

CONFESSING Together

READINGS FOR CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Liturgical Readings
based on the
1999 Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith

Winnipeg, MB Canada

KP logo

Hillsboro, KS USA

Copyright © 2000 Kindred Productions

Published simultaneously by Kindred Productions, Winnipeg Manitoba and
Kindred Productions, Hillsboro Kansas

Design: Fred Kopp, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Printed in Canada by
Kendrick Quality Printing, Winnipeg, Manitoba

International Standard Book Number: 0-921788-63-0

These readings are designed for worship services, as one way of incorporating the content of the Confession of Faith in prayers, public affirmations and statements of commitment. They are intended as antiphonal readings: either leader/congregation, or two groups of readers. Worship leaders are encouraged to use these readings creatively and prayerfully to enrich the spiritual life of our churches.

For some settings only a part of a reading might be used. For example, the section of *Article 11: Marriage, Singleness, and Family* pertaining specifically to family might be used for a parent-child dedication service. A reading could also be subdivided with interludes of silent prayer or a verse of a song. For example, *Article 10: Discipleship* could be used with a verse of “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” or the chorus of “Refiner’s Fire” after each bold-print paragraph.

Hear, O people:

**The LORD our God, the LORD is one!
Almighty in power,
perfect in wisdom,
righteous in judgment,
overflowing in steadfast love.**

The LORD is our Sovereign,
who reigns over all things visible and invisible.

The LORD is our Shepherd,
who rescues the lost and the helpless.

The LORD is a consuming fire, perfect in holiness.
The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in tender mercy.

Holy and pure is the Father in all His ways!
**Creator of heaven and earth,
in whom we live and move and have our being;
who hears us when we pray,
who opens to us the way of salvation,
who unites us in the one family of faith.**

Holy and true is the Son in all His ways!
**Image of the invisible God,
eternal Word who was made flesh,
conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary
to be Servant of all and Lord of all.**

**Made like us in every way, yet without sin,
He suffered, was crucified and buried,
and was raised to new life on the third day.
Savior of the world,
who loves us with an everlasting love,
who reveals the fullness of the Father,
who intercedes for us His followers,
and calls us to be His witnesses
until He returns in glory to judge the world.**

Holy and wise is the Spirit in all His ways!
**Power and presence of God,
divine Gift to all God's people,
who convicts us of sin,**

**gives us the new birth,
guides us into all truth.
Enriches us with gifts for service,
and cultivates the fruit of maturity.
Divine Comforter and Counselor,
who prays for us when we do not know how,
who baptizes us into the one body,
who gives a foretaste of the glory to come.**

Blessed be the name of the LORD!

**Blessed be the name of the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever! Amen.**

Article 2: REVELATION OF GOD

The glory of God is written boldly in the skies,
carved deeply into the landscape of this earth.

**Lord, since creation You have shown all people
that You exist, and have all power.**

**Merciful God, open our eyes
to see the heights and depth and breadth
of Your glory and Your steadfast love
which fills the world.**

In the fullness of time,
God revealed Himself by the Son, Jesus Christ,
who is the brightness of God's glory,
the true likeness of God's essence.

**Christ, the law and the prophets look forward to You,
hoping for the day of Your arrival.**

The New Testament calls us to follow You and abide in You.

We believe that all Scriptures are inspired by God.
They are profitable for teaching,
for pointing out error and setting us straight,
and for training in right living,
so that everyone who belongs to God
may be well-equipped for every good work.

**Almighty God,
Your Spirit moved among the ancient prophets and writers,
reminding them of the truth,
shaping the eternal message of salvation.**

**Move among us now, and speak to us,
so that we might hear Your Word with understanding,
and respond with obedient hearts.**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Beauty erupted out of blackness,
perfection sparkled where chaos once reigned,
a universe clean and pure.**

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it;
the world, and all that fills it.

**O Lord, You delight in Your creation,
and all creation delights in Your care
and sustaining presence.**

But who are we, that You should take notice of us,
we poor mortals, that You even look at us?

