

Towards a covenant of loving relationships at Erb Street Mennonite Church

Who We Are

In 2004, our congregation felt called to create a **Vision Statement**, which articulates our understanding of **who we are**, and are committed to being, as Erb Street Mennonite Church.

In it, we describe our self-identity: a community of diverse people sharing a “common purpose of following Jesus Christ,” who are “united and empowered by the Holy Spirit,” who are “a living expression of Anabaptist values – revealing God’s love, and demonstrating acceptance, peace, humility and hope,” and who “create a place of refuge, support and guidance, so that all persons in our congregational community may find restoration and wholeness.”

Our congregation refers to its Vision Statement in a variety of settings, and for a broad range of purposes. The statement can be found [here](#), on the church website.

How We Are

Who we are as a community comes to life through our actions. This includes our interactions, which are expressions of our **relationships**.

Our Vision Statement describes a congregational identity that regards relationships as a sacred trust, rooted in the love of God. And so, to be authentically who we understand ourselves to be, who we say we are, our vision should show itself in our relationships: **how we are** with one another, how we relate to one another through our communication.

Towards this, and also acknowledging past conflicts, we have felt called to create, affirm, and profess a **covenant** to be people who seek **loving relationships**.

The spirit and the content of this **covenant of loving relationships** is guided by the people of Erb Street, who, through a congregational consultation process in 2022, determined its core principles and themes, with an emphasis on love, respect, trust, listening, honesty, openness, care, and gathering together.

The intention of this covenant is to be both an **encouragement** that helps to orient us towards mutual compassion and understanding, and also a **description** of the conspicuous character of our relationships.

Our policies, including the Pastor/Member/Staff/Lay Leader Feedback Process and the ESMC Safe Church Policy, help us live out the values of the covenant in our shared church life together.

Love in Thought, Deed, and Word:

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God is Love, and the love of God has called us together.

For love, God imagined the world with us in it, from the beginning, and so God spoke us into being, in God's image.

God's child Jesus has come to us in our likeness, and as the Word made flesh, and as Love incarnate. Jesus has called to us by name, beloved children of God.

Love has called us into relationship, with God and with one another.

As God's people at Erb Street Mennonite Church, called and gathered together, we believe our relationships are a sacred trust through which the Spirit of God works, so that we may minister to one another, and to the world.

In thought, deed, and word, God is Love. We commit, to God and to one another, that we will seek to live out this love in our relationships.

We commit:

- to listening to one another the way we listen for God: in love, with open minds and hearts;
- to giving and receiving in that same spirit, for shared learning and growth;
- to honesty in our communication;
- to caring for each person as God's beloved child, knowing we are God's hands and feet for one another;
- to recognizing when we may fall short of these commitments, and, when we do, to working towards the repair of our relationships.

Through these commitments we pray our church may be, for all, a place of refuge, support, and guidance. Called by the love of God to love God in return, and to love one another, we covenant together to build relationships that lead each person towards restoration, wholeness, and belonging.

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God of Love, as your children gather together, we pray: open our minds, live in our actions, speak through our voices, now and always, as we commit, to you and to one another, our love in thought and deed and word, so that each person may find restoration, wholeness, and belonging. Amen.