

BFL statement of affirmations for study conference 2011

As your board of faith and life for the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, we feel encouraged by what we have heard at this study conference on “The Mystery of the Cross.” We affirm the openness with which we have spoken to one another and listened to one another, particularly as we have studied Scripture together. We sense a mutual respect and desire to edify one another that befits our relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We affirm the reality that there is a healthy diversity within our fellowship – members coming from different backgrounds and cultures, across regions and within regions, proclaiming the fullness of the cross in varied ways that bring the truth of God’s revelation to bear on contexts with sensitivity, grace, and prophetic boldness. In all of this, we see a unity that underlies our diversity. We recognize in this a parallel to how biblical passages depict the gospel being brought to bear in distinct yet complementary ways to different hearers.

We affirm the common desire to build on the foundation of our theological convictions regarding the cross in order to holistically proclaim the gospel to our nation and participate in the work of reconciling Canada to God in Jesus Christ. This is because the salvation made possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ is the only hope for humanity. We believe that our theology mandates this common commitment, and that it helps to unite us in the work of the Kingdom of God.

We affirm that through the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God himself graciously atoned for the sins of the human race, demonstrating ultimate love toward us even while acting in full accord with divine justice. We are renewed and transformed by the person of Christ for the mission of reconciliation now made possible. We have confidence in our proclamation of this reconciling work because Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers against which we struggle as we contend for the gospel in this life. We look ahead to the consummation of God’s amazing work on our behalf, and await the ultimate fellowship we will enjoy with God and with one another in eternity, all made possible through the mystery of the cross.

Some of the complications in our theological conversations parallel the differences in terminology we have discussed between systematic and biblical theology. Some of us define atonement strictly around the death of Christ on the cross, while others look more broadly to the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. As a result, what for some is talk about the implications of the atonement is talk about the atonement itself. But we are affirming the same truths, despite differences in our theologies and terminology. And for that reason we are encouraged as a BFL, and pray that you are encouraged as you move forward together as Mennonite Brethren.

—Board of faith and life, Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches