

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF
BEREA AMSIH MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP CHURCHES

ARTICLE 1. NAME

This fellowship of churches shall be known as Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship Churches. (“These... were... noble in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scripture daily, whether these things were so.” Acts 17:11) May we be as they were!

ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE

1. To provide a conferring fellowship so that ordained brethren can be of mutual assistance to each other in continuing to maintain the standards of the gospel by the practical application of its principles and to promote the general welfare of the church of Jesus Christ. Acts 15:6, Matt. 18:15-20, Heb. 13:7, Heb. 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4
2. To provide a closer fellowship of encouragement, exhortation, practical application of Bible principles and accountability. Heb. 10:23-25, Phil. 2:2, 1 Cor. 5:6
3. To provide a consistent environment and fellowship for our youth. 1 Cor. 15:33

ARTICLE 3. STRUCTURE

1. Membership in this fellowship shall be by request, and be contingent upon investigation and acceptance by all bishops within the constituency. Those desiring to join this constituency must be agreed with this constitution and its bylaws.
2. Each congregation shall be self-governed, and have their own resident bishop wherever practical.
3. Commitment to this fellowship shall be through the congregation’s ministry. The ministry must have the support of their congregation. Each current congregation must give their consent to become a part of this constituency.
4. This constituency will not assist ‘splinter’ groups in multi-church settings.

ARTICLE 4. ADMINISTRATION

1. Any bishop shall have the liberty to call for a bishop meeting at any time.
2. He shall consult with the bishop in charge to arrange a meeting. (The ‘bishop in charge’ is the one who is responsible to lead out in the annual Minister’s Meetings. His term shall begin at the Minister’s meetings and continue for the following year.)

3. The bishop in charge shall appoint a secretary to take minutes of all the meetings and distribute them to all who attend.
4. The bishop in charge shall also appoint someone to write a summary of each meeting to share with fellow ministers and ministers in his charge.
5. The bishop in charge shall call a bishop meeting just prior to our annual Ministers Meetings.

ARTICLE 5. ANNUAL MINISTERS MEETINGS

1. Our annual ministers meetings are encouraged to be the first week of March, Tues. and Wed., or Wed. and Thur.
2. The hosting community is responsible to contact a hosting community for the following year and announce it at the meeting.
3. Speakers shall be from Berea churches or those who are likeminded. All exceptions shall be cleared with all bishops.
4. The hosting community is responsible to plan the meetings, contact prospective speakers and print brochures well in advance.
5. Nathan Yoder has been elected to coordinate the schedule of our annual Minister's Meetings. Any questions concerning the schedule can be directed to him.

6. DISCIPLINE

1. Congregations desiring to participate in this fellowship shall maintain a scriptural discipline in harmony with the accepted fellowship interpretation of Bible doctrine and application of Bible principles.
2. Violations shall be dealt with by the local congregation and ministry. If additional help is desired, it shall be at their request and the assisting bishops' committee shall be their choice.
3. When any congregation fails to maintain the doctrines and discipline accepted by the fellowship or conditions develop that cause churches to become uncomfortable, the bishop with the concern shall contact and consult with the bishop in charge. No final action or decision shall be made without approval of the ministerial body.
4. The authority of this ministerial body in the individual congregation shall be limited to acceptance into, and exclusion from, this fellowship.
5. The bishops, in cooperation with the whole ministerial body, shall be responsible for making ongoing application to Bible principles as the need arises.

6. At our annual ministers meeting we will humbly and charitably share areas of concern, and by positive peer pressure and encouragement attempt to “strengthen the things that remain.” Rev 3:2

7. We will only use ministers in good standing in their home church to preach in our churches.

8. When changing standards in our churches, we will consult with all the bishops, to avoid placing pressure on the rest of the churches.

ARTICLE 7. STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

1. We agree with the interpretation of our forefathers as set forth in the 18 articles of faith written in Dortrecht, Holland on April 21, 1632.

2. We also accept and agree with the statement of faith of a more recent adoption (see attached sheet). This statement does not supercede the Dortrecht Confession of Faith which the church still confesses and teaches, but rather it gives expression to more of the doctrines of the Word of God.

