

NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MEMBERSHIP COURSE

Session One: OUR FAITH

The Church of the Brethren has always tried to be a church that follows the New Testament Example. Let's begin by looking at a picture of the first Church is found in Acts 2:42-47:

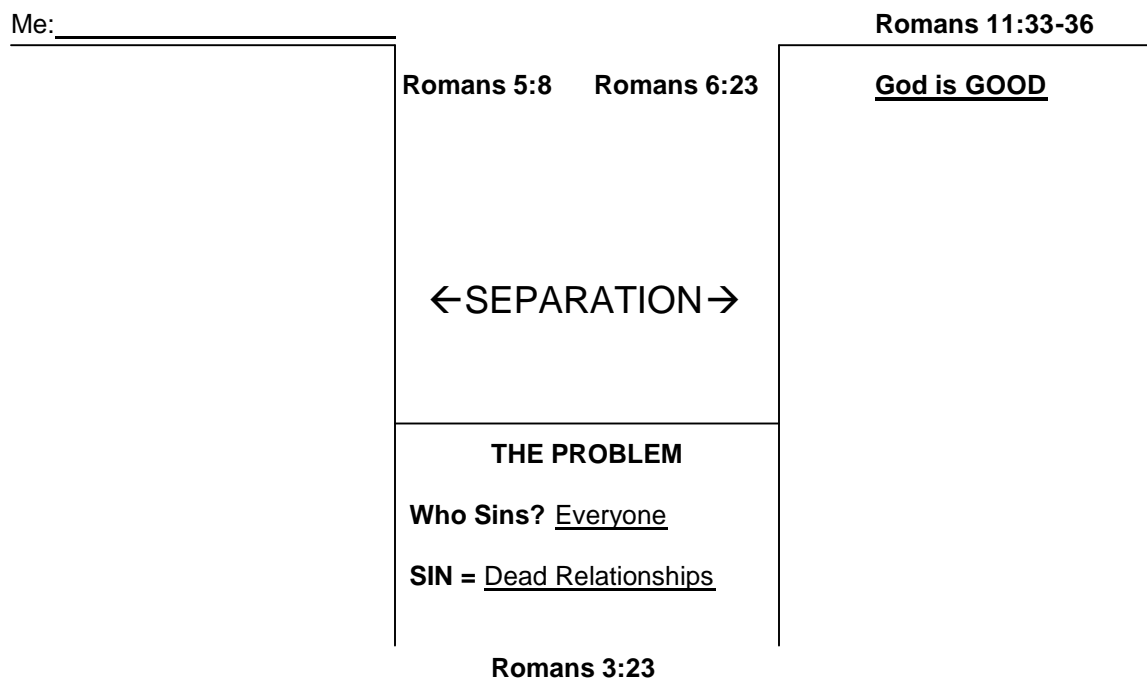
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

A FAITH CORE VALUE:

When studying our faith, we must keep in mind the following statement:

- In essentials, there must be unity. Ephesians 4:4-6 – There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.
- In opinions, there must be liberty. Romans 14:1-2 – Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.
- In all things, there must be love. 1 Corinthians 13:2 – And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR US ALL?



THE QUESTION IS: What does God want me to do in response to His free gift?
Romans 5:1-2

THIS LEADS US TO ASK: What does it mean to have faith?

Romans 10:9

1. Believe
2. Confess

Romans 2:4

3. Repent

Romans 6:3-6

4. Be Baptized

Romans 12:1-2

5. Live transformed for God

Summary Verse: Romans 3:21-26 - But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

Special Study: BAPTISM

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY CHRIST
 - Mark 1:9 – In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
2. BECAUSE CHRIST COMMANDED IT.
 - Mark 16:16 – The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. IT MAKES US ONE WITH JESUS' BURIAL AND RESURRECTION.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – Christ died for our sins..., was buried, and ...raised on the third day.
 - Colossians 2:12 – When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.
2. IT GIVES US THE PROMISE OF NEW LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN.
 - Romans 6:4 – Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
3. IT GIVES US THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
 - Acts 2:38 – Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

