

CONSTITUTION OF BETHEL MENNONITE CHURCH

West Liberty, Ohio

PREAMBLE

We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the world, and that persons are redeemed through faith union with Him.

We believe that the Church is:

- the fellowship of believers committed to following Jesus;
- the community of those who share God's grace with one another, and together work out the implications of Christian discipleship;
- the community which models the values and priorities of God's kingdom;
- the community of faith and love where each shares the other's burdens;
- a community that creates a safe and welcoming environment for all who come to worship and fellowship;
- the community of worship and learning;
- the community of witness and service, proclaiming in word and deed the riches of grace in Christ;
- the embodiment of the risen Christ, carrying on the work which He began until He comes again;
- empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We, the members of Bethel Mennonite Church, affirm this understanding of the Church and adopt this Constitution.

ARTICLE I - Name

This organization is known as the Bethel Mennonite Church of West Liberty, Ohio.

ARTICLE II - Purpose

The purpose of our congregation is to experience and extend the gracious rule of God. To this end, we:

- Worship, praise and glorify God;
- Nurture one another within the church;
- Minister to the needs of our community and world;
- Call others to commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

ARTICLE III - Relationships

Section 1. Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

- A. Our congregation is a member of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA.
- B. We are willing to give and receive counsel in the Conference, and to cooperate with and support the activities of the Conference.

Section 2. Mennonite Church USA

- A. Through the Ohio Conference, our congregation is part of Mennonite Church USA.
- B. We support its agencies with our interest, prayers, persons and finances.

Section 3. Other Christian groups

- A. Our congregation acknowledges the presence of other Christian denominations and congregations who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and we acknowledge our unity in Christ.
- B. We acknowledge diversity in understandings and practices.

ARTICLE IV - Ownership and Financial Responsibilities

Section 1. Administrative Council

- A. The legal responsibility and ownership of the church rests with the Administrative Council.
- B. Action regarding the sale or purchase of real estate will be taken with a vote of the members at a congregational business meeting.

ARTICLE V - Membership

Section 1. Membership Application

- A. Any person of any race, nationality and cultural background is eligible to apply for membership in the congregation. Applicants must
 - believe in Jesus Christ as their living Savior and Lord;
 - give evidence in spirit and life of the new birth;

- be willing to commit themselves to active participation in the faith and practice of Bethel Mennonite Church.

B. Persons seeking membership

- should indicate their interest to the Pastor;
- will receive instruction in Mennonite history and theology;
- will be encouraged to share their personal faith pilgrimage.

Section 2. Receiving of Members

- A. Persons may become members by believer's baptism, by confession of faith, or by church letter.
- B. The Administrative Council will review and approve membership applications. Notice to the congregation will be given prior to the announced date of receiving persons into membership.
- C. The congregation will receive persons desiring membership and celebrate their mutual commitment to the Body of Christ.

Section 3. Rights and Responsibilities of Members

- A. Each member is entitled to participate in all the activities of the church, to vote on matters brought before the church, and to hold offices in the church.
- B. Persons holding the following positions must be members of the congregation: Pastor, Youth Pastor, Congregational Chairperson, Administrative Council members, Elders, Ministry Chairpersons, Trustees, and Church Treasurer.
- C. The membership delegates the coordination and administration of church life by affirming trustees and Administrative Council members.
- D. The membership has responsibility for major decisions, including approval of the purchase or sale of property, the annual budget, the creation of paid positions, the hiring of the pastor, and changes to the Constitution.

Section 4. Membership Commitment

- A. On becoming a member, each person makes the following basic commitment:

*I commit myself to Jesus Christ as my Savior.
 I have repented of my sin and received God's loving forgiveness.
 I commit myself to Jesus Christ as my Lord.
 I will allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of all my life.
 With the help of God and the support of the fellowship
 I will seek to know and do God's will,
 to turn from sin, and to grow in faith.*

*I commit myself to this body of Jesus Christ called
the Bethel Mennonite Church.
I will give myself to the building of Christ's Body and its mission
by using my spiritual gifts and
by regular participation in the life of this congregation.*

- B. Annually, members and church participants will be asked to affirm this basic commitment.

Section 5. Membership Count

- A. The number of members used for reporting, budgeting, and conference representation purposes will be the number of active members. An active member participates in corporate worship and/or in some other aspect of the church's ministry and program.
- B. Shut-ins and college students will be considered active.

Section 6. Membership Status

- A. Members who have moved away from the church community and become actively involved in another congregation will be encouraged to transfer their membership via church letter. Upon a member's request and the action of the Administrative Council, a church letter of transfer will be granted.
- B. Members who choose not to be involved in the life of the church will be contacted and encouraged to evaluate the meaning of membership. If the status of the member is still in question, the individual's membership will be determined by the Administrative Council.
- C. A member may be disciplined following the disciplining procedure and the spirit of winning back a brother or sister as suggested in Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1-2.
- D. Members who withdraw their membership or who are removed from membership, thereby forfeit all legal and official rights in the congregation.

ARTICLE VI – Pastoral and Elder Leadership

Section 1. Pastor

- A. The Pastor shall be a Spirit-filled person committed to the way of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. The congregation shall choose the Pastor through the recommendation of the Administrative Council.

- B. Role of the pastor:
- Give spiritual leadership to the congregation through preaching, teaching, and nurture;
 - Equip church members for the work of the ministry;
 - Attend to pastoral administrative matters;
 - Oversee the ministries of visitation, spiritual guidance, counseling, and crisis care. Additional persons may be asked to assist in these areas.
 - Be involved with the congregation in mission, evangelism, and service;
 - Lead in vision building for the church.
- C. The term of the Pastor shall be for an indefinite period with the Administrative Council reviewing the Pastoral Memo of Understanding annually. This Memo of Understanding shall list the benefits given to the Pastor.
- D. At the end of each fiscal year, the Administrative Council shall evaluate the work of the Pastor with a summary made available to the congregation. The Council shall determine the evaluation process using the job description as a base and accepting input from the congregation. Every three years the evaluation shall include formal input from the congregation.

Section 2. Youth Pastor

- A. The Youth Pastor shall be a Spirit-filled person committed to the way of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. The Youth Pastor is employed by the Administrative Council upon the recommendation of the Pastor.
- B. Role of the Youth Pastor:
- Provide direction and vision for the ministry among youth as a teacher, mentor, and role model;
 - Provide pastoral care for the youth;
 - Perform the administrative responsibilities for the youth department and ministries;
 - Work with and provide oversight for volunteer youth leaders of the various youth programs;
 - Is responsible to the Pastor;
 - Serve as part of the pastoral team and the Coordinating Council;
 - Connect with conference and denominational persons involved in youth ministries.
- C. The term of the Youth Pastor shall be for an indefinite period with the Administrative Council reviewing the Memo of Understanding annually. This Memo of Understanding shall list the benefits given to the Youth Pastor.
- D. The Youth Pastor shall be evaluated annually by the Pastor.

Section 3. Elders

- A. The Elders shall be mature Christians committed to following Jesus Christ and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Role of the Elders:
 - Work with the Pastor to provide spiritual oversight for the congregation;