



Accents & Issues

Renewal

The Brethren in Christ have a long history of openness to the Holy Spirit's empowerment to live a holy life. We encourage individuals to pursue a vital, life-changing relationship with the living God.

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to understand, interpret, and apply the Scriptures, which are the final authority for faith and practice. As we open the Scriptures together, the Holy Spirit helps us discern God's truth and will, which allows us to remain faithful to the Word of God.

With such biblical convictions, it is not surprising that Brethren in Christ are attracted to contemporary expressions of spiritual renewal. This desire is woven into our understanding of the Christian life. Yet, we recognize our need for one another, so that together we discern the strengths and weaknesses of various movements attributed to the Holy Spirit.

Throughout our history, we have encountered practices associated with various renewal movements. For example, the holiness movement was known for altar calls, shouting, and upraised hands; the Pentecostal movement was associated with speaking in tongues and their interpretation in public assemblies; the charismatic movement was marked by praise choruses, ministry gifts, and hands raised in worship; the Third Wave movement was characterized by expressive worship, corporate prayer, and teaching about spiritual warfare. Other renewal movements have been noted for emphasizing prophetic words and being slain in the Spirit.

The Brethren in Christ strive to stay attuned to the moving of the Holy Spirit and remain faithful to the Word of God by measuring contemporary renewal movements by biblical marks such as:

Repentance

Throughout the Bible, repentance preceded fresh outpourings of God's Spirit. From the days of the Old Testament prophets to Peter's sermon at Pentecost, renewal was marked by God's people humbling themselves, confessing their sin, and turning to God for deliverance and guidance, before God responded with revival and blessing (2 Chron. 7:14).

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit

At Pentecost, when the disciples waited for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, God gave that gracious gift. Jesus taught, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11:13). When we surrender to the sovereign rule of Jesus through the indwelling presence of his Spirit, the wind of renewal blows upon the Church.

Obedience

A renewed commitment of obedience to Jesus is inseparably linked to the work of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul demonstrated this link by using phrases such as "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) and "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16) interchangeably. Paul taught that people filled with the Spirit are distinguished by "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Community

God clearly demonstrated an interest in creating community. God called Abraham to bring forth a nation (Gen. 12:2-3) and instituted the Church to be “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Pet. 2:9). Community, therefore, is a vital dimension of any renewal rooted in God.

Witness and Service

The Church experiences fresh manifestations of God’s grace for witness and service in the world. As the Church obeys the Great Commission to make disciples and seeks to be a redemptive influence in the world with acts of love and compassion, it receives from the Holy Spirit direction and empowerment to fulfill its calling.

The Brethren in Christ affirm the following guidelines to assist in ascertaining what is an authentic movement of the Holy Spirit.

- We affirm Brethren in Christ doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit, both personally and corporately (Articles of Faith and Doctrine, “Life in the Spirit,” Part Two, Section IV).
- We celebrate and foster Christian community as the context for experiencing the gift of the Holy Spirit given in response to our faith and commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:3).
- We encourage all individuals and churches to seek God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm vital public worship services and recognize that people experience God in various ways and worship in various styles.
- We anticipate that the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.) will be evident in renewal (Gal. 5:22-26).
- We understand that gifts of the Spirit are given to strengthen and enlarge the body of Christ and to be used for the common good of the Church (Eph. 4:11-12).
- We recognize that the Bible affirms a variety of spiritual gifts and experiences.
- We acknowledge that we need each other so that together we can discern the strengths and weaknesses of various movements and phenomena in our day. We affirm the role of bishops and pastors to clearly instruct people in biblical teachings, such as heart purity and holiness of life, so that people can distinguish between essential and peripheral elements in renewal.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit exalts Christ for the glory of God (John 16:12-14).