1. BECAUSE JESUS WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.
 - Matthew 3:16 – And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.
 - TO COME UP FROM, YOU HAVE TO GO DOWN IN
2. EVERY BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE WAS BY IMMERSION. One Example: Acts 8:38-39
3. THE BIBLE WORD ("BAPTIZO") MEANS "TO IMMERSE UNDER WATER."
4. IMMERSION BEST SYMBOLIZES A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17 – So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

1. EVERY PERSON WHO HAS BELIEVED IN CHRIST.
 - Acts 2:41 – So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.
 - Acts 8:12 – But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. AS SOON AS YOU HAVE BELIEVED. See: Acts 2:41

NOTE: There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to follow Christ, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect" or "know enough", you'll never be baptized. The key is: do you trust Christ as Lord and Savior?

WHY BE BAPTIZED THREE TIMES FORWARD?

1. BEING IMMERSSED THREE TIMES SHOWS YOUR BELIEF IN THE TRINITY
 - The Great Commission mentions the Trinity with Baptism - Matthew 28:19
 - Three Person = One God / Three Dunks = One Baptism
2. BEING IMMERSSED FORWARD SHOWS YOU RELATE TO CHRIST'S DEATH
 - When Jesus dies on the cross, He bowed His head – see: John 19:30
3. SOME (MAYBE MOST) IN THE EARLY CHURCH WERE BAPTIZED THIS WAY:
 - The Didache, sometimes called The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, was written about A.D. 100. It says, "But concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water."
 - Tertullian, A.D. 160-220: "Jesus gave as his last command that they should immerse into the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, not into one person. Therefore, all who believed were immersed. For we are immersed, not once but thrice, at the naming of every person of the Trinity."
 - Augustine, A.D. 354-430, "In this font, before we dipped your whole body, we asked you, 'Believest thou in God the omnipotent Father?' After you declared that you believed, we immersed three times your heads in the sacred font ... You are rightly immersed three times, you who receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, who rose the third day from the dead."
 - Jerome, A.D. 340-420: "We are thrice dipped in water that the mystery of the Trinity may appear to be but one, and therefore though we be thrice put under the water to represent the mystery of the Trinity, yet it is reputed to be but one baptism."
 - Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407 "Christ delivered to his disciples one baptism in three immersions when he said to them, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

Session Two: LIVING FOR GOD

What does it mean to “live for God”?

Living for God is summed up in one word: RELATIONSHIP

- 1 Corinthians 8:3 – Anyone who loves God is known by him.

Living for God means we have a TRANSFORMED LIFE

- Galatians 5:22-23 – By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.
- Romans 12:1-2 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Living for God means we are a WITNESS:

- Acts 1:8 – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- What is our Jerusalem? Boulder Hill
- What is our Judea & Samaria? Kendall/Kent County & Illinois
- What are the ends of the world? The U.S. & the World

Living for God means actively PURSUING PEACE:

- James 3:18 – A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

The Church of the Brethren in 1785 – Now we see that Christ always, in all his sufferings, endured them, and that with great patience, and never resisted or defended himself...So...we can not see or find any liberty to use any (carnal) sword, but only the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Session Three: A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH

According to the book of Ephesians in the New Living Translation, a Church is like...

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

A BODY
Ephesians 1:22-23

... And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.



