

Declaration of the Marginal Mennonite Society

We are Marginal Mennonites, and we're not ashamed. We're marginal because no self-respecting Mennonite organization would have us. (Yet we consider ourselves legitimate heirs to the Anabaptist tradition.)

We reject creeds and doctrines, because they're man-made, created for the purpose of excluding people. Their primary function is to determine *who's in* and *who's out*.

We are inclusive. There are no dues or fees for membership. The only requirement is the desire to identify as Marginal Mennonite. If you say you're a Marginal Mennonite, that's good enough for us!

We see God as Mother as well as Father, a heavenly parent who cares for all her children. (*Isaiah 49:15*: "Can a woman forget her nursing baby, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I won't forget you.")

We like Jesus. A lot. The real Jesus. The human teacher who moved around in space & time. The Galilean sage who was obsessed with the Commonwealth of God. The wandering wise man who said "*Become passersby!*" (*Gospel of Thomas 42*).

We believe the Commonwealth of God is a state of being, a state of transformed consciousness, available to everyone. (*Luke 17:21*: "It will not be said to be over here or over there. For God's Commonwealth is inside you & around you.")

We are universalists. We believe the concept of "hell" was invented by the church to control people. In our view, everyone who's ever lived gets a seat at the celestial banquet table. We claim kinship in this belief with Anabaptist leader Hans Denck, and Brethren leader Alexander Mack.

We oppose the proselytizing of non-Christians. In our eyes, religious diversity is beautiful. It would be a shame if all Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Jains, Pagans, Pastafarians, etc., were converted to Christianity. So we reject evangelistic crusades and missionary programs, no matter how well-meaning they claim to be. (*Matt. 23:15*: "Woe to you hypocrites! You scour land & sea to make a single convert. And when you do, you make that person more a child of Gehenna than you are.")

We endorse the "Sermon on the Mount." Or, rather, about half of it: those sayings identified by modern scholarship as most authentic. Especially the ones on the following themes:

1. **Nonviolence** (*Matt. 5:39-40/Luke 6:29*);
2. **Generosity** (*Matt. 5:42a/Luke 6:30*);
3. **Unconditional love** (*Matt. 5:44/Luke 6:27-28*);
4. **Universalism** (*Matt. 5:45b/Luke 6:35d*);
5. **Mercy** (*Matt. 5:48/Luke 6:36*);
6. **Forgiveness** (*Matt. 6:14-15/Luke 6:37c/Mark 11:25*);
7. **Non-attachment to things** (*Matt. 6:19-21/Luke 12:33-34/Gospel of Thomas 76:3*);
8. **Freedom from anxiety** (*Matt. 6:25-30/Luke 12:22-28/Gospel of Thomas 36:1-2*);
9. **Non-judgment** (*Matt. 7:3-5/Luke 6:41-42/Gospel of Thomas 26:1-2*);
10. **Compassion** (*Matt. 7:9-11/Luke 11:11-13*).

We are pacifists, in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, Vincent Harding, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Jeannette Rankin, Jane Addams, Leo Tolstoy, Adin Ballou, Lucretia Mott, George Fox, Margaret Fell, the nonviolent Anabaptists, and of course Jesus.

We are allies of the poor and dispossessed. We're dismayed by the rampant consumerism and materialism of our age, and the way mainstream Mennonites have embraced the world's money system.

We are humanists, feminists, and freethinkers. We are gay, carefree, and fabulous (or try to be). We believe in art, evolution, revolution, relativity, synchronicity, serendipity, the scientific method, and putty tats. We value irreverence, outrageousness, and a strong cup of tea.

We don't want to take ourselves too seriously. As someone once said: "God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh." For us, hilariousness is next to godliness.

This Declaration is not a creed or doctrinal statement. It carries no weight of authority. We are anti-authoritarian.

The above "beliefs" are suggestions only. We could be wrong.

The Marginal Mennonite Society was created in February 2011. This Declaration last revised Nov. 25, 2015.

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