

toward more righteousness. Furthermore, a new element of church life had sprung up nearby in Lancaster County. This group was openly advocating that it was the traditionalism of the Mennonites that was causing hypocrisy, problems in relationships, and spiritual defeat.

With this in mind, after much prayer and soul searching, the Lebanon District ministry decided on a proactive course of action. They decided to analyze church goals which motivate groups. This would help evaluate why action was taken on certain issues and why battle lines formed where they did. The District ministry decided to clearly identify where they wished to come out in church life, in time, and in eternity.

It was agreed to share this mission statement in two congregations of the district. Then a questionnaire was given out. The purpose of the questionnaire was to help our people think through the issues and solidify why they were in the church they were in. We held these meetings in February of 1991. This evaluation is written in the inside fold of this brochure.

Some felt the lengthy disagreements of the conferring fellowship was a personality conflict. The Lebanon District believed this evaluation would help determine and reveal whether the conflict was personality driven or principle driven. If it was principle driven, then rallying around principle would bring us together. When people find they believe the same, they readily lay aside differences. If however, the conflict was because of difference in vision, or because of personality, then clearly identifying truth would only intensify the conflict.

With this in mind, another more lengthy commentary on the analysis was also written and shared with the bishops of the larger setting. There was much discussion on the bishop board, mostly seeking to discredit that church groups goals could be identified and evaluated in such a manner. Then, without our knowledge and/or consent, a minister outside the local Lebanon District mailed the expanded document to every ordained brother of the conferring fellowship.

The reaction was tumultuous. Of course in a time of church stress many factors enter in, and the conflict was not

entirely over vision. However, what received the focus was the efforts to crystallize the motivating vision of our church. Eventually the bishop board demanded the withdrawal of the influence of this letter, or else disciplinary action would be taken. When it was shared that conscientiously the letter could not be withdrawn, then the board moved forward with their discipline. In a bishop meeting held August 26, 1991 the minute was passed, "That we work out a separation in which the brethren Aaron, Sidney and Stephen would provide leadership to those ordained who support them..."

This is the story in brief behind the chart on the inside of this folder. Since this evaluation is the work of man, it is not infallible. However, it is the history of our Pilgrim Conference. It is a history that should be evaluated by each member of each rising generation.

This vision has not solved all our problems. In fact, since it has created new ones, we might be tempted to abandon it. Any clear vision must be mixed with faith and humility. It will not do to rest on a worthy history. No generation yet has been exempt from the suffering of the cross and needs to pay for the vision in their day.

What does a vision like this do? It calls for members to be devoted to the Bible, not just as a creed, but as a Book to study and meditate upon. It calls for a people who will take this Book into their families, then to their communities, and finally all over the world. It asks for respect to forefathers, but when times or culture changes, changes may be made in a more Biblical direction. In this way it sits uncomfortably in the "Mennonite drift" which gradually accommodates to worldliness. Changing only in a Scriptural direction confronts fads and fashions, it confronts the casual and grunge look of our present generation. It confronts the lukewarmness of affluence. It calls for constant vigilance and discipleship.

What will be the future of this vision? Every member of the PMC helps to make that decision. May the Lord guide and direct us in our prayer. May we today make the decisions that will bring us and our posterity joy in the ages of eternity.

Per HSE
June 7, 2012

REVIEWING THE VISION

OF THE

PILGRIM MENNONITE CONFERENCE

Every church group has a goal or foundational platform. This may be a written mission statement or an unspoken understanding. Since the church is made up of many individuals that goal may be quite diversified. A clear and focused goal coupled with spiritual graces such as humility and faith produces harmonious church life.

A score of years have passed since the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference was founded. A new generation of youth and members from other groups may have little or no idea that the PMC was actually born of the writing down of such a mission statement. Let's review that story.

In the Spring of 1991, the Lebanon District of our former group setting was in disarray. The brethren Aaron Shank and Sidney Gingrich had made earnest efforts to have peaceful church life. Most of us admired how they had served the district with humility and faithfulness. In spite of their efforts, we witnessed repeated criticisms coming from certain areas of the larger conferring fellowship. Along with that, when new issues came up, it was almost predictable that disagreement would develop along lines of principle.

