



# Statement

## God Calls Us to Christian Unity (1998)

### Biblical Foundations

1. Throughout the whole Bible, we see God working in history to create a faithful people, a people comprising members "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages." (Genesis 15:5; 17:4-7; Revelation 7:9)
2. When Jesus met with his disciples near the end of his earthly life, Jesus prayed that those who would follow him "might be one." (John 17:20-23)
3. In his ministry, the Apostle Paul worked ceaselessly for unity, even in situations of serious division and among those whose doctrines he saw as misguided and wrong. (1 Corinthians 1:12-13; Romans 12:1-15; 13; Philippians 2)
4. We see Christian unity, therefore, not as an option we might choose or as an outcome we could create, but as an urgent imperative to be obeyed.

### Our Situation

5. As Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, we give thanks to God for brothers and sisters of other traditions around the globe who accept the claims of Scripture and seek to live as followers of our Lord.
6. We confess that we have not done all we could have to follow God's call to relate in love and mutual counsel with other brothers and sisters who confess the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and who seek to follow him.
7. We have seen peacemaking and reconciliation as callings of all Christian disciples, but we confess that we have not done all we could have to overcome divisions within our circles and to work toward unity with other brothers and sisters.
8. We recognize that we find our identity and mission, not in isolation, but in interaction with others with whom God has placed us as fellow inhabitants of God's world in this time and place.
9. As members of the Mennonite World Conference family, we recognize that God has given us some unique faith experiences and insights we can contribute to other Christians.

10. We recognize that there is much we can learn from Christians of other traditions.
11. We recognize that our relationships with others will be strengthened as we become more secure and more firmly grounded in our faith.
12. Confessions of faith have been prepared by many of our conferences; we appreciate the opportunities they provide for sharing our understandings with one another and strengthening each other in our Christian faithfulness.

### **Cooperative Efforts**

13. We should not refuse to witness and serve in some ways with others just because we cannot do everything with them. In such cooperative efforts, we should not go beyond the extent of the unity we have found and thereby depreciate the meaning of truth and unity.

### **Present and Future Relationships**

14. We give thanks for the relationships many of our members and congregations have with Christian brothers and sisters in their local communities.
15. We are grateful for the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ groups who actively participate in global, national, and local inter-confessional church fellowships and councils; we encourage consideration of such relationships where it is discerned that these can further unity and common witness.
16. We seek to be sensitive to the ways our relationships with others are affected by the different contexts in which we find ourselves around the world, with differing memories of past experiences, experiences of present persecution, situations with respect to the relative sizes of conversation partners, power balance factors, etc.
17. The Mennonite World Conference and national conference groups can help our churches by providing written materials and leadership to guide existing and new conversations and relationships with other traditions and movements, and to deepen our understanding of the faith we confess.
18. Biblical studies and fresh accounts of our common history of Anabaptists who took the initiative in seeking to relate to others would help ground us for the initiatives we need to take today.

### **Prayer for Renewal**

19. With other believers around the world, we pray for the leading and renewal of the Holy Spirit as we seek to be God's faithful people in our time:

*"Renew your church, O Lord, and make us instruments of your peace! "*

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**Date Adopted:** 22 July 1998

**Adopted By:** MWC Executive Committee and MC-GC Interchurch Relations Committee

**Location Adopted:** Goshen, Indiana, USA

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