burdensome or even impossible. Jesus affirmed the sanctity of marriage (Matt. 5:32) and pointed to hardness of the heart as the ultimate cause of divorce (Mark 10:4-9).** Today’s church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage and help couples in conflict move toward reconciliation. At the same time, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. The church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families” (“Family, Singleness, and Marriage.” *Commentary: Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*).
- **The Mennonite Church U.S.A. reports, “Most modern Mennonite churches accept as members persons who have been divorced and remarried. The most conservative groups do not allow for divorced and/or remarried persons to be part of their congregation”** (“Divorce.” *Who are the Mennonites?* 11 Apr 2012. <thirdway.com/menno/glossary.asp?ID=32>).

Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9, Mark 10:5-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:10-15, Heb. 13:4.

The End Times & Afterlife:

- The Mennonite Church U.S.A. give this confession about the Reign of God, “We affirm that, in Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection, the time of fulfillment has begun. Jesus proclaimed both the nearness of God’s reign and its future realization, its healing and its judgment. In his life and teaching, he showed that God’s reign included the poor, outcasts, the persecuted, those who were like children, and those with faith like a mustard seed. For this kingdom, God has appointed Jesus Christ as king and Lord.

We believe that the church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full. The church is to be a spiritual, social, and economic reality, demonstrating now the justice, righteousness, love, and peace of the age to come. **The church does this in obedience to its Lord and in anticipation that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord.**

We believe that, just as God raised Jesus from the dead, we also will be raised from the dead. At Christ’s glorious coming again for judgment, the dead will come out of their graves ‘—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.’ The righteous will rise to eternal life with God, and the unrighteous to hell and separation from God. Thus, God will bring justice to the persecuted and will confirm the victory over sin, evil, and death itself. [...]

[Commentary] **Yet the church is not identical with the kingdom, or reign, of God”** (“The Reign of God.” *Confession of Faith in the Mennonite Perspective*. 11 Apr 2012).

Scripture: Matt. 24:29-51, 25:31-46, **Mark 9:1**, 13:24-37, Luke 21:25-36, **John 14:1-4, 18:36**, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Cor. 15:23-28, 50-53, **Col. 1:13**, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, **Heb. 12:28**, 2 Pet. 3:1-13, Rev. 19-22:5.