

Who are the Mennonites?

On any Sunday you will find Mennonites gathered for worship in about 61 countries around the world. With over one million members, the Mennonite Church has been in existence for more than 475 years, with a wide variety of practices and people: from a Midwest farmer, to an European architect; from the African chieftain, to the South American sociologist. Although they speak dozens of languages, the thousands of different congregations count themselves as one family of faith—one of many faith families in the Christian church.

Our Basic Beliefs

At the center of Mennonite teachings is the need to believe in Jesus Christ as the one who died and rose from the dead in order that people could live in union with God. Mennonites believe that the life and teachings of Jesus guide our daily living. They believe that the church should keep Christ's life and ministry alive in the world, just as though Christ was still living on earth: that's why they refer to the church as the "body of Christ".

Mennonites believe that the church is made of people whose sins have been forgiven and who choose to follow Christ's teachings. Mennonites believe that Christians should try to relate to each other and the world in the same loving, forgiving way that Jesus practiced. Here are highlights of seven basic beliefs:

The Bible is Central

The church tries to live in obedience to the Word of God -- the Bible. Mennonites believe that God's spirit, or "Holy Spirit," helps the community of believers understand that Word. The life and teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Bible help in interpreting the meaning of the "Old Testament" part of the Bible: "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11, RSV). The Holy Spirit uses the written Word to give new life to the church and to help people grow in faith.

New Life in Christ

Because we are human beings, we all sin: we commit wrongs, we don't do the things we should, and we're out of touch with God. In history, God sent Jesus Christ to the world so that all those who believe in Jesus Christ could receive forgiveness for all their sins, as well as the gift of a more whole life today and the promise of living forever with God. Taking part in a regular worship service enables Christians to respond to God with praise and thanks, and to live for Jesus through the week.

Voluntary Membership and Commitment to Christ

A church is strong when its members experience God's love and are wholeheartedly committed to its purposes. For that reason, "believer's baptism" is practiced to symbolize the decision of an adult to make a public commitment to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In baptism, the believer shows willingness to share the good news about Jesus by words and actions.

Reaching Out to the World

Jesus Christ said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21, RSV). He sends the church to bring "good news" to all persons throughout the world. Jesus wants his followers to help each other. As Jesus put it, "The Spirit of the Lord ... has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, ... freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind" (Luke 4:18, RSV). Mennonites also believe it's important to be concerned for both the "spiritual" and "physical" aspects of life.

Belonging to Each Other

"In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Ro. 12:5, NIV). Mennonites feel that Christians need each other for encouragement and growth, for confronting one another in a supportive way, and for help in time of crisis. The church grows in faith, unity, service, and witness when it is a caring and loving community.

Living Peacefully

As disciples of Jesus, Mennonites try to live under Christ's rule: for many this means loving the enemy and refusing to use violence or participate in military service, living peaceably with others at all levels, serving the poor and needy, and including taking risks to work actively for justice and mercy.

Helping Each Other

As members of the body of Christ, Mennonites try to care for the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of other members. "Mutual aid" takes many forms, including giving time, money, and goods in times of crisis.

Information provided by [The Mennonite Church](http://www.mennonites.org) – www.mennonites.org