We also witnessed spiritual brethren growing disillusioned with conservative Mennonite church life. They did not believe that becoming more traditional was necessarily a move

Group	A	B	C	D	E
Primary Goal	To maintain traditional Mennonite practices.	To maintain traditional Mennonite practices.	To build a Biblical Spiritual church.	To be a Biblical spiritual church.	To celebrate Christian liberties.
Secondary Goal		To keep the mentality spiritual.	To make application to the scriptures with respect to our Mennonite heritage.		
Authorization	A rigid adherence to customs and practices of the past, even preserving practices that conflict with the Word of God.	Effort is put forth to follow the Scriptures but if there is some conflict between the Word and the traditional Mennonite way, the tradition always will supercede.	Effort is made to exalt the Word of God and apply it in the traditional manner of the Mennonite church, but if in any way there is found conflict between the two, the Scriptures are followed. Furthermore, the Bible is studied and sought to be applied even in areas not formerly noticed or given emphasis to.	Effort is made to apply the Word of God but no preference is given to any particular historical Christian heritage. All Christian heritages are considered viable and worthwhile.	Effort is made to teach the Bible, but few direct applications are made.
Salvation	Salvation based on outward conformity to group practices, with no teaching or belief in assurance of salvation.	Assurance of salvation is taught, but is reserved for those who come out with the same thinking and practices of the group.	Assurance of salvation is taught and believed but is reserved for those who maintain a relationship with Jesus, pursue biblical discipleship, and bring themselves under the authority of a Biblical church.	Assurance of salvation is guaranteed to those who believe in Jesus and practice discipleship regardless of whether or not they bring themselves under the authority of a church fellowship.	Assurance of salvation is guaranteed to all who believe in Jesus.
Group loyalty	Strong emphasis on group loyalty, so much that if one leaves the group his salvation is questioned, even if he continues to live in Biblical discipleship.	Group loyalty is emphasized, and if one challenges the status quo whether it be from the Bible or not, he may face severe rejection. Uniformity is stressed and those who would differ from an unwritten norm are regarded as rebellious.	Loyalty for the Lord Jesus and His Word are the foremost emphasis of the teaching, and a submission one to another is promoted as decisions and applications need to be made. Loyal opposition is welcomed if it is not given in a spirit of contention, but in an effort to honor the Word. Other church groups are recognized if they are sound in doctrine and practice even though some applications are different.	Teaching that would build loyalty to one particular heritage is reflected against.	No effort is made to preserve or appreciate practices from the past.
Personal conviction	Conviction for certain practices is built by strong rejection for anyone who dares to suggest or to practice anything different.	Conviction is built by appeal to the group consensus and Scripture verses are added to give the teachings extra support.	Conviction is built by appealing to the Word of God, expressing strong personal example and practicing Biblical discipline. Areas where no Biblical principles are at stake are left to Christian Liberty.	Conviction is built by teaching the Word of God, and strong personal example. Most of life*s daily choices are left to individual decision.	Convictions are left up to the individual and are largely considered unnecessary.
Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit exists only as a theological point. Practically no place is given for His work in the life of individuals.	The Holy Spirit speaks through group voice. There can be no individual prophetism, for all revelation is given through the group.	The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word, and will never contradict its authority. He also works in the believer*s life through; authorities, (including the church), circumstances, and a still small voice within; but never contrary to the Word.	The Holy Spirit will not override the Word, but will rule and guide the believer in such a powerful way so as to make church standards or discipline largely unnecessary.	The Holy Spirit continues to give revelations as authoritative as the Scriptures and may permit certain Bible teaching to be regarded as obsolete.
Missions	Mission efforts and personal evangelism are practically nonexistent.	Mission work and personal evangelism are engaged in with the intention of reproducing as nearly as possible the identical applications of the group.	Mission work and personal evangelism are encouraged, and converts are expected to subscribe to the doctrines of the Word as understood by the church doing the mission work. In other cultural settings some applications may vary if they better illustrate the teachings of the New Testament in that setting.	Mission work and personal evangelism are enthusiastically engaged in with effort to bring new disciples into obedience to the Word.	Missions and personal work are emphasized but no visible expression of discipleship is expected.