

1277 **Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love**

Attachment 1

1278 Commitments for Mennonites in Times of Disagreement

1279 “Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3)
1280 as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

In Thought

- Accept conflict 1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. (Rom. 14:1-8,10-12,17-19; 15:1-7)
- Affirm hope 2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict we can work through to growth. (Eph. 4:15-16)
- Commit to prayer 3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). (James 5:16)

In Action

- Go to the other 4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism.* (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20)
- In the spirit of humility 5. Go in gentleness, patience, and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. (Gal. 6:1-5)
- Be quick to listen 6. Listen carefully, summarize, and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. (James 1:19; Prov. 18:13)
- Be slow to judge 7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats, and act in a non-defensive, non-reactive way. (Rom. 2:14; Gal. 5:22-26)
- Be willing to negotiate 8. Work through the disagreements constructively. (Acts 15; Phil. I -11)
- Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).
 - Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).
 - Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).
 - Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).
 - Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).
 - Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality).

In Life

- Be steadfast in love 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. (Col. 3:12-15)
- Be open to mediation 10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. (Phil. 4:1-3)
- Trust the community 11. We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. (Acts 15)
- In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.
 - In congregational, conference district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made.
- Be the Body of Christ 12. Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. (I Cor. 6:1-6)

1281 *Go directly if you are European-North American; in other cultures disagreements are
1282 often addressed through a trusted go-between.

1283 Christians are not immune to conflict. We face it in our homes and churches, in our
1284 neighborhoods and work places. Wherever we interact with other people, we experience
1285 conflict.

1286 Too often conflict becomes destructive, because we try to avoid it, or because we don't
1287 know how to face it well. But we can make it an opportunity to grow, to become more faithful
1288 to Jesus, to model Christ-like love for one another.

1289 To work constructively with conflict, we need skills. "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love"
1290 outlines approaches to conflict that will help us live out our calling to be Christian
1291 peacemakers.

1292 **Biblical Foundation**

1293 The Bible guides us to seek reconciliation when we disagree. Scripture teaches us that
1294 conflict can be an arena for God's revelation.

1295 ● Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. Through Christ we are reconciled to God, who
1296 gives us the ministry of reconciliation.

1297 *Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20*

1298 ● Reconciliation with others in the church is a prelude to genuine worship. *Matthew 5:23-24*

1299 ● Jesus describes a process for addressing conflict and restoring relationships in the church.
1300 *Matthew 18:15-22*

1301 ● Groups in the early church came together to talk about their differences, to seek the Spirit's
1302 leading as they worked for consensus.

- 1303 *Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:1-3*
- 1304 ● The church needs each person’s gifts and perspectives; no one has a corner on truth. *1*
- 1305 *Corinthians 12-14*
- 1306 ● God’s chosen ones are to bear with one another, to forgive each other and to clothe
- 1307 themselves “with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” *Colossians 3:12-*
- 1308 *17*
- 1309 ● We are to grow in unity and maturity by speaking the truth in love. *Ephesians 4:1-16*
- 1310 ● God calls us to act and speak with respect for each other despite differences of culture or
- 1311 conviction. *Romans 14:1-7; James 1:19;*
- 1312 *John 7:51; Ephesians 4:25-32; Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Peter 3: 8, 16*
- 1313 ● God’s people do not seek the absence of conflict but the presence of shalom, a peace based
- 1314 on justice. *Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8;*
- 1315 *Isaiah 58; Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 4:18-19*

1316 **Adopting the Guidelines**

1317 We encourage congregations, area conferences, church boards and agencies to adopt the

1318 guidelines for agreeing and disagreeing in love, and to use them. The process you use to consider

1319 adopting the guidelines can itself be a model for working through differences together.

