

Covenant for Life in Christ

Fundamentals Series

Christ at the Center: Our Declaration and Reminder
Conception of the Kingdom: Vision of Allied Mission Church
Confession in Creeds: Baptismal and Conciliar to Chalcedon
Covenant for Life in Christ: Code of Our Witness
Prime Principles: The Twelve Tenets of Allied Mission Church
Primer on Prime Principles: Teaching the Twelve Tenets

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Code of Our Witness

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A division of Allied Mission Church

Covenant for Life in Christ: Code of Our Witness

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Cover art represents the Agnus Dei or Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' victorious over death. An alternate art depiction is part of the seal of the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum) with the surrounding phrase, sometimes in Latin, of "Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow him." The *Moravian Covenant for Christian Living* also features a version of the seal.

“It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.”

- Matthew 10:25

“It is only because he became like us that we can become like him . . . By being transformed into his image, we are enabled to model our lives on his.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

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PREFACE

The *Covenant for Life in Christ: Code of Our Witness* reminds Christians of Allied Mission Church to be loyal to Jesus Christ. As a biblical summary, it instructs us in the nature of our Christian commitment, and is therefore also an aid to catechumens. It elucidates but does not exhaust scriptural teaching.

The *Covenant* is voluntarily accepted by oral and written commitment. It expresses a person's fidelity to Christ, and goodwill toward the church. The sections "The Foundation of Our Witness" and "The Essence of Our Witness" introduce the doctrine and emphases of Allied Mission Church. Various principles and applications for following Jesus Christ as Lord proceed thereafter.

The series of documents *Fundamentals*, which includes the *Covenant*, expands upon the core teaching and emphases of Allied Mission Church, especially the booklet *Christ at the Center: Our Declaration and Reminder*.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF OUR WITNESS

A. *Christ and the Kingdom of God*

1. We declare essential good news about Jesus: with him the rule, activity and presence of God is accessible and all around us. Human enmity and futility are on the way out. Supernatural living is immediately possible, real, and eternal. The keynote of the good news is that the Christ of the cross is the portal to God's kingdom, and its path, presence, and power.

2. Consequently, to those who embrace Christ and his message, God gifts the promise of his Spirit as his active, powerful presence, and pledge of present participation and future inheritance (Gal. 3:1-5, 11; Eph. 1:13-14). God welcomes all peoples to know and intimately interact with him as Jesus' apprentices and rulers-in-training (Mark 1:15; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36; 3:19; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; 15:25). Our relationship with God is love (Matt. 22:36-40).

3. Through Jesus is forgiveness of wrongs to whoever renounces them in receiving and believing him (Luke 3:3ff; 24:46-47; Acts 19:4). He rescues from sin as Savior (Gal. 1:3, 4; Col. 1:13; Acts 5:31). Christ crucified is of "first importance" (1 Cor. 1:17-23; 15:3; cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). Repentance responds to and anticipates the kingdom, yet God enables it (Acts 2:36-38; 3:19-26; 5:31; 11:18). Forgiveness is a kingdom lifestyle (Matt. 6:9-15). God's pardon is deliverance from sin's power to serve him with clear conscience (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rev. 1:6); transformed life is the expected, natural,

necessary result toward divine participation and permeation (2 Pet. 1:3-11).

4. With Jesus inclusion in a new reality and rule of life is available (John 1:12; 14:20, 23; Eph. 2:1-6). As a gift of God, his Spirit occupies us and infects us with love (Rom. 5:5), and he involves himself to act in and with us (Phil. 2:13). Diligently nurtured, the new life grows us in likeness to Jesus and in obedience to his commands.

5. The Spirit invites all people to repentance toward Jesus as their Master and Teacher (John 16:8-15), helping us develop Christ-like character to obey Jesus' commands. As learners of Jesus, we model and minister the with-God crucified life. Our ever-availing, powerful, and necessary helper is the Spirit; as a result, we strive to love God, all Christians, and anyone in works of grace and truth. Apprenticeship to Jesus and new life in him are a vital relationship and condition for all persons.

6. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was revealed personally in Jesus the embodied Son (Matt. 12:28, 31; John 14:9-11). We proclaim Jesus' living presence and universal kingship; joyful sharing in his life, sufferings, death and resurrection; mutual love with his followers; acting with him in his reclamation and renewal of human life; and, like him, daily 'death' to the usual *modus operandi*: self-will; reliance on human abilities and upon mere physical resources; prioritizing provision for daily needs and indulging bodily desires. We refuse mundane existence for one infused by God.