ARTICLE 8. STANDARD OF PRACTICE

Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Amos 3:3

1. The sanctity of the Lord’s work

Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship Churches shall be committed to seeking God in every area of church life, home life, business life, and personal life.

We recognize the importance of our Church practices and standards complementing and supporting each other. Therefore, we are agreed upon the following:

A. We will respect and support each other whenever disciplinary action is taken upon wayward or unsupportive members.

We will respect and cooperate with each other in membership transfers and in making standard changes. If asked to assist any church group by providing leadership, we will be careful to respect and honor God-ordained church leaders and will not overrule their authority without just cause, godly counsel, and earnest prayer.

B. We believe God calls His children to a life of separation and nonconformity to the world, and that every aspect of our Christian lives should reflect his holy calling.

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 [*that is, “mouth harmonicas” –c.a.*]. We reject drama because of its hypocritical nature. We will avoid all skits and plays which borrow from drama’s insincerity and hypocrisy.

C. We discourage churches to accept Social Security benefits. It is recommended however that churches develop a program to assist the elderly.

D. We will resist the ecumenical pressure to compromise by not attending religious seminars and other involvements in any movements that do not align with the historic, biblical, Anabaptist faith. We encourage our youth to take the opportunity to attend our constituency's youth meetings.

E. We will bind ourselves together in the bonds of Christian love and endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bonds of peace" while we "contend for the faith, once delivered to the saints." Churches in our constituency agree to support a constituency periodical and an organized pulpit exchange to encourage awareness and accountability.

F. Black vehicles are expected, at least for Sunday use.

G. Every congregation is expected to support CASP to the best of their ability.

2. The sanctity of the Lord's order

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." 1 Cor. 11:3

A. Scriptures are clear that man, as the head of the woman, is to exercise his God-ordained headship in the church and in the home. God is looking for "man to assume leadership positions in teaching and preaching in our worship services. We further believe that "man" is to be the "priest" in the home. Therefore, we expect husbands and fathers to lead out in daily family worship and teaching, and to maintain our church standard in our homes.

B. Scriptures are equally clear that "woman" is divinely given as man's helper and companion. Woman's primary role in life is to be "keepers at home." (Titus 2:5) The headship covering shall be faithfully worn by the women to keep alive their recognition of God's headship order. We believe that the covering should be recognized as a religious symbol but that the covered hair is the scriptural ordinance. Therefore the covering should be large enough to cover most of the hair and should reach at least partly over the ears at the side and to the bottom of the hair in the back. The "cap type" covering, with strings, is to be consistently worn and shall not be substituted with other patterns with the exception of the white hanging veiling on the foreign mission field.

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

D. Christian discipline cannot countenance mixed bathing or patronizing public bathing places.

E. Casual appearance promotes casual permissiveness. We will seek to avoid casual attire, casual hairdos, and casual lifestyles, both brethren and sisters, by wearing attire and conducting ourselves in a manner which conforms to Bible principles. We ask our brethren to wear the suitcoat for church services, with the exception being made for warm weather. We also ask that the top button of the brethren's shirt be buttoned for formal services. Appearing in public with only a T-shirt is not permitted. Material for sister's dresses, and brethren's suitcoats and shirts should be solid in color and weave. We ask that the brethren's pants be of dark shades, without horizontal pockets, the broadfall pattern encouraged. We ask that sister's sweaters, jackets, and coats be of dark shades. For simplicity's sake we feel that sisters' hair should be parted in the middle. If brethren's hair are parted, they shall be parted in the middle. No close shorn hair cuts permitted.

3. The sanctity of marriage

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." (Heb 13:4)

A. We believe and confess that there is an honorable state of marriage has been instituted by God, consists of one man and one woman, (Gen. 2:22) and is indissoluble, except by death (1 Cor. 7:39) according to the "one flesh" principle established by God in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:24) and the express words of our Lord when He said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt 19:6) Divorce and remarriage is therefore condemned by the clear pronouncement of God's eternal Word (Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18). The Scripture also does not sanction any excuses, loopholes, or the exceptions to its own clear statement on the pertinence of the marital union.