**O God, You were not content with beauty alone.
You desired love, and created us in Your image
to love You and live with You.
Male and female You made us, in Your image.
You gave us the world, to name it and tame it,
to enjoy it and offer it back to You,
in ministries of exploration and care.**

Holy God, we failed You at the beginning,
we have sinned ever since.
As sin entered the world through one man,
and death through sin,
so life and salvation have entered
through Jesus Christ.

**God's light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness cannot put it out.
We live with the pain of Eden's curse,
we live with the promise of Eden regained.**

All creation waits with bated breath,
for the glorious return of Christ,
who makes all things new;
and God shall be all in all.

**Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad,
let the sea roar, let the fields celebrate!
Then shall all the trees of the field rejoice before the Lord,
for He comes,
He comes bringing justice to all the earth.**

Article 4: SIN AND EVIL

Out of the depths we cry to You, O Lord;
in Your mercy, hear our prayers.

**We confess that formerly we were dead in sin,
cut off from You,
cut off from each other,
rebels wandering in a wilderness of our own making.
We long to put off the sin that so easily entangles,
but in our own strength, Lord, we cannot.**

Father in heaven, do not lead us into temptation!

**The human heart is deceitful above all things;
how dare we trust in ourselves?
Pride and greed make their home within,
and we so quickly turn to worship anything but You.**

Father in heaven, rescue us from the Evil One!

**The devil prowls around,
like a lion seeking someone to devour.
Powers and principalities rage against us,
seeking to deceive and enslave.
Yet greater is He that is in us,
than he that is in the world.**

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Article 5: SALVATION

We believe that there is no name under heaven
that can save us, except the name of Jesus.

**For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish,
but have eternal life.**

Since that sad day when sin entered the world,
indeed, before the foundation of the world,
our God has been a saving God:
covering our shame,
covering our sin,
covenanting in faithfulness
to receive all who call upon the name of the Lord.

**We were too weak and blind to help ourselves;
but while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.**

O blessed cross, our tree of life,
on which was shed the precious blood of Jesus,
in which we find the healing of the nations.

**In Christ we are the new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!
Together with all creation,
we eagerly await the day
when the heavens and earth will be renewed,
and we will gather in joyous worship
around the throne of God,
singing songs of thanks
to the Christ who was slain, and now lives.**

We confess that all must receive salvation
as a gracious gift of God.

**For it is by grace that we are saved,
through faith, and not by works,
so that no one can boast.**

We confess that all whom God adopts
are brought together as sisters and brothers,
one new people of God.

**When we are together with all the saints,
we grasp how wide and long and high and deep
is the love of Christ.**

We confess that all who receive the love of God
respond with lives of service and beauty.

**For we are God's works of art,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works.**

Give thanks to the Lord!

God's steadfast love endures forever!

Article 6: NATURE OF THE CHURCH

No one can lay a foundation
other than the one which was laid,
which is Christ Jesus.

**He has called us from darkness into His glorious light.
He builds us into a holy temple,
a house of prayer for all the nations,
and the gates of hell will never overpower it.**

You are the body of Christ
and individually members of it.

**God's Spirit makes us one,
breathing unity into diversity,
breaking down the walls that divide.**

There is neither male nor female,
nor any walls of nation, race, or class,
but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body.

**We commit ourselves
to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,
as we live out our mission to be Christ's hands and feet,
ears and mouth, mind and heart,
His body for a broken world.**

You are a holy people, a royal priesthood,
God's special property, created to do His will.

**We gather to build up the body of believers
and to make God's praise glorious!
We celebrate God's faithfulness and grace,
we hear the word of the Lord, bread for our soul,
we offer prayers as incense to the Lord,
we prod each other on to love and good works,
we seek God's will for our life and mission,
we baptize, eat and drink as Christ commanded,
awaiting with joy the Great Banquet to come.**

Bear one another's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ.

**And when we fail, merciful God,
bring us lovingly back to Your truth,
so that we might learn again
how to bring each other back from sin and error.
We commit ourselves to the common good of Your people,
humbly submitting to one another,**

according to our Lord's example and Spirit.

When Christ was enthroned at the right hand of God,
He poured out His Holy Spirit upon His followers,
men and women, young and old, according to the promise of the Father.

We receive God's Spirit as the gift and promise of eternal life.

**We yield ourselves to the Spirit,
that God might work through us,
in our ministry to the body and our mission to the world.**

God gives the church spiritual gifts
to equip the whole body for ministry.
Those with gifts of leadership have a high calling,
as models of Christ-like living
and servants entrusted with the care and equipping of God's people.

**We receive those whom God has given to us
and commit ourselves to pray for them,
to support them and correct them in a spirit of love.**

**Bless them, O God,
bless us through them,
that Your people might be built up
and Your good news announced to all the world.**

Article 7: MISSION OF THE CHURCH

You are the light of the world!
Let your light shine,
so that all people might see it
and praise your Father in heaven.

**God, we love You and live for You.
Help us to love our neighbors as ourselves,
sharing the good news with boldness,
showing the good news with deeds of limitless love.
We are not ashamed of this good news:
it is Your power for salvation,
to everyone who believes.**

All authority in heaven and on earth
is given to our Lord Jesus Christ.
Therefore, go and summon all nations to follow Him,
baptizing them and teaching them
to observe all that He commanded.

**Let the nations praise You, O God,
let all the nations praise You!**

Spirit of God,
fill us with power to be Your witnesses.

**We offer ourselves to the Lord of the Harvest.
As ambassadors for Christ,
purify us and use us to proclaim His salvation.
We commit ourselves
to spread the good news of peace with God
to those who are near
and to those afar off.
Strengthen us to work with joy
as we look forward to the Day of Harvest,
when the redeemed will gather in God's presence
to celebrate forever the boundless riches
of Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Article 8: CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Jesus our Lord was baptized
to fulfill all righteousness.
All who turn to Jesus are also called
to pass through the waters
and embark on a life of obedience and abundant joy.

**Blessed is the one
who hears the call of Jesus and follows.
Blessed is the one
cleansed by Jesus' forgiving love,
washed and made new by His Spirit,
welcomed into the Father's family.**

Baptism is a public sign of repentance
and the forgiveness of sins.

**Baptism signifies that we have died with Christ,
that we might also be raised to newness of life in Him.**

Baptism is a pledge to serve Christ
according to the gifts God has given.

**Baptism announces that we belong to God:
we take His name upon ourselves,
and His people become our people.**

So submit yourselves to God,
and commit yourselves to the church family
that God has entrusted with your care.

[optional blessing for baptismal candidates:]

**May the Spirit descend like a dove,
and the blessing of God rest upon you:
"Well done, my dear child,
with you I am well pleased!"**

Article 9: LORD'S SUPPER

Taste and see that the Lord is good!
Jesus says, "I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.
Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

**Listen! The Lord who fed the thousands on the hillside,
who fed the twelve in the upper room—
listen, He stands at the door and knocks;
if we hear His voice and open the door,
He will come in and eat with us.**

Jesus invites all His disciples to feast at this table.
All who are members of God's covenant family,
living in obedience to God
and with integrity towards their spiritual brothers and sisters,
gather to celebrate their communion with Christ and each other.

**Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us!
Forgive our sins:
our pride and self-sufficiency,
our bitterness and division.
Help us to examine ourselves,
and give us the grace to repent.
We will leave the gifts of our worship at the altar
until we have made right that which needs mending
with You or in the church.
And then, O Lord, Your kindness and forgiveness
will feed our very souls.**

On the night He was betrayed
the Lord Jesus took the bread,
gave thanks, broke it, and said,
"This is my body, which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

**Father, we bless You for the bread,
for this sign of Jesus' body,
for His life of compassion
and His example of humble service.
This loaf unites us in the one Body,
and strengthens us for ministry.
Lord, remember Your Body,
and deliver us from evil.**

In the same way, Jesus took the cup,
blessed it, and said,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me."