A FAMILY
Ephesians 2:19

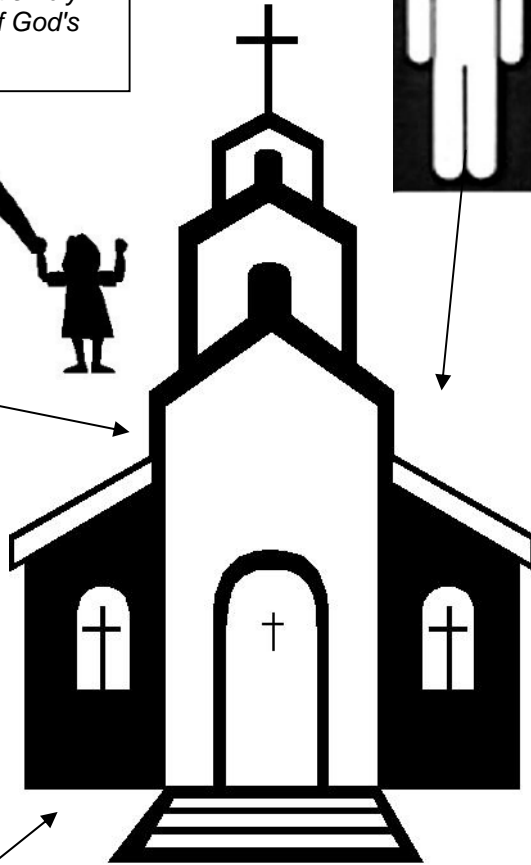


A BRIDE
Ephesians 5:25, 32



A TEMPLE
Ephesians 2:21-22

We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.



v. 25 – And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her
v. 32 – This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.



A HOUSE
Ephesians 2:20

We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

Special Study: OUR PURPOSE

The Church should do what God wants. We find the Church's purpose in the desires of God. What is God's desires? Well, one way to find out is to listen to what Jesus has to say. Let's look at two important statements from Jesus, our Lord.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he said the following: Matthew 22:37-38 – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment.

This is called the Great Commandment. This is a direct quote of Deuteronomy 6:4, what is called the Shema (the central faith statement) in the Jewish Faith.

- What does it mean to love God? WORSHIP (Celebrate Christ)

Jesus also gave us the Great Commission. These were some of the last words He gave to His disciples while on earth. It was like His summary statement for what He wants while He is away.

Matthew 28:18-20 – Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- Go therefore and make disciples = Reach out (Care for the Community)
- baptizing them... and teaching them = Connect and Grow

Neighborhood Church of the Brethren's Purpose

"We cannot say that [our church is] completely one in spirit, but we must be one in purpose." ~ Alexander Mack (early Brethren leader)

The purpose of Neighborhood Church of the Brethren is to bring people to Jesus Christ and into His community; to develop and strengthen them to be Christ-like, equipped for ministry in the Church, our neighborhood and the world for the glory of God.

Celebrate Christ / Connect and Grow / Care for the Community

Session Four: THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

People in the world have no clue what Church of the Brethren means. Sure they have heard of Baptist or Catholic, but Brethren? Is it a cult? Is it Christian? We must realize that being part of the Church of the Brethren means that we are part of something bigger than ourselves: a movement of Christ's Church to follow Christ in a radical way.

The Church of the Brethren began in a land where there had been thirty years of war over religion. Catholics, Lutherans and followers of Calvin and Zwingli had killed and tortured one another over creeds. The army of one of the churches would sweep over an area and force all the inhabitants to become a part of their church. Then another army would come and claim the area for another church.

Many of the common people began to feel they wanted nothing to do with this barbarism. They wanted nothing to do with the Church. The established churches had grown rich, powerful, and corrupt. They no longer shared the Gospel message of the New Testament and of Jesus.

But a young man named Alexander Mack and a few others felt there must be a Church for the people. The people need Jesus, not the religion the corrupt Church was giving them. Alexander Mack and his crew desired a Church that was like the church in the New Testament, a pure group of believer who cared only about following Christ. They set out to form such a church, taking the New Testament as their rule of faith and practice.

The most important thing to any of them was their burning desire to take Jesus very seriously. To believe that Jesus was their Lord and Savior as Scripture presents him. To do what Jesus asked. To go where Jesus would send them. To live, in accordance with his teachings, the kind of life he shared.