We believe that marriage to a divorced person is an unscriptural marriage and an adulterous relationship that must be broken upon repentance. However, since it involves the exchange of marriage vows that our Lord Himself recognized as 'marriage' even in an adulterous marital relationship, we believe that anyone involved in such a situation is not free to remarry as long as the partner from the adulterous marital union is still living. Matt. 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18, Prov. 13:15b

We believe that the sin of adultery is a serious betrayal of trust and commitment that violates the command of God and destroys the type of Christ and the Church. (1 Cor. 6:9, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:21-32) While we believe that God is gracious and forgiving where there is sincere heartfelt repentance, nevertheless, adultery is a sin that brings reproach and a stigma that can never be entirely wiped away. (Ps. 51, Prov. 6:27-35) For an ordained brother to fall into such grievous sin gives "great occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme." (2 Samuel 12:13) Therefore to maintain a pure testimony for the church, and because it will be difficult to regain the trust of the brotherhood, we believe any ordained minister who becomes involved in the sin of adultery should forfeit his ministry and be silenced by the church.

B. The holiness of the marital relationship is attested to and supported by the gravity and solemnity of the premarital days. Premarital conduct is an expression of holy purity "keep

thyselves pure.” (1 Tim. 5:22) and submissive trust in the leading of the Lord (Ps. 34:8-9) . Knowing that the lust of the flesh indwells the body, and that Christian courtship depends on the soul and the spirit, we believe that all forms of physical contact, (holding hands, petting, hugging, kissing, etc.) are to be withheld till after marriage. This ‘hands off’ policy contributes positively to the stability and nurture of the relationship on the spiritual plane and, therefore, it is to be taught diligently among our people.

C. Weddings shall be simple and Christlike, with Christ as the center and not the bride as is the practice of the world. Services should be in harmony with regular church services. To help maintain the above principles, the wedding party should file in together and be seated before the service begins. There should be no picture taking during the service, and a reverent atmosphere should be maintained throughout the reception, etc.

4. The sanctity of the home

“For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment...” (Gen. 18:19)

“Choose you this day whom you will serve:...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh. 24:15)

In the midst of a decadent society where the home is fast becoming a forgotten entity, we will endeavor to “hold fast till I come” (Rev. 2:25) and to “strengthen the things that remain.” (Rev. 3:2)

A. Our homes must be a shelter from the storms of worldliness, the threat of deception , and the pollution of sin. For this cause the filth of television and the allurements of the radio will be banned from our homes. Computer, cell phone, and E-mail usage regulated by local church brethren. Games and Internet are not permitted. We will limit our viewing of videos to business training and educational purposes. Video use on cameras is not permitted. Our vehicles are for service and not for vain display. Long distance truck driving jobs are not permitted. Caution needs to be exercised in taking an outside job or hiring outside help.

B. The church standard is to be faithfully observed in our homes by older and younger alike. The Christian husband/father is responsible for creating and maintaining an environment of ‘separated’ consistency, and is charged, after the example of Abraham, to “command his children and his household after him.”

5. The sanctity of the Lord’s time and talents

“Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor. 10:39

A. The Lord’s Day is to be set aside for worship and holy meditation. It is a day to be spiritually refreshed and strengthened by “assembling ourselves together, exhorting one

another...” (Heb. 10:25) The Lord’s Day should be kept as a day of rest from physical labor and devoted to the Lord’s business.

B. Competitive sports are ‘highly esteemed’ by the world and, we believe, ‘an abomination to the Lord’, therefore we will avoid all commercial sports as well as organized sports teams among us. We believe even our youth are called to “be an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity...” (1 Ti. 4:12) We will seek to recreate ourselves in ways that render us “perfect and complete in the will of God.” (Col. 4:12)

C. Churches should attempt to provide opportunities to their members for service and spiritual growth. Spiritually safe mission and schoolteacher opportunities should be encouraged. Disaster relief work, cottage meetings, nursing homes, jail services, and tract work should be an integral part of our church life.

D. Jesus said, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) With that vision in focus, we feel that when congregations are financially able, have sufficient membership, and sense God’s leading; a plan would be initiated by the home ministry to plant another church in another area.

This *STANDARD OF PRACTICE* is not to replace the individual congregational standard of practice, but is to be used as a *minimum* standard for all the churches.

ARTICLE 9. AMENDMENTS

1. All changes and additions to this constitution shall be made with the unanimous support of the participating ministerial body.
2. The ministers’ decisions must be validated by the support of their congregations.