1320 Design a process to study the guidelines and decide whether to adopt them. Your written

1321 process design could include these pieces:

- 1322 A) Define the issue: Should our group adopt these guidelines?
- 1323 B) Identify goals: To enhance our commitment and ability to deal constructively with
- 1324 conflict. (Add your goals.)
- 1325 C) Clarify steps and timeline:
- 1326 1) Approve the process design. The appropriate decision-making body acts to do this.
- 1327 2) Study the guidelines and the biblical foundations.
- 1328 a) Offer a Sunday school class on conflict resolution skills for congregations.
- 1329 b) Invite an outside resource person to present a Saturday workshop on the topic.
- 1330 c) Encourage committees and small groups to study the guidelines.
- 1331 3) Talk together about using the guidelines.
- 1332 a) Discuss ways to use the guidelines in your context.
- 1333 b) Integrate the guidelines into constitutions, bylaws, personnel policies.
- 1334 c) Note concerns that arise and work to resolve them.
- 1335 4) Implement the decision rule (see below).
- 1336 D) State the decision rule: Identify who will make the decision, and how it will be made

1337 **Using the Guidelines**

1338 After your group has adopted the guidelines, you can:

- 1339 • Display the “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love” poster in rooms where committees meet.
- 1340 • Include training on the guidelines in new member classes or orientation sessions.
- 1341 • Use reconciliation and conflict resolution as a focus for worship from time to time.
- 1342 • Include articles in your newsletter about the guidelines and your experience with them.
- 1343 • Appoint a process observer for your meetings, to monitor your group’s use of the guidelines.
- 1344 • Every year evaluate how your group is working with conflict.

1345 **Several Cautions**

1346 The guidelines should not be used as a substitute for the proper exercise of authority. When
1347 laws have been broken or people abused, mediation would only be appropriate at later stages,
1348 when offenders have taken responsibility for their actions and victims are requesting face-to-face
1349 meetings as a step toward their own healing.

1350 The guidelines may inform disciplinary or grievance procedures, but they are not intended to
1351 be a substitute for such procedures. In cross-cultural settings, the guidelines should be adapted to
1352 fit the context.

1353 The guidelines were primarily adopted to help parties in conflict, not as instructions for
1354 groups pursuing God's will in matters of church practice or theology. For such purposes, it is
1355 recommended that groups seek additional guidance in processes of Biblical/communal
1356 discernment.

1357 **Some Basic Principles**

1358 In interpersonal and group conflicts, people can take many of the steps identified in the
1359 guidelines without the help of an impartial third party. But when conflict escalates and the
1360 principal parties cannot resolve it by negotiating together, they should seek outside help.

1361 In mediation, disputing parties come to their own agreement with the assistance of an
1362 objective third party. Those serving as mediators should be trained; attempting to mediate a
1363 dispute without having the necessary skills can make matters worse. Trained mediators can help
1364 people come to agreement on issues and also aid in healing broken relationships.

1365 If mediation fails to resolve a dispute, arbitration could be sought. The disputing parties
1366 would agree in advance to abide by whatever decision the arbitrators make. The arbitrators listen
1367 to each party's case, consult with each other, and agree on a win-win decision that attempts to
1368 address the interests of all the parties.

1369 **Information**

1370 **For more information, contact:**

1371 **Mennonite Church USA**—Peace Advocate; Peace@MennoniteUSA.org;

1372 Toll-free 866-866-2872; www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace

1373 **Lombard Mennonite Peace Center**—101 W. 22nd Street, Suite 206, Lombard, IL 60148; 630-
1374 627-0507; Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org

1375 www.LMPeaceCenter.org

1376 **Mennonite Conciliation Service**—21 South 12th St., PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500;

1377 717-859-3889; mcs@mccus.org;

1378 www.mcc.org/us/peaceandjustice/mcs.html

1379 **To order additional copies, contact:**

1380 **Mennonite Media**—1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2497;

1381 LoisH@MennoMedia.org; 1-800-999-3534

1382 **To see additional resources:** www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace

1383

1384 *From the General Conference Mennonite*
1385 *Church and Mennonite Church General Boards*
1386 *March-April 1995, updated July 2013.*