In the late summer of 1708, Alexander Mack and 7 men and women walked down into the waters of the Eder River near the little village of Schw arzenau, Germany. They did something illegal: they were baptized! It was against the law for adults to be baptized and the penalty was death. They were willing to risk it all to belong to Christ's Church. Alexander Mack, after coming out of the water, in turn baptized his wife, Anna, and the six others who had been meeting together for several years for prayer and study of the Scriptures. Our denomination was born at a great risk.

Our Denomination

We are part of the Church of the Brethren. The term "Brethren" describes the kinship of men and women who choose another way of living: the way of Jesus. Today, there are about 1000 Church of the Brethren congregations throughout the United States and many other Brethren ministries throughout the world. We gather annually for a church-wide conference to seek the Spirit in discerning the direction of the church. The General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, On Earth Peace Assembly, and the Brethren Benefit Trust are denominational ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Our church is also part of the Illinois/Wisconsin District, which has a wide variety of Youth District activities, including our church camp, Camp Emmaus! We are part of a large network of Brethren churches trying to bring peace to people's lives.

An Historic Peace Church

The Church of the Brethren is known for being one of the Historic Peace Churches (Mennonite and Quaker being the other two). From the beginning, Brethren have opposed war. Many can not reconcile the call of Christ to love and the killing of another human being. In fact, recent Annual Conference statements have said, "all war is sin." Three political movements have been spawned from Brethren faith:

- The Peace Corp – this was developed from the model of our Brethren Volunteer Service (an alternative to military service).
- Conscientious Objectors
- On Earth Peace

We realize that this is hard to accept for some. Here are some Scriptures that are vital to the Church of the Brethren's understanding of peace:

- Matthew 5:9 - blessed are the peacemakers
- Matthew 5:38-48 & Romans 12:17, 21 - overcome evil with good
- Matthew 26:47-56 - Jesus does not retaliate
- Isaiah 2:2-4 - the peaceful kingdom of God
- James 3:18 - actively pursue peace

There are a number of reasons for standing in opposition to war. Some are opposed to war because of a mere desire for survival. They have a fear of death and destruction in this gruesome atomic age. Others are pacifists because they believe simply that human life is sacred. Still others refuse to participate in war because they believe in the doctrine of progress. They believe the universe is constituted in such a way that mankind will eventually move toward perfection - and the elimination of war is one more step in this evolutionary surge. But the Brethren have historically refused to participate in war - not primarily for the above named reasons - but because of loyalty to Jesus Christ and obedience to the teachings of the Scriptures.

Special Study: BEING BRETHERN

People who find their Peace in Christ

Brethren realize the Jesus Christ is the only way people will have peace with God, themselves, and the world around them. They take to heart that it is Christ who has set all things right.

- Colossians 1:19-20 – For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

People who Count the Cost

Jesus called His followers to consider what it would cost them before they followed Him (Luke 14:25-33). This means our churches should be committed to training people what risks, dangers, and rewards are involved in the following Jesus.

- 1 Peter 2:21 – For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

People who follow the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was different from the Kingdom of man. As a Christian, our first loyalty must be to God's Kingdom.

- John 18:36 – Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

People who Serve others.

Brethren look for ways to serve in practical and meaningful ways. Jesus taught His disciples to do this when He washed their feet. He showed them in a real way that they must serve others. He then said:

- John 13:17 – If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

People who are Peacemakers.

Brethren take seriously Jesus' call for His followers to love their enemies, and to serve those around them. Some rewards of peacemakers:

- Peacemakers will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)
- Peacemakers will have an abundance of righteousness in their lives. (James 3:17-18)
- Peacemakers are promised that God will watch over them and listen to their prayers. (1 Peter 3:10-12)

People who have "no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible."

Brethren ask the question: "How much of the New Testament can we believe & do?" This is different from: how can we boil the New Testament down to a simple phrase (example: "saved by faith through grace").