**Father, we bless You for the cup,
for this sign of Jesus' shed blood,
for His death on the cross
and His sacrifice for sin.**

**This cup welcomes us into a covenant of forgiveness,
and promises us the riches of eternal life,
for Christ, our Passover lamb,
has been sacrificed,
and we have been brought over
from death into life.**

As often as you do this,
you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus calls us to walk with Him,
to follow Him.

**Through the power of Your Spirit,
we will take up our cross,
we will live ready to suffer,
to surrender our rights, even to die,
for the cause of Christ our King.**

Jesus calls us to walk with each other.
Do not neglect to meet together,
but encourage each other to love and good works.

**God, You have given us to each other,
that together we might discover
Your holy and perfect will.**

**We ask for wisdom in time of uncertainty,
for courage in time of difficulty,
for humility in time of defeat.**

**We commit ourselves to a life of discipline,
ready to receive correction and offer encouragement
as the Lord directs,
so that we might be built up
into a holy and beautiful temple,
pleasing to God in every way.**

As followers of Christ, we are also "friends of God,"
and enemies of the darkness that rules this present age.
Rescue us from its seductive power,
empower us to live boldly as citizens of the Age to Come.

We reject the world's use of power to oppress and impress.

**Fill us with Your love and humility;
make us peacemakers, who know the power of sacrifice.**

We reject the world's desire to hoard and squander wealth.

**Fill us with Your generosity;
make us poor in spirit, who know the wealth of simplicity.**

We reject the world's lust for pleasure and lack of self-control.

**Fill us with Your purity;
make us to hunger and thirst after righteousness,
as those who know the pleasure of feasting on God's will.**

May we grow to be like Christ,
thinking His thoughts, speaking His words,
embodying His passion to serve and to save the lost.

**As Christ called us,
we want to joyfully call others to walk with us,
and together follow Him in this new life.**

Article 11: MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS AND FAMILY

We believe that God designed human life to begin in a family, and be blessed by the family.

Even more, God desires all people to become part of the family of faith.

The blessing of God is on those who receive God's gift of singleness.

We bless them and receive them fully as members and ministers in the family of faith.

The blessing of God is on those who receive God's gift of marriage.

We bless them and ask that God would empower them to love, forgive, and submit to their partners in the spirit of Christ.

In the beginning, God established marriage as the union of one man and one woman for life-long companionship, intimacy, and the nurture of children.

We commit ourselves to uphold the honor of the marriage covenant.

O Lord, keep us from temptation.

Strengthen us to flee any desire for sexual union beyond the bonds of marriage.

And fill us with compassion and wisdom

to bring healing to the faltering and the fallen.

The blessing of God is on those who receive God's gift of children.

We bless them and ask that God would strengthen them for the many challenges of parenting.

May they bring up their children to love and serve God, by instructing them in the faith, disciplining them with gentleness, blessing them with favor, and not provoking them to anger. May their children respond

**with love, respect, and obedience,
maturing as believers who take their own place
in the family of faith.**

God in His mercy established government
to promote the well-being of all people.

**We commit ourselves to pray for our leaders,
and to work for justice, truth, and righteousness
in our homes,
in our communities,
and in all the nations of the world.
We ask for the Spirit's guidance
to make us keenly aware
of those who suffer discrimination and injustice.
In serving them, we are serving Christ.**

God requires governments to uphold and bless what is good,
and restrain and punish what is evil.

**We commit ourselves to obey all laws
that do not conflict with the Word of God.
We grieve for all acts of violence
and all victims of evil.
We deplore the loss of life that comes from violence.
In the spirit of Christ,
we seek to bring God's justice
by reconciling victims and offenders.
We seek to be truthful and gracious in all we say,
avoiding the practice of swearing oaths,
but letting our Yes be Yes
and our No be No.**

The citizenship of believers is in heaven,
and God's Kingdom demands absolute allegiance.