1387 **Student Aid Committee Guidelines**

Attachment 2

1388 STUDENT AID GUIDELINES

1389 The Student Aid Program is based on the premise that one of the functions of the
1390 congregation is to provide adequate opportunity for the education of its members, both in
1391 preparation for a vocation and for fullest participation in the life of the church. This, we
1392 believe, is especially important for the training of youth, for leadership training in the church,
1393 and in fact for training in the exercise of all the gifts of the Spirit in the church. We, therefore,
1394 believe that a Mennonite college education should be available to any regular attendee of the
1395 congregation who feels called upon to improve his/her skills and to deepen his/her
1396 understanding of the Christian walk.

1397 It is the purpose of the Student Aid plan:

- 1398 ■ To affirm our belief in the distinct values of Christian education in the Anabaptist-
1399 Mennonite tradition;
- 1400 ■ To give our young people further opportunity to learn about and appreciate the
1401 Anabaptist-Mennonite vision;
- 1402 ■ To promote a spirit of brotherhood sharing and servanthood in our congregation;
- 1403 ■ To ease the financial burden which may prevent an individual from enrolling at one
1404 of the Mennonite colleges or seminaries. Some of the most gifted young people do
1405 not consider a church college because of the financial burden placed upon them and
1406 their families;
- 1407 ■ To encourage our members to pursue Christian education at our own church schools.

1408 Therefore, the Springs Mennonite Church offers to support its students at Mennonite
1409 Church USA institutions with a pledge of \$500.00 per semester as a scholarship grant to any
1410 bachelor's degree student who:

- 1411 1. Attended services regularly, for the period of one (1) year prior to entering higher
1412 education at a Mennonite Church USA institution.
- 1413 2. Attended services regularly, for the period of one (1) year prior to (or while) attending
1414 another educational institution, and then transferring to a Mennonite Church USA
1415 institution.
- 1416 3. Attended services regularly, for the period of one (1) year prior to serving in a Christian
1417 mission or relief program, and then entering higher education at a Mennonite Church
1418 USA institution.

1420

1421 **Springs Mennonite Statement Regarding Abuse:**

1422 Springs Mennonite recognizes the seriousness and sinfulness of sexual and physical abuse.
1423 This type of mistreatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the mind,
1424 body and spirit of the one abused. It also causes harm to the mind and soul of the abuser.

1425 Through our policies and guidelines, we seek to make our church environment a safe place
1426 for all who worship and fellowship with us. We attempt to prevent abuse by adopting worker
1427 supervision and certification policies and will address charges of abuse seriously. Where abuse
1428 does occur, we will seek and support healing measures for the abused and abuser.

1429 We seek to follow the above in the manner of our Lord who addressed evil clearly with the
1430 ultimate goal of bringing wholeness and healing to all.

1431 **What constitutes sexual abuse?** Any sexual contact or interaction (touch or non-touch) with
1432 a child is abusive. Force, threats, bribery, and misrepresenting right and wrong are some of the
1433 ways this abuse is perpetrated. Even if a child out of ignorance or fear does not resist, it is still
1434 abuse.

1435 **What constitutes physical abuse?** Serious physical or mental injury which is not accidental,
1436 or serious physical neglect of children under age 18 caused by the acts or omissions of a
1437 perpetrator.

1438 **Worker Certification Policy:** For the protection of the children and youth in our care, we
1439 have established the following guidelines for a Acertification process@ for all adults (eighteen and
1440 older) who desire to work with children and youth. Youth (seventeen and younger) may serve
1441 under the supervision of a certified adult.

