

**The Guidelines and Practices
for Joyful Living**

of the

Marietta District

of the

**Keystone Mennonite
Fellowship**

Preface

There are 11 verses in the Book of Acts that use the phrase, “one accord”. While some of these were not positive, (7:57 & 18:12), most of these were very positive and advanced the Gospel message.

These district guidelines are presented – not to hinder our liberty and freedom we have in Christ, but with the prayer that they will aid in bringing us to the point of “one mind and one accord”.

I. SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT – Rom. 12:1-2

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8

Because of the great blessing of coming into a personal relationship with our Creator God, by grace through faith in the reconciling work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are privileged to be children of the Heavenly King.

This high calling challenges us to yield ourselves – spirit, soul, and body – to the Lordship of Christ. Our royal heritage inspires us to walk in the Spirit, the way of holy living, and not in the flesh. This involves living above the moral filth and pollution found in our society. As taught in Gal. 5:22-23, the indwelling Holy Spirit will produce His fruit within us. In this way we become a powerful witness for our Savior.

II. PURPOSE IN LIVING – I Cor. 10:31

In contrast to the frustrations of living without Christ, the redeemed child of God lives with the purpose of bringing glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. In our work, family life, social activities and in every area of life, we seek to do what is pleasing to God. We discern this through Scriptures, the direction of the Holy Spirit, and the brotherhood of believers.

Members shall develop strong convictions against all amusements and activities which degrade and defile rather than encourage godliness. We will also be careful that we do nothing to unnecessarily cause others to be offended or hurt whether they are fellow believers or the unredeemed. We desire that the light of the Lord Jesus Christ shine through us.

III. WORSHIP – John 4:24

We believe Christians are to worship in spirit and in truth. Therefore, we shall use congregational a-cappella singing in our church worship services. - Eph 5:14, Col 3:16

We observe close communion twice a year. According to I Cor. 11:17-34, members should continually examine themselves individually as to their walk with the Lord, and give expression collectively in council meeting prior to communion. Participation in the communion service is the privilege of those who are in harmony with the congregation. The ordinance of feet washing as taught in John 13:1-17 is observed in conjunction with communion.

The Lord's Day should be kept as a day of worship and rest. Members shall regularly attend Sunday School and church services, as much as possible, and loyally support the activities of their congregation with their tithes and offerings.

Buying, selling, pleasure seeking, secular business and unnecessary labor violate the sanctity of the Lord's Day and shall be avoided as much as possible. - Isaiah 58

IV. HEADSHIP – 1 Cor. 11:1-16

We believe that the headship veiling is an ordinance to be practiced today. Therefore, men are to have short hair. Women's hair shall be naturally long and arranged up in a simple style to avoid excessive care, display and attention.

Sisters shall wear an appropriate white veiling as a testimony of obedience to God's order of headship in harmony with the congregational standards. It shall be of sufficient size and of such design that it cannot be taken for any fad of society.

V. PERSONAL APPEARANCE

- Rom. 12:1-2; I Timothy 2:8-10; I Peter 3:3-4

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, God's people are called upon to live above the world with its allure, charm, and ways. God asks His people to be separated unto Himself, with a focus on the eternal, not the temporal. We view jewelry, cosmetics, and clothing, that are worn for personal gratification or praise and attention of others, to be inconsistent with the simple lifestyle we are called upon, in Scripture, to maintain. Therefore, members shall not wear makeup, wedding bands, rings, earrings, or other items worn for personal adornment.

To this end, all clothing for brothers and sisters should emphasize the character of godliness, modesty and simplicity. The principles of humility, purity, consistency, cleanliness, and economy are our goals. Uniformity in Christian attire aids in unifying the church and strengthens our witness to the ungodly society.

Therefore, we ask our brothers to model these principles by wearing full-length trousers and tailored shirts - without neckties, and when a suit is worn, we encourage the plain suit.

When beards are worn, they shall be worn consistently, "to the glory of God", and not for the sake of pride or self-gratification. Mustaches alone, goatees or other fashionable styles shall not be worn.

In like manner, sisters should avoid clothing which is form-fitting, transparent, or which, in other ways, emphasizes the body. Dresses shall be modest with knees covered at all times. We encourage the caped dress.

VI. THE WAY OF LOVE – Matthew 5:38-48

We recognize government as ordained by God, yet their methods of keeping order in society differ from the Biblical teaching of love and overcoming evil with good, which is to characterize the life of a believer.

Therefore, members shall not serve in the military.

We also believe that any involvement that requires the use of force, such as police and security guards violates Scripture.