**We seek the well-being of our governments,
but reject overbearing nationalism
as an idolatrous claim for our loyalties,
and an affront to the God of all nations.
We also reject membership in any secret society
as an affront to the unity of the church of Christ.
We commit ourselves to always live lives
worthy of our heavenly citizenship,
for it has been purchased for us
with the priceless blood of Jesus.**

Article 13: LOVE AND NONRESISTANCE

Greater love has no one than this—
to lay down your life for your neighbor.
Jesus has left us His example,
that we should follow in His steps.

**For Christ is our peace,
who demolished all divisions
and made us one new family
united by His one Spirit in the bond of peace.
We proclaim that our allegiance to the name of Christ
is higher and stronger than any other loyalty.**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in the one Body.

**Christ, let Your word dwell in us richly,
that we might teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.
Grant us courage to make peace among ourselves,
remembering that You ask us to leave even our acts of worship,
so that we might be reconciled to each other.**

Blessed are the peacemakers
for they shall be called the children of God.

**Lord God,
fill us with the love that flows from Your heart,
that we might be agents of reconciliation in a broken world,
ambassadors of the Prince of Peace in all our ways.
Give us the patience to wait on Your judgments,
rather than taking vengeance ourselves.
Give us the strength to yield,
returning evil with good,
and trusting in the power of Your love,
rather than our own love of power.**

Jesus warned that in the last days
there would be wars and rumors of wars.

**Lord, strengthen Your children to be a sign to the world
that one day You will bring an end to all war.
Nations will beat their swords into plowshares;
weapons of war shall become tools for peace,
and the Tree of Life shall be given for the healing of the nations.
But while we wait for that Day,
free our hearts—and our mouths—
to bless and pray for those who persecute us.**

**Help us to live as people of peace,
and deliver us from the time of testing.**

Article 14: THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

All human life belongs to God.

**We have been created in the image of God,
crowned with dignity and honor.**

God opposes every action and attitude
which devalues human life.

**Since the beginning of time,
God has shown Himself
as a shield for the defenseless,
caring for the poor and needy,
providing for the widow and orphan,
comforting the sick and lonely.
Spirit of God, use us as Your instruments
for justice, peace, and blessing.**

O God, You are Lord over life and death.
When You open Your hand to us,
we are filled with abundance;
when You take away our breath,
we die and return to dust.

**Lord, You were present at the moment of our creation,
for You lovingly shaped us in our mother's womb.
We praise You, for we are wonderfully made!
Your care over our mortal body is unending.
It extends from that earliest spark of life
to our final breath.**

God has given to us
individuals gifted in medical sciences and care-giving
who aid in His work of healing.

**We receive them as a blessing to the human race.
We pray that God would use them
to promote the well-being of all people.
But we reject any medical procedure designed to take life
as an attempt to undermine God's authority over life and death.
As God's children, we say with confidence:
whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.
Teach us to number our days aright, O Lord,
that we might gain a heart of wisdom.**

Article 15: STEWARDSHIP

In the beginning,
God placed man and woman in the garden
to tend it and guard it.

Today,
God still entrusts us
with the care and responsible use
of our world and its resources.

**We receive this task as a sacred trust,
and will manage our lives
in ways that honor God.**

**As stewards of God's gifts,
we commit ourselves to using the earth's abundance
to meet human need.**

**O Lord, save us from self-destruction fueled by greed,
protect us from unjust exploitation of the land,
keep us from destroying the beauty of Eden!**

All that we have is God's,
time, talents, and possessions;
and without God we are nothing.
We worship and follow the One who,
though He was rich,
for our sakes became poor,
that we might become rich in Him.

Our lasting treasure is in heaven, O Lord.

Teach us to live lightly with our earthly treasure.

**Forgive our preoccupation with comfort and luxury,
forgive our divided loyalty between God and Wealth.**

Free us from anxiety over food and drink and clothing.

