

# Bunkertown Core Beliefs, Values & Practices

Every organization has core beliefs or minimal standards which serve as guiding principles to maintain consistency, harmony, and alleviate conflicts arising from misunderstandings. The following points regarding personal accountability and social responsibility are central to the Church of the Brethren and the local congregation at Bunkertown.

**ABORTION** is murdering the innocent which belong to God. *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Hebrew רצח, murder) as stated in the Sixth Commandment. The necessity of protecting small children from harm, and the punishment for the offender was forcefully expounded by Jesus in Matthew 18:6, *“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

**ALCOHOL** and addictive behavior undermines sober vigilance against the devious stratagems of Satan who would destroy the Church by first destroying its members - mind and body. Apostle Paul reminds us that God regards our bodies as a sacred temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,”* 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. Following the deaths of the priests Nadab and Abihu by fire, God instructed Aaron, *“Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean,”* Leviticus 10:9-10.

**CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE** should be a hallmark to the secular world that we value the worth and contribution of each member of a God ordained family. Ephesians 5:21–25 provides basic guidelines for husbands and wives in a Christian family. A husband is required to love his wife in the same manner as Christ sacrificially loved the church. A wife should respect her husband and willingly submit to his Christ-like role of leadership. Fathers are admonished to raise their children in the, *“nurture and admonition of the Lord,”* Ephesians 6:4. Additionally, fathers are to provide for their families, or be regarded as *“worse than an unbeliever,”* 1 Timothy 5:8. God also expects, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise,”* Ephesians 6:1-2. Obedience to these precepts by all family members represents a successfully functioning Christian family.

**DANCING** is prohibited at Bunkertown as dancing may invite sensual thinking and sexual passions. Even ballroom dancing at wedding receptions engages one to lose sight of the purity demanded by the Holy Spirit, *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,”* 1 John 2:16. (Also by vote of Congregational Business Meeting, February 9, 2003).

**FRUIT BEARING** is the litmus test of Christian loyalty to Jesus who challenged us to be productive workers in the Kingdom of God, for Jesus stated *“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire,”* Matthew 7:19. We achieve Christian productivity by adhering to, and implementing the teachings of Christ in our daily lives. *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing,”* John 15:4-5.

**GAMBLING** is an avaricious mind-set toward worldly gain which directly subverts the entire body of Christ’s teaching. *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,”* Luke 12:15. *“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me,”* Matthew 19:21. Church of the Brethren Annual Conference addressed this issue in their 1986 Statement on Gambling, to *“Encourage all congregations to look carefully at their stewardship practices to assure that gambling, lotteries, and games of chance, however harmless-appearing, are not promoted, excused, or practiced within their fellowship.”* 1986, IV, E.

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**HOMOSEXUALITY** violates the very basic family structure established by God in Genesis 1-2 and then reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6, “*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” Every biblical mention of same sex activity employs disdainful and condemnatory language, such as found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” Same sex unions simply lack biblical foundation, tacit approval by God, or a divinely sanctioned blessing to any degree.

**INTEGRITY OF SPEECH** preserves the highest standard of love and respect for all of God’s people. Jesus stated, “*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,*” Matthew 12:37. Apostle Paul likewise affirmed, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers,*” Ephesians 4:29.

**LAW SUITS** between Christians reflects a spiritual weakness in asking the government to arbitrate spiritual disputes outside of what Jesus has taught us in Matthew 18:15-17, “*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*” Apostle Paul, likewise, stated in I Corinthians 6:1-8, “*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? ...*” Spiritual matters are best resolved through a spiritual process.

**LOVE FEAST AND COMMUNION** has been one of the most sacred ordinances to the Church of the Brethren. Holy communion involving the remembrance of Christ’s bodily suffering through the Bread and the Cup sustains our devotion. Love Feast refers to the Agape love of Christ for the Church. A typical service is composed of a fellowship meal, washing of feet, breaking of Bread, and receiving the Cup of Blessing. Each step is emphasized by Scripture, hymns, and prayer. See also Matthew 26:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.

**PEACE** and non-violent resolutions to all conflicts are primary. Jesus instructed us to care about our enemies in the same manner as God. “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,*” Matthew 5:44. Jesus gives us a very orderly approach to resolving conflicts in Matthew 18:15-17.

**SECRET SOCIETIES** governed by oath-bound allegiance are in direct violation of our primary loyalty to Jesus Christ and his Church. Jesus stated that no one can serve two masters, for they will always reverence one with disdain for the other. Jesus forcefully stated that we should not take an oath apart from devotion to God alone. “*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King,*” Matthew 5:34-36.

**SIMPLE LIVING** has been at the heart of the Brethren mind-set from the very beginning in 1708 when our founders Alexander Mack and wife Anna gave practically all of their personal wealth to sustain the new fledgling congregation. They followed the teaching of Jesus to give to the poor in order to have treasure in heaven. A simple life-style frees us from the hurried pace of consumerism and self-promotion, both of which draw us away from God. “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him,*” 1 John 2:15.