- Matthew 5:38-48; John 18:36; Romans 12:18-21

In light of the principle of separation of church and state; jury duty, voting, and holding public office is forbidden. Prov 17:15; Romans 13:1-7

Paying taxes (even when the money is used for military purposes) is a Biblical command. Matthew 22:21

Militant involvement in labor unions, and litigation is not in keeping with the New Testament principle of love and should be avoided.

VII. WEDDINGS

A separate paper has been adopted to address the many aspects of a godly courtship and wedding. This statement should be read by all young adults before entering into a courting relationship.

The statement can be found attached at the back of this booklet, and is also available as a separate document from your pastor.

VIII. THE CHRISTIAN HOME – Eph 5:22 – 6:4

We believe that it is fully acceptable to serve Christ married or unmarried. I Cor. 7

We affirm those who God has called to serve in singleness.

We believe that God instituted marriage in the beginning of human history and it is binding on both believer and unbeliever. It is intended by God to be the union of one man and one woman for life, dissolved only by death.

Christians should marry only fellow believers. For the sake of spiritual unity, both individuals should become members of the same congregation.

We believe that it is adultery for a person to divorce his or her partner and marry another, or to be married to and living with one divorced. It is fornication for a couple to live together unmarried. No one living in adultery or fornication shall hold church membership. In all of these cases, God forgives when a person repents and forsakes his sin. Mk 10:11-12, I John 1:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph 5:3, Roms 7:2-3.

The Christian home should be a bit of heaven on earth. Parents should seek to have regular worship, attempt to faithfully live according to the Word of God, and loyally support the work of the church.

We believe in the sacredness of human life, which begins at conception and is terminated by the authority of God.

While we will continue to have our homes free of television, we recognize that technology is a part of the “norm” of society - including the computer and Internet, etc. As a district, we see grave danger in accepting these in an uncontrolled manner. Therefore, each member with these technologies should ask his ministry for an accountability plan.

While these technologies can be beneficial for business and education, we shall not use these technologies for entertainment that promotes disrespect for human life, undermines the sanctity of marriage and the moral standards held by the Word of God. This entertainment would include viewing the world's movies, professional sports, gaming, social media and such like . Like the Psalmist, we will “set no wicked thing before our eyes” - Psalm 101:3, Mt 26:41 & 1 Cor 6:12

IX. FUNERALS – Hebrews 9:27-28

Funerals should emphasize the Christian's hope. The principles of simplicity and stewardship must be carefully considered. In lieu of flowers, we suggest donations to organizations that advance the work of the Lord. If flowers are donated, they shall not be present in the sanctuary. Those planning the service should recognize the opportunity to share the message of salvation. Due to the sanctity of the Lord's Day, Sunday funerals should be avoided as much as possible.

X. CHURCH LEADERSHIP – I Tim. 4:1-13

We accept the leadership pattern of a bishop in the district, with one or more ministers and a deacon in each congregation.

When a bishop, minister or deacon is needed, approval shall be given by the Keystone Bishop Committee, the district leadership and the congregation involved. Nominations will then be received from the brotherhood. Brethren who receive the required number of nominations (predetermined by bishop and ministry), who give clear evidence of the qualifications given in I Timothy 4:1-13 and Titus 1:1-9, and who are in agreement with the standards of the district are eligible. The lot will be used when there is more than one nominee. In certain circumstances, a ministerial license may be granted for a limited time.

It is the responsibility of the bishop to teach the Word of God and to discern with the congregation the will of God for our time. It is his duty to be a pastor to the pastors. He is responsible to administer the ordinances or to delegate the pastors to do so. He will lead in the calling of leadership. He will direct the forfeiting of membership of the disobedient in accordance with the Word of God and standards of the district. Titus 1:5

It is the duty of the minister to preach the Word of God, to warn sinners, to comfort the penitent and to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ, and to teach and nurture believers. He is primarily responsible for the instruction of applicants for baptism and church membership. In order to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of the brotherhood, we encourage the pastor to make home visitation a part of his ministry. Romans 15:16; Colossians 1:28; II Timothy 4:2

It is the duty of the deacon to receive and distribute charities to the needy members of the church, to preach when opportunity affords, and to assist the bishop in administering the ordinances. If difficulties arise in the church, the deacon, with the approval of the ministry, shall endeavor to bring about peace and reconciliation. - Acts 6:1-6

XI. ADMINISTRATIVE guidelines

The purpose of this statement is to provide a unified standard of practice as a testimony of submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to His Church.

Any problems or questions concerning areas of practice not covered herein shall be decided by the leadership of the district. If it seems advisable, the leadership of other like-minded congregations or districts may be consulted.

This statement of belief and practice reflects the mind of the brotherhood of this district at the time of its adoption. It is understood that in time there may be Holy Spirit directed additions and/or revisions.