B. *God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit*

7. One God in three persons is declared in the Bible (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:3-6, 11; Eph. 4:4-6). He is relational love (1 John 4:16), and therefore invites us to love in community with him and each other. God is the source and re-source of life. He re-creates and sustains us, and makes accessible in Christ the abundant quality of an undivided, full-dimensional eternal essence.

C. *Bible and Creeds*

8. The Bible is essential knowledge and truth. We commit to the principle: “*in essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; and in all things, love.*” Church catholic consensus, such as the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, is a witness to the unity of the Spirit that Jesus is Lord.

II. THE ESSENCE OF OUR WITNESS

1. Our rule is the earliest Christian confession: “Jesus is Lord.” We obey him as King, Ruler, and Teacher. His teachings (e.g., Matt. 5-7), manner of life, and love (Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 5:2), instruct our allegiance. The early Church offered guidance in various areas of living (e.g., Col. 3:1-4:6). As one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), Jesus’ intelligence is unrivaled. He is master of all fields or schools of knowledge and research. In every sphere and endeavor he is able to expertly teach and lead. We attend to his mind as we cultivate our own.

2. Life with Jesus and by God’s unearned grace impels and energizes our constant efforts at obedience. In and through Christ, with the Holy

Spirit, we do good works (John 3:20-21; 14:12, 13; 15:5; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:10). Our end is always for Christ, and thus love, to be formed in us (1 Cor. 13:1-13; Gal. 4:19). In him we might become God's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We pursue that formation through spiritual practices, while learning from any believer sound in doctrine and conduct (1 Tim. 4:7b-8; 2 Tim. 2:22). We follow those who follow(ed) the way of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2; 11:1).

3. In baptism we were united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We died to sin to live in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-11).

III. OUR CORPORATE WITNESS

A. *Leadership*

1. As Jesus lowered himself to lead his followers, we accept Christ-like leadership (John 13:1-17). We lead under him (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Therefore, we accept Christ-centered, cross-bearing direction from our overseers to guide us as individuals and as a congregation in order to imitate them. The Chief Shepherd was also the Crucified Lamb (cf. Acts 8:32-35; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:19).

B. *Stewardship*

2. Jesus is Creator, Giver, Owner, and Sustainer of all (1 Chr. 29:11-14; Ps. 24:1; Acts 17:25; Heb. 1:3). As stewards of time, talents, possessions and resources, we prioritize their use for his commission and consonant works of compassion. We will generously support financial needs of the church and the cause of

Christ. Benevolent and mission enterprises are a privilege, opportunity, and duty.

C. *Mutual Relationship*

3. As students of Jesus, we are to be known by our mutual love (John 13:35), so we prioritize it. We realize possible differences, but our duty is to model the togetherness created by God who made us one. We will resolve our offenses and disputes, if necessary with mediation (Matt. 18:15-17). For our witness, we will, if possible, avoid resort to a court of law — better to be victims instead (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

D. *Assemblies of the Saints*

4. We and our families will faithfully attend our assemblies (Heb. 10:24-25), avoiding both unnecessary labor and recreations that regularly interrupt our own attendance or that of others.

E. *Lord's Supper*

5. In the Lord's Supper we receive renewed assurance of the forgiveness of sins; participate in the death of Jesus and fellowship in his sufferings; unite as members of his Body; and rejoice in the hope of his glorious return. Therefore, we will commune faithfully, and renew our pledge of allegiance to him (Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 11:23-32)

F. *Relationship with Other Christians*

6. Christians must make every effort to reveal our unity in Christ (John 17:20-23; Eph.4:2-6). He has graced his Body with many gifts. Enriched by them, we mutually learn and rejoice. Our focus is learning to obey everything Jesus commanded. We avoid divisions of fellowship with all for whom "Jesus Christ is Lord"

and cooperate to promote the good news and works of Christ.

IV. OUR DOMESTIC WITNESS

A. *Human Nature*

1. God created humans male and female in his image (Gen. 1:27). What he created “very good” is not optional to alter, adapt or enhance (Gen. 1:31).