People who seek the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Brethren take seriously that Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would dwell in His followers. This means that the third person of the God-head lives in all Christians. They seek His guidance.

- John 14:26 – But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

People who DO theology.

To the Brethren, theology was never meant to be "head stuck in the clouds" talk about God. Theology is a way to live and experience God through your life.

- James 1:22 – But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

People who practice real community.

Jesus told His followers how to really love each other, reach out to each other, hold each other accountable, and serve one another in Matthew 18. The Brethren hold this Scripture dear to their hearts.

- Example: Baptism – a mark of the called out believer

People who practice the New Testament:

As we try to follow the entire New Testament, here are some practices that you will find in our Church:

- Simple Living – Jesus called us to live different from the world
- Baptism by trine immersion (Acts 2:38);
- The Love Feast (Luke 22:20; John 13; Jude 12)
- Feet-washing (John 13:1-20)
- Taking Communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
- Anointing for healing in the name of the Lord (James 5:14)
- Laying on of Hands for Prayer (Mark 10:16)

Our Name:

Even our name comes from the New Testament. The name "Church of the Brethren" might sound weird to some. Our name was chosen by our desire to follow the New Testament and to remind us to belong to one another. In the New Testament, several different words were used to describe followers of Jesus:

- "Disciple" – 269 X
- "Church" – 112 X
- "Christian" – 3 X
- "Brethren" – 190 X



The Symbol of our Church:

The C.O.B. logo is composed of images central to the life of Jesus Christ.

- The cross recalls our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4) and testifies to God's plan to bring "all in heaven and on earth... into a unity in Christ" (Eph. 1:10 NEB).
- The circle, partially defined, represents the world into which we are sent by Christ (Matt. 28:19). The circle also affirms that as members of Christ's body we are members one of another (Rom. 12:5)—a people who confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).
- The wave connotes new life in Christ, "born of water and the spirit" (John 3:5). It further evokes the waters of justice (Amos 5:24), the cup of water offered in Christ's name (Mark 9:41), the basin and towel (John 13:5), and "springs of living water" (Rev. 7:17).

Combined, the cross, the circle, and the wave present a distinct "Brethren" statement — images central to the life of Jesus Christ, images for Brethren to live by.

Session Five: BRETHREN ORDINANCES

The Church of the Brethren denomination has several church practices that are rich in meaning. From our beginning, the denomination's focus was to restore the faith and actions of the early church found in the Scriptures.

The Church of the Brethren have HISTORICALLY practiced six ordinances:

1. Baptism by trine immersion,
2. the love feast,
3. the anointing with oil,
4. the laying on of hands for prayer,
5. the assembling together for worship, and
6. and the Christian salutation of the holy kiss.

Sacraments vs. Ordinances:

Before we go farther, it is important to understand why we do these things. The Church of the Brethren does not view these actions as "Sacraments."

- Sacrament - those rituals that pass on the grace of God mysteriously simply by the fact that they are done.

Brethren would use the terms: celebrations or ordinances (they are orders, "commanded practices," by Christ).

- Ordinance = visible acts and signs appointed by Christ to be administered in the church which express and confirm the saving truth of the gospel to the believer. They usually require more than one believer to perform, so they strengthen the community.

Ordinances are essential factors in the development of the Christian life, because of their rich meaning.

BAPTISM

We have already done a special study on Baptism, but here are some notes that may explain why the Church of the Brethren holds this ordinance so dear:

- Baptism is linked to repentance, an adult decision to redirect one's life by saying yes to good news of God's reign;
- Baptism celebrates God's forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, an amnesty of grace that allows life to begin anew;
- Baptism is an act of separation from the world ("this corrupt generation"), a shift of loyalty from the values of the present age to those of the age to come;
- Baptism is coupled with empowerment by God's Spirit, who frees our tongues and lives to witness boldly to God's grace; and
- Baptism incorporates us into a community of believers, a common life where faith flourishes and worship abounds.