We shall review this statement as a ministry and as a district for review and reaffirmation every ten years.

Approval of this entire statement, and any subsequent amendments, requires an affirmative vote or at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the ballots cast by members 18 years and older.

Any individual desiring membership in a congregation within the district must give evidence of a new birth and of a growing relationship with Christ, and must give favorable testimony of peace and be willing to accept the Keystone Mennonite Fellowship Statement of Belief as well as this statement of belief and practice.

Any member who violates Biblical standards and these guidelines shall receive discipline as taught in Matthew 18 and Gal. 6. If such a member refuses to receive the love and admonition of the brotherhood and refuses to repent, he or she shall forfeit their membership. I Corinthians 5:5

Statement

on

Courtship and

Weddings

of the

Marietta District

of the

Keystone Mennonite Fellowship

Introduction

Dear Young Brother,
Dear Young Sister,

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth”. These words found in Ec 12:1 are so important as you mature and move from childhood into adulthood, and contemplate courtship, and marriage.

Your ministry's desire is that when God calls you to marriage, you build a solid and biblical home that will honor God and provide a model for the watching world.

This paper is our attempt to solidify in your mind the important scriptural principles that are to guide your decisions as you walk through this new and exciting venture.

Our prayer is that you and your future life companion will both “walk in the fear of God” and will model the compassionate leadership of Christ, and the submission of his Church.

Courtship

We believe in courtship (social activities that lead to engagement) – not dating which is merely “for fun”.

While courtship will include going on dates, it holds a much more reverential and sacred attitude. Courtship is entered into, only when a couple is mature enough to joyfully be under the biblical authorities of home and church. It carries with it a level of commitment that is not present in casual dating.

Principles of Courtship

1. **Be under authority.** When the scripture instructs us to honor father and mother, it never gives an age limit. While the world states that you are free to make your own decisions at the age of 18, the Bible never releases you from the call to honor your parents. When you enter into a courting or marriage relationship with someone whom your parents and church leaders can approve, you are laying the foundation of trust and honor in your marriage and home.

2. **Giftng and wooing.** Brother, you are asking permission to woo your potential spouse. Your goal is to lead and encourage this fine young woman of character and refinement, while protecting her purity. Her parent's desire is to “gift” her to a man they believe will carry on the godly development they have worked diligently hard to achieve in her. Sister, only court a man of character - he may be your future leader.

3. **Pray.** God already knows who would be best for you. He works through your authorities to protect you from friends and potential mates who would lead you astray. View this as a serious life long matter. Who you marry is the most serious decision you will make - after the decision to follow Christ.

4. **Brother take the Lead.** It is very common in dating for a man to initiate the relationship, but eventually his young lady takes over in planning dates and in wedding and marriage plans. While you, as a Holy Spirit-led man, will never become a dictator, you are laying in your courtship days a foundation and pattern that will continue in your marriage. You are not ready to court, until you are surrendered to the Lordship of Christ and have become a man of decisive vision and planning. While you obviously need and want her wisdom and counsel in your relationship, if she takes over the planning and executing of your dates and activities, you may be startled someday when in marriage you discover you are married to a controlling woman.

5. **Servants of Christ.** Romans 6 calls us to become servants of Christ. Every action, thought and motive must be to please your master Jesus Christ. If you do anything that He would not approve of, then you have violated your first and foremost commitment to Christ.

6. **Abstain from fleshly lusts.** The Bible is very clear that physical affection is right and legitimate in marriage. - Song of Solomon,

Heb13:4, Prov 5:19, 1 Cor 7:1-5. It also gives models of and instruction for guarding purity in the area of physical affection in today's world of lust and fleshly gratification.

1 Cor 7:1, Gen 26:8, Mt 5:28, 1 Tim 5:2.

There are many individuals in the church who live with great regret because of allowing themselves to get physically involved before marriage. Once the fire of passion is ignited, it is many times impossible to keep from getting physically involved – thus violating the scriptural injunction to not defraud one another. Maintain a high standard so that you may live with no regrets.

Engagement. After you have come to the conclusion that you are being led by God to spend your lives together - for His honor and glory - you will become engaged. You will enter into a covenant to become married. This engagement should not be broken unless there is a serious violation of trust.

Weddings

You are engaged and planning a wedding. Congratulations! We, as your ministry, desire to bless your marriage. “Marriage is honorable in all...” (Heb 13:4). We wish you the Lord's blessing as you plan for your wedding day and your life of faithfulness and bliss together in service for the Master!

Because the world, and many in the church today, have distorted the pattern for godly weddings, there are a few areas that we would like for you to prayerfully consider as you prepare for your wedding day.

These include:

1. Who is being honored?
2. Will the picture of Christ and His Bride be supported by your service?
3. Are you demonstrating a spirit of love and submission?

Who is being Honored?

A wedding, like any other service, should honor our Heavenly Father who was the spiritual husband of Israel, and to Jesus Christ, the only

begotten Son, who is the spiritual bridegroom of his espoused Bride - the Church. Therefore it is fitting to accompany the ceremony with a worship service which includes the preaching of the Word, singing and prayers, so that all who attend will hear the promotion of the Gospel and be exhorted to honor marriage and the Christian home. For some guests, it may be one of the few times they will be in a church service hearing the Gospel.

As you make plans that include special recognition to the bride and groom as you exchange your solemn wedding vows and to your parents who were fruitful and faithful in raising you, make every effort to deflect the praise and honor to HIM instead of yourselves.

Is the Picture Biblical?

Moses was prohibited from entering the Promised Land because he disobeyed God when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. The Hebrew writer tells us that Christ was that Rock in the wilderness. God wanted Moses to demonstrate a picture of salvation by striking the rock once and speaking to it the next time. God was so serious about Moses damaging His “type” that He barred him from the Promised Land.

As you plan your wedding, think seriously about the picture God wants a Christian wedding and home to illustrate to the watching World.

Eph 5:22 - 25 tells us that the man is a “type” of Christ as Head of the Church, and the wife is to typify the Church in submission and support of Christ.

Therefore, we believe that your wedding should be a picture of the soon-coming wedding between Jesus Christ and His Bride - the Church, as described in Rev 19.

Several keys to discover in this account:

- ◆ All that happened was to the Glory of God – v 10
- ◆ There was special worship (24 elders fell down and worshiped the LORD) – V 4
- ◆ There was congregational singing (A great multitude giving praise to the LORD) – v 6

- ◆ The bride was in a garment of pure white which represents the righteousness of the saints - v8
- ◆ The bride is seen and mentioned first - v7
- ◆ The Groom makes His entrance last to come and get His bride – v 11
- ◆ There was a great supper as part of the marriage - v9

Am I demonstrating a spirit of Love and Submission?

Two important principles in the marriage relationship are love and submission. Man's head is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3) and his love for God is demonstrated by his submission to the lordship of Christ and his love for his bride in leading, protecting, and providing (Ephesians 5:25). He will lead her in respecting the standards of the church and she will demonstrate submission by respecting his leadership (Ephesians 5:22). Together they will respect the counsel of parents (Ephesians 6:2) and the church (Hebrews 13:17).

There are many sad stories of couples who disregarded the counsel of their parents and the guidelines of the church, causing harm to others and damage to their own marriage.

Making it Practical

While the two of you will happily discuss your plans and ways that you can uniquely show forth the praise of God on your “special day”, following is what your ministry believes should be guidelines for your planning.

Worship Service - The wedding service should be in an atmosphere of reverence and worship. We will use only acapella singing in the service. If decorations are used, they must be approved by the officiating ministry. There may be no visible taking of pictures after the service begins. Standing for the bride’s entry is not permitted.

Bridal Party – If there is a bridal party, their attire shall be in conformity with the standards of the Marietta District. The bride’s dress may not be touching the floor. Junior attendants or flower girls and separating engaged or married couples by escorting, ushering,

or seating at the bridal table is not permitted. (This also applies to ushering wedding guests). No divorced and remarried persons may have a special part in the wedding.

Ceremony – Wedding ceremonies may be performed by the district bishop or minister of the groom or the bride. Wedding vows are to be answered to the officiating minister. If the option of exchanging vows is used, they must be pre-approved.

Reception – The wedding reception is a vital part of the wedding celebration. While the atmosphere is more festive than the wedding service, moderation should prevail in decorations and expenditures. If there is “open mic,” the sharing must be in honor of Christ and the couple with words of blessing for them. Announcements should be made concerning this and to refrain from glass-tapping and throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. Plans for the reception must be approved by the officiating ministry in consultation with the fathers.

Final Instructions– A meeting with the officiating bishop or minister shall take place **before** any plans are finalized or persons invited to participate. Any special considerations to the above shall be discussed at this time. The officiating minister – not the wedding coordinator - shall be in charge of the wedding practice.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

I understand that this supplement to the 1963 Mennonite Confession of Faith is intended to encourage and guide members of this district in our Christian growth and commitment to each other within the body of believers of our district. By the grace of God and with the help of the Holy Spirit and my brothers and sisters, I will support the work of my congregation, my district and the standards of this statement.

NAME

DATE

Accepted by Marietta – Dec 1999

Accepted by Tidings of Peace – April 2000

Revisions - 2012

Reaffirmed by Marietta -

Reaffirmed by Tidings of Peace – 12-11-2013