B. *Marriage*

2. God instituted marriage to complete a man and woman as his unique representatives and resemblance. They image and extend God's rule in themselves — and beyond them as they love and obey him (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15, 18). As in Jesus that rule is accessible and advancing, they should act accordingly and reorient their priorities (1 Cor. 7:29-31). Christ and his death is the model for their relationship (Eph. 5:22-33). As followers of Jesus we will not marry unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14).

3. Male-female union of husband and wife is God's one very good design for sexual fulfillment (Gen. 2:20-24). It expresses intimacy, mutual fidelity and committed love (Song of Songs 7:10; 8:6-7). Therefore, we avoid all other relationships. Marriage is lifelong covenant. Its breaking causes human suffering and offends God. As far as possible, all friction, offenses, and disagreements end with forgiveness and reconciliation.

4. Our noble duty is to uphold God's purpose for marriage that Jesus endorsed. We will train our young people by example and precept.

C. *Children and Family*

5. Jesus welcomed children, so we help lead them to love him and God (Matt. 19:14; cf. Dt. 6:7). By winsome apprenticeship to Jesus, we diligently train them to obey and follow us — encouraging and comforting them so their honor is without fear or bitterness (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20, 21; cf. 1 Thess. 2:11-12). With prayer and God's help we will preserve them from every evil influence to our best ability.

6. From their conception, we protect children. Human nature is God's handiwork in his image, in which his Son, Jesus, was forever enfleshed (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 139:13; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35). He occupied the womb; its life is sacred. The unborn possess personhood (Luke 1:41-44).

D. *Singleness*

7. Singleness is honorable. God's advancing new era through Jesus elicits undivided devotion to him and great joy (Matt. 6:33; 1 Cor. 7:29-35; cf. Matt. 13:44). We will train and pray to abstain from illicit sexual desires, and avoid such contact with the same or opposite sex. Jesus is our cruciform model.

V. OUR PUBLIC WITNESS

A. *Civil Leaders*

1. Jesus willed to unjustly suffer the extreme penalty under Pontius Pilate — how much more must we obey civil authorities as ordained of God (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14). We do not evade taxes or obligations which are lawfully required (Rom. 13:7).

B. *Citizenship*

2. Praying for authorities, we model a peaceable witness for attracting people to know Christ the truth (1 Tim. 2:1-6). We endorse defending the afflicted, weak, and needy, with justice against aggressors (Ps. 72:1-4, 12-14). Influence will not be bought (Dt. 10:17). Our efforts encourage also well-informed voting and elected office.

C. *Conscience*

3. God and conscience inspire our first obedience. We reserve for God what is due only to him, and retain right to proclaim Christ and his kingdom (Dan. 3:16-18, 28; Acts 4:19, 5:29-32).

D. *Peacemakers*

4. We seek to live peaceably with all people. Jesus did not retaliate against those who harmed or insulted him (Matt. 26:51, 52; 1 Pet. 2:23). The manner of his kingdom is unlike human type (John 18:36).

E. *Encounters and Interactions*

5. Jesus befriended outcasts, healed without partiality, and pointed out God's indiscriminate good, so we open ourselves with God's love to every person, including giving our provisions for their necessities (Matt. 5:43-48, 9:10-13; Luke 17:11-18).

F. *Vocation*

6. God ennobled humans with creative capacity and privileged responsibility to work and rule together on earth as they both join with him and obey (Gen. 1:28; 2:15-17; Ps. 104:14, 23; 115:16). He endows ability and knowledge (Ex. 31:1-6; Isa. 28:24-29). God enables happiness and perhaps also prosperity (Ecc. 5:18-6:2).

God's loving provision gives peace of mind to prioritize his rule and rightness (Matt. 6:25-33). Joining Jesus in his work offers rest of soul (Matt. 11:28-30).

7. God created the earth "very good"; he tasked humans to develop their social world, and to harness and care for the natural world (Gen. 1:28, 31; 2:15). Our vocations are to provide goods and services for the common good. Learning from Jesus, and with him applying knowledge, we employ skills and utilize resources. Whatever we do is to honor God (Col. 3:17): Products and services will be beneficial and to our best ability; work always diligent, loyal, and timely; practices fair and honest; conditions safe; relationships selfless. We are God's priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) to serve open-handed, not underhanded.

G. *Money*

8. Money will not be our master, motive, means of security, or measure of success (Luke 16:12-15). Giving excels receiving (Acts 20:35). We are content with daily provision (Prov. 30:7-9; 1 Tim. 6:10). God grants the kingdom to Jesus' followers (Luke 12:32-34) so we release money's grip on us and ours on it.

H. *Our Manner of Life*

9. Jesus expects us to follow him in cross-like daily self-denying (Luke 9:23-26; 14:27). As a crucible, we expect to suffer for Jesus (Luke 6:22, 23; 2 Tim. 3:12); we are thereby blessed and should be joyful (1 Pet. 4:12-16). God's kingdom is priceless and worth everything to procure (Matt. 13:44-46). As a result, we strive to live "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27), "not being conformed to this world" but even

crucified to it through the cross-death of Jesus (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 6:14). Expecting interest from inquirers, we will prepare to winsomely explain our hope (1 Pet. 3:15-17).

I. *Sickness and Death*

10. To heal ailments, God offers prayer, medical wisdom, and spiritual counsel. We accept cross-bearing, and loving trust in the merciful rule and remedy of God in Christ. Our bodies do not belong to us (Jer. 10:23; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20), but to the God of all comfort, the Father of compassion (2 Cor. 1:3). We plead comfort for ourselves and others that relief in suffering is applied, relying always on God's grace.

J. *Self-Discipline*

11. Of primary importance is love for God with every personal dimension optimized, along with loving anyone — even 'enemies' — with compassion to aid and restore them (Matt. 22:36-40; Luke 10:25-37). Our responsibility is to activate our bodies and capacities so we are always fully alert, controlled, and able, thereby positioned to love God, and serve others without hindrance or offense to them.

12. Jesus the cross-bearer mastered self-discipline; he is our Teacher Exemplar (e.g. Luke 4:1-4, 28-30, 5:16, 9:51). Those after him extolled the same virtue (1 Cor. 6:12; Jas. 1:26; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6). Our bodies are to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1, 2); God also enables us (Tit. 2:11-12). Therefore, we (re)train ourselves to embody Jesus' character. Each body belonging to Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and must honor God (1

Cor. 6:19, 20; 9:24-27). We realize our influence on others (Rom. 14:20-21).

13. Jesus lived *on* food but did not live *for* it; his appetite was for God (John 4:32-34). He both feasted and fasted (Matt. 11:19; Luke 4:1, 2; 5:29), acting appropriate to occasion and as one either celebrating or craving God. Hunger results from following Christ but God strengthens and sustains (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 6:5; 11:27; cf. Matt. 4:2, 11). Using food, drink, or other substances is guided by the moderation of Jesus who loved and trusted God. Prudence, not proscription, also informs (Dan. 1:11-16; Mark 7:18, 19; 1 Cor. 8:8).

K. *Unity*

14. Christian: By word and deed we witness our oneness in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 3:11). Universal: Since all people are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27), we humbly respect everyone with grace, truth, and as equal to ourselves.

VI. THE PLEDGE OF OUR WITNESS

1. We affirm "Jesus is Lord" to follow him as our allegiance. We also help our spiritual leaders and each other do the same, forgiving and striving to restore each other when we falter.

2. We pledge good relationship with each other. Upon all adhering to the Covenant, we resist leaving our fellowship on any terms other than mutual love and active involvement in another body of similar Christian conviction and Christ-like character. Our pledge is free but God holds us accountable (Dt.

23:21-23; Eccl. 5:1-7). To God we pray and intercede for one another that he will continually grace us toward conformity to Jesus and have mercy on us.

RECOGNITION

The concept for the *Covenant for Life in Christ* is derived from the *Covenant for Christian Living* in the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum). In original form, the Moravian *Covenant* was the “Brotherly Agreement” of 1727 adopted by the inhabitants of the Moravian settlement at Herrnhut, Saxony (modern-day Germany). Their acceptance preceded a momentous spiritual renewal that eventuated in a worldwide mission movement.

The Allied Mission Church *Covenant for Life in Christ* is a significant revision, and its content bears little resemblance to the Moravian counterpart, except perhaps in few paragraphs and general outline. In addition, Allied Mission Church is not affiliated with the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum); however, AMC does have friendly relation and/or partnership with its heirs who are recognizably faithful to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

For a comparison, a copy of the Moravian *Covenant* can be obtained from:

Moravian Church in America
Interprovincial Board of Publications
1021 Center Street
Bethlehem, PA, US 18018