Here is an interesting note on Alexander Mack's stance on baptism – "A believer who desires to be baptized, but cannot obtain it because of necessity - like the criminal on the cross - is still saved. If, however, a man does not desire to be baptized, he is rightly to be judged as unbelieving and disobedient, not because of baptism, but because of his unbelief and disobedience."

Historically in the Church of the Brethren, there was a teaching time that existed before baptism (like this class). After baptism, the deacons and ministers would also interview the converts.

THE BAPTISM VOWS – Three questions are asked before the congregation before you are immersed:

1. Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son, that He lived a perfect life on earth, died on the cross, and rose from the dead?
2. Do you receive and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
3. Will you turn away from all sin and will you endeavor by God's grace to live according to the example and teachings of the Bible?

If there is a positive response to each question then you are baptized! The preacher usually says, "Upon this confession of faith, I now baptize you: in the name of the God the Creator (DUNK), in the name of the Jesus Christ the Redeemer (DUNK), and in the name of the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer (DUNK).

Then you are prayed over: praising God, claiming Bible promises in the name of Jesus, asking for protection as you take your baby steps in faith, and once again praising God for the new life in you!

THE LOVE FEAST

Our Love Feasts are held twice a year in our church on World Communion Sunday (1st Sunday in October) and Maundy Thursday (Thursday before Easter). For some Brethren, the traditional love feast remains the profound central act and symbol of the church's life. The Love Feast, or Agape Meal is not just taking communion.

THE FOUR PARTS OF THE LOVE FEAST:

Part One: Examination

1 Corinthians 11:28 - Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Examination has always been an important part of taking communion and the Love Feast. Part of the examination process is confession to God.

Possible questions to consider during examination:

- Is your heart right with your brothers & sisters in Christ? Do you have any disagreements that would hurt your relationship with God?
- Is your personal devotion to Christ right? Do you need to spend this time to renew your devotion to Him?
- Is your service to others what God wants it to be? Do you need to spend time reflecting on what Jesus has done for you?
- Are your relationships in need of repair? Is there any one that God wants you to forgive?
- Is there sin in your life that is stopping you from knowing God more fully and creates a roadblock for you to walk the way Jesus wants you to?
- Is your witness powerful? Do you eagerly attempt to share Jesus Christ with others?

Part Two: Foot washing

In Jesus' day, it was custom for the slaves to wash the feet of guests as they entered a home. Jesus wanted to teach the fussy and greedy disciples a powerful lesson, so what did He do? He washed their feet! See: John 13:1-5

The Church of the Brethren tries to reenact Jesus' example at the Love Feast. When they wash a Christian brother or sister's feet, they remember that He washed His disciples feet to show them true fellowship and love. He even called every one of His followers to wash feet in John 13:14-15.

Part Three: The Love Meal, or Agape Feast

“Agape” is the Greek Word for “LOVE”. The dish that is served varies from church to church, but traditionally it was a beef, bread, and broth meal. This came from the Peasant Supper from Germany to remind us that we are each poor without Jesus.

This agape meal is a sign that there is true fellowship:

- For thousands of years, eating together has been a sign of friendship. See: John 15:14-ff
- In the Old Testament, eating together was the sign of a ratified agreement. See: Genesis 26:30
- In the days leading up to the birth of Christ, eating together was a popular figure of speech for the Kingdom of God. Luke 13:29-30
- Eating together is one of the significant things a family does as a family!

Part Four: the Bread & Cup of Communion

Communion is practiced in the Love Feast and monthly in our worship services at the first Sunday of the Month.

Matthew 26:26-28 – While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

We are to remember Jesus Christ. Communion is the best way to remember that He gave His body and shed His blood for us.

1 Corinthians 11:24 & 25 quotes Jesus twice, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

At our Church, we practice open communion. This means that everyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ can partake. We call young people to wait until they have been baptized to take communion.

A Singing Faith

Our Love Feasts are filled with songs. They even usually end by singing, because Matthew 26:30 says, “Then they sang a hymn and went out...”

ANOINTING

Our church tries to follow the New Testament example in this.

James 5:14 – Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

There are many different reasons to be anointed. Traditionally, Brethren have anointed for three reasons: the forgiveness of sin; the strengthening of one's faith; the healing and wholeness of body, mind, and spirit according to God's grace and Wisdom.

Reason One: For healing – on different levels:

- Physical (if the Lord wills).
- Emotional (from brokenness).
- Spiritual (readiness of what God is going to do – might include peace).
- And even from demonic oppression.

Reason Two: To know that Jesus' Kingdom has come.

The title of "Christ" means "God's anointed one." When you are anointed, you are claiming that Christ is now here.

Reason Three: To discover

Important Question: How is God's glory and activity revealed here?

The Anointing Service traditionally includes:

- A reading of James 5:14;
- Opportunity for the confession of sin
- The anointing. We say, "we anoint you for: the healing of body, the forgiveness of sin, and the strengthening of faith" while anointing (sometimes making the sign of the cross with the oil and sometimes pouring the oil).
- The laying on of hands on the anointed to pray blessings
- Sometimes the individual is left in solitude to contemplate what God has done or spends time in fellowship.

Session Six: MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Members dedicate 3 HOURS PER WEEK to God:

1. 1 Hour of Worship (Hebrews 10:25 / Mark 16:2)
2. 1 Hour of Ministry / Serving (1 Peter 4:10, Ephesians 4:11 -12)
3. 1 Hour of Small Group: Bible Study / Sunday School (1 Peter 3:15 & 2 Timothy 3:15)

Members have DAILY DEVOTIONS (Prayer, Bible Study, & Quiet Time):

- Ephesians 5:18 / Matthew 14:23 / John 15:5 / 1 Peter 1:24 -25

Members have CONTAGIOUS FAITH:

- By living with integrity for God: Philippians 1:27 & 2:13
- By developing a servant's heart: Philippians 2:3 -7
- By consistently being involved in your Church: Revelation 1:6 & 1 Peter 2:9

Members have a HEART FOR THE LOST:

- By inviting friends and family to attend: Luke 14:23 & Matthew 4:19
- By praying for growth (spiritually & numerically): 1 Thessalonians 1:2
- By warmly welcoming those who visit: Romans 15:7

Members have a CONCERN FOR THE FLOCK:

- By acting in love towards everyone: Romans 15:5, 19 & 1 Peter 1:22
- By refusing to gossip: Ephesians 4:29 & 2 Corinthians 12:20
- By following leaders: Hebrews 13:17 & Colossians 1:18
- By tithing and giving regularly: Malachi 3:10 & 1 Corinthians 16:2

How to Become a Member:

- The new member was baptized by immersion because of their faith.
- The new member has a relationship with Jesus that is evident and accepts the vocation of the covenant community, as practiced by the Church of the Brethren.
- Membership is recommended to the deacons, and then prayerfully approved.
- The new member is presented to the congregation by a friend or new mentor.
- The congregation accepts the new member into the Church.

Session Seven: ASK THE PASTOR ANY QUESTION

TESTIMONY WORK SHEET

Today's world is driven by stories. Just think about how much the movie industry makes! Your story is important, because it is the story of how God made you who you are today. People want to listen, if you take the time to tell it. Here are some tips on writing your testimony:

Write Your Story Out

You should always try to write your story out. This helps you organize your thoughts and see how God has moved in your life. When writing it out, try to answer these questions:

- What was missing in your life before your relationship with Christ was missing?
- Why did you seek God before you became a Christian?
- Who influenced your decision?
- When and where did you start your personal relationship with Jesus?
- Why did you accept Jesus into your life?
- What need was met?
- What events truly impacted your faith-walk?
- How has your relationship with Jesus changed the way you live today?
- Where do you see your life going now that Jesus has changed your life?