- 1442 • All workers should be a Christian for at least one year, and an attendee of Springs
1443 Mennonite Church for at least six months before volunteering in children and youth
1444 ministry. Volunteers or employees who have attended less than 6 months may be
1445 considered on an individual basis after personal references and clearances have been
1446 checked.
- 1447 • Each worker will be asked to complete a SMC Application for Children and Youth
1448 Ministry form (including references as indicated on the application), complete a PA Child
1449 Abuse History Clearance form, and a State Criminal Record Check form. All costs of
1450 obtaining clearances will be paid by SMC.
- 1451 • If the worker relocated from another state, they will still be asked to complete the PA
1452 clearances. In addition, we will get at least two personal references from the church this
1453 individual previously attended while living in that state. If they had clearances done in that
1454 state, we will ask for copies for our files.
- 1455 • If the worker already completed the Child Abuse History and Criminal Record check
1456 within the last ten years, and has lived in the same community since obtaining the
1457 clearance, there is no need for another one. A copy of the clearance or supporting
1458 documentation will be required from the holder of the clearance to verify state responses.
- 1459 • The applications and clearances will be reviewed by the Director & Assistant Director of
1460 Christian Education who will refer any questions to the pastor for final decisions.

1461 • Any person with a history of physical or sexual abuse of children or youth will not be
1462 approved as a child or youth worker

1463 • Each worker must attend a Springs Mennonite Church Abuse Protection/Worker
1464 Certification Training Class.

1465 **Worker Supervision Policies:** For the safety of our children and youth we ask all workers to
1466 follow these guidelines. The Christian Education Director and Assistant Director will work with
1467 all leaders of children and youth ministries to insure that all workers go through the worker
1468 certification process.

1469 • Two certified adults should be present during any church activity involving children and
1470 youth. Exceptions to the above guideline are granted when:

1471 1. The event is large enough to have ongoing oversight by supervising adults at the
1472 ministry location. Examples of this are: Sunday School, VBS, etc...

1473 2. A certified supervising adult is overseeing a youth over 13. Examples could include
1474 Sunday School, Nursery and VBS.

1475 • Nursery children will be photographed with their parent(s) or guardian so nursery workers
1476 can easily identify parents when they come to pick up their child.

1477 • When there are no windows, doors should be left open so that persons passing by can
1478 observe inside.

1479 • Small group leaders are responsible to provide a safe environment for any children present
1480 at their meetings.

1481 • Sunday School teachers should be present in the class before the children arrive, and
1482 remain until they are released or picked up by their parents.

1483 • In the event that only one child comes to Sunday School, that child should be taken to
1484 another class. Teachers should leave the door open until two or more children arrive for
1485 class.

1486 • A certified adult leader of each sex represented should be present at all youth activities.
1487 Exceptions can be made when the event is large enough to have ongoing oversight by
1488 supervising adults on location.

1489 • Adult chaperones (advisors, parents and helpers) must be certified before accompanying
1490 youth on an overnight activity.

1491 • Youth advisors should get written parental permission before providing transportation for a
1492 youth alone in their car.

1493 • Youth advisors meeting with a youth alone for mentoring should meet in public places and
1494 have written parental permission.

1495 **Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Abuse:** All children and youth workers have a personal
1496 responsibility and moral obligation to report any suspected abuse to the Pastor or Elder
1497 Chairperson.

1498 • The person making the observation or receiving disclosure of a suspected sexual/physical
1499 abuse should contact the Pastor or Elder Chairperson immediately.

1500 • The Pastor or Elder Chairperson will make sure Children's Services and/or the police are
1501 notified as well as our liability insurance company and the Alleghany Mennonite

1502 Conference office. An attorney will be retained for legal counsel. A detailed response plan
1503 that was adopted by the Elders in the summer of 2002 will be followed.

- 1504 • If the Pastor is suspected of abuse, the District Overseer should be notified immediately,
1505 and he along with the Elder Chairperson will report as stated above.
- 1506 • A “Suspicion of Abuse Form” and “Log of Observations” form will be completed by the
1507 Pastor or Elder Chairperson and kept in a confidential file.

1508 The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else. The state authorities will do the
1509 investigation and take appropriate action.

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