**Empower us to live simply,
content in every circumstance:**

well-fed or hungry, having plenty or being in need.

**We commit ourselves to a life of
cheerful, regular, and sacrificial giving,
managing all that we have and are
for the glory of God.**

Article 16: THE LORD'S DAY , WORK, AND REST

In six days the Lord God made the heavens and the earth, and everything in them.

**O Lord, You are the carpenter of creation,
the weaver of worlds.**

**You have blessed us, Your creatures, with labor,
and ask us to work honestly and with integrity,
employing our skills in ways that tell the world
that we are serving You.**

**Help us to treat all workers with respect,
and remember those who are without work,
that they may find their true calling in You.**

On the seventh day God finished all the work of His hands, and He rested from all His labors.

**O Lord, You thought it a good thing
to pause,
reflect,
enjoy
what You had done.**

Help us to do the same.

Help us to rest, thankful for our daily bread.

Help us to rest, enjoying a sweet foretaste of eternal peace.

**Help us to rest, relying on your goodness,
and not on our own activity.**

**Help us to worship You, the giver of every perfect gift,
and slow us down**

so that we can

be still and know that You are God.

On the first day of creation, God said "Let there be light!"

On the day of new creation, God said,

"Let the light of Christ shine out of darkness,
the glory of God in the face of Jesus!"

**We celebrate Jesus' triumph over the grave,
by gathering on the first day of the week,
for praise and prayer.**

**We celebrate the promised gift from the Father,
the Holy Spirit poured out on God's people,
by gathering on the first day of the week,
for teaching and sharing.**

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
No one comes to the Father except by Me.

**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.**

**O Lord, fill us with passion,
fill us with wisdom,
to proclaim Your name
to the ends of the earth.**

O Lord, ever since You made this world,
Your handiwork shouts out Your glory;
Your signature has never been erased.
Your presence and power are evident
to all who have eyes to see.

**Just as we confess that Christ is the Truth,
so we confess that echoes of God's truth
might be found in all places and times.
Open our ears, that we might listen and learn
from all the human family.
In the same way, open our mouths,
that we also might humbly share
what we have seen and heard and touched.
We desire that all people would be brought
from darkness to light,
from bondage to freedom,
from unknown gods to the love of Jesus.**

Almighty God, You desire that no one
should be eternally destroyed,
but that all should come to new life in Christ.

**Even so, there is a way that ends in death.
We confess that those who are without Christ
are under the judgment of God.
The Judge of all the earth
will do what is right.**

For the wages of sin is death,
**but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The words of Him who is faithful and true:
Surely, I am coming soon!

**The end of this age is drawing near,
and we live as a people of hope.
We await the appearing of Christ the King,
who comes to bring justice to the earth.**

All around we see the work of the Enemy:
war and destruction, famine and death,
increasing more and more as the Day approaches.

**We rejoice that the Enemy has been conquered,
and that Christ will reign
forever and ever.**

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
Christ has broken the power of death,
and therefore we will not fear.

**We long for the day
when we will take off these mortal rags,
and put on the glorious robe of immortality,
that we might be with the Lord forever.**

When Christ returns, the dead shall be raised,
and the living shall be transformed.

**The righteous shall awaken to eternal life,
the wicked, to judgment and death.**

On the day of resurrection,
we shall all stand before the judgment throne of God.

**We yearn to hear the great words of welcome:
"Well done, O good and faithful servant.
Enter into your Master's delight!"**

**But yet, Lord, over the many centuries,
Your children have waited and watched,
prayed and hoped.
In our spirits we ask,
How long, O Lord?
When will be the day of Your appearing?**

It is not for us to know the times or seasons.
The form of this world is already fading away,

and the Lord is not slow about His promise.
God is patient, not wanting any to perish,
but wanting all to receive eternal life.

**Therefore we will watch and pray,
according to His promise,
waiting for the new heavens and the new earth,
where righteousness is at home.
We will gather in worship around God's throne,
and praise and adore the God of our salvation,
for ever and ever.
Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**