While answering these questions is important, it is also helpful to tell your testimony according to a **general time-line**. You will basically be telling your life-story.

Integrate Scripture into It

You may want to include Scriptures from the Roman Road, or your other favorite Scriptures. Putting Scripture into your picture helps your audience see how important God's Word is to your walk. Here are some example Scriptures to include:

Jeremiah 1:6-8, Ezekiel 33:1-9, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 23:32-48, John 1:1-18, 3:5-8, 14:15-31, Acts 2:37-42, 9:1-19, Romans 1:16-17, 3:23, 5:8, 6:3-6, 6:23, 8:35-39, 10:9, 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:22-26, Ephesians 6:10-18, Philippians 2:5-11, 4:4-13, Colossians 3:1-4, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:2, James 2:14-20, 3:1-12, 1 John 2:7-11, or Revelation 21:10-25.

Tell it so that it relates to the person hearing it

You should always tell your story so that the person who is hearing it can relate to it. You should write one large story and then be able to give a condensed version as the situation arises. Practice telling your story to a loved one.

WHAT WE BELIEVE AS A CHURCH

OUR CORE VALUES ABOUT BELIEFS:

- In essential beliefs, we must have unity. - Ephesians 4:4-6
- In opinions, we have freedom. - Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22
- In all our beliefs, we show love. - 1 Corinthians 13:2

We believe that there is but one God who is a personal God who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all. Ephesians 4: 4-6

We confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the Church and of all life - Colossians 1:18

We believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and minds of believers, creating and sustaining the Church through the Gospel, giving guidance and comfort while uniting believers with their Lord and with one another. John 15:5 & Galatians 5:22-23

We maintain that the New Testament is the only creed and rule of faith and practice. In the Holy Scriptures is recorded God's search for all persons, which is climaxed in God's redemptive act in and through Christ. Through the Bible, God still speaks and continues to accomplish His redemptive processes. - 2 Timothy 1:10, 3:16 & Hebrews 4:12

We believe that the Gospel is the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Through the Gospel, God's sovereign will and Christ's redeeming grace are revealed. Mark 1:15, Luke 2:14, 1 Corinthians 1:18, & 1 Thessalonians 1:5

We hold that the Church is the body of Christ and is under the Lord's mandate to be faithful in accepting and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and deed – 1 Peter 3:15

We believe that all members of the Congregation, as the body of believers, are responsible for the ministries of the Church - 1 Peter 2:9

We accept the ministries of the Church to be the proclamation and fulfillment of the Gospel for all people and the nurture of individual believers in the Christian faith and life. Every Christian is a peace-maker – James 3:18 & Matthew 5:9

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

I hope you have had fun learning about God and His Church. You should now be able to answer some questions of our faith, like:

- What is God's plan for us all?
- What does it mean to live for God?
- What does God's Church look like?
- What is different about the Church of the Brethren?

What you have learned, however, is just the beginning! The Bible warns us to not just know the basics, but to move on to more solid teaching:

There is so much more we would like to say about this. But you don't seem to listen, so it's hard to make you understand. You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food. Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right. Hebrews 5:11-14

We should continue to grow in all areas of our faith and encourage others to do the same. We have other classes that will help you go more in depth in what you learned today and will help you explore other areas of faith as well.

The Next Step:

Let me encourage you to take the next step. Living for God means being part of His Church – Take a look at the outline for **1 Corinthians 12**:

- Vs. 1-11 – Discover your gifts
- Vs. 12-27 – Be part of the Body (the Church)
- Vs. 27-31 – Use your gifts in the Body

This process is vital to your walk. After this membership course, be prepared to meet with our Church moderator to discover your gifts, reveal your passions, and get plugged into our Church.

THANK YOU!!!

If you have more questions, or would like to just talk, contact the office right away:

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