

Draft as of 2/13/21 (still a work in progress)

## **Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship**

*A Jesus-centered community committed to peacemaking and doing life together.*

We seek to be a peace community, sharing the faith perspectives of the Mennonite USA [‘What is A Peace Church?’](#) document.

### **An Inclusive, Justice Seeking, Peacemaking Community:**

We are a community that seeks to be a place where all people experience God’s justice, peace and joy. We denounce white supremacy and seek to root out its ideology from within ourselves and our systems. We are committed to the work of antiracism and pursuing liberation for all people from oppression. We strive to use inclusive language in our gatherings together. We invite everyone, without qualification, to full participation in our community and life together. We welcome and affirm LGBTQ persons for membership, marriage, ministry, and leadership.

### **Life Together**

We embrace the mystery of faith, freeing us from thinking we have arrived or have it all together. The rituals and sacraments we practice together help us engage God, but they are not the be all or end all. They are parts of our community life together that serve as an invitation to life with Jesus and to God’s grace. At their best these practices help us connect with God and each other. At their worst they are used to exclude or harm one another. Together we ask ourselves, “What is the fruit of our life together? Are we becoming more like the God who is love?” We adjust when we are not. We are cautious to not change for the sake of change, but acknowledge that we can and have and will get it wrong.

Life together looks messier than the list of rituals and the living sacraments below. It often looks more like text messages with prayer requests, silly pictures shared to bring joy, and the chaos of kids playing in the backyard. At times it looks like a friend coming over to fix a plumbing problem, a meal dropped off during a tough week, or a needed conversation. Community is not contained, but it grows through shared life and love for one another.

### *Sunday Gatherings & Potluck*

Every Sunday we gather together for a time of singing, reading scripture, reflection, discussion, sharing life, prayer, and a meal together. Everyone brings their gifts, stories, and food to share as they are able to that day.

### *Communion*

When we gather together around communion all are welcome. The bread and wine represent Christ’s body broken for all with no qualifiers. At the Last Supper, Jesus dined with die-hard followers, doubters, and betrayers. He invited all to take and eat. There is no “litmus test” of

dogma or doctrine. There are no requirements. There is no wrong or right way to come to the table, just the questions: are you hungry? Are you thirsty? We understand the communion table to be an invitation to reconciliation not just with the living Christ, but also with each other.

### *Baptism*

Baptism is an outward sign of someone's joyful decision to follow Jesus. This sacrament symbolizes that we are dying to self and living with Jesus by the Spirit. This is not a qualifier for membership or communion. It is the emphatic "yes!" to God's covenant love which births within us a desire to love God and others in return. It is in baptism that we enter the global Church and become connected to every believer past, present, and future.

### *Membership*

Membership to a particular church community is about committing to the collective life of a particular group of people, at a particular time. It is in this type of fellowship that we find ourselves challenged by the God who loves specifically and not theoretically. We are called to work through our disagreements, baggage, failures as well as celebrate our strengths, victories, and reconciliations here and now and in doing so, demonstrate the possibility of God's kingdom coming to earth. Baptism is not required for membership. Rather, anyone wishing to join makes a public commitment to the community.

### *Decision-Making:*

Currently we have a three person lay leadership team that coordinates and organizes our time together, yet everyone is actively engaged- leading worship, kids lessons, and more. We seek the Spirit's guidance in all decisions that we make together. Decisions are brought to the group at community meetings and made by consensus. Members may vote on decisions, non-members can attend community meetings and participate freely in discussion.

### **Sources used for Inspiration and Guidance:**

- Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective, Article 11. Baptism: <http://mennoniteusa.org/confession-of-faith/baptism/>
- Open Table Fellowship's Membership Guidelines and Structure: <https://www.opentablemennonite.org/>
- Milwaukee Mennonite Church Approved Statements and Who We Are <https://www.milwaukeeemennonite.org/what-we-do>  
<https://www.milwaukeeemennonite.org/who-we-are>
- Columbus Mennonite Church LGBTQ Inclusiveness <http://www.columbusmennonite.org/who-we-are/lgbtq-inclusiveness>
- Jonathan Martin and the Congregation at The Table: <https://www.thetableokc.com/>
- Sarah Bessy: <https://sarahbessey.com/blog/>
- [Vision: Healing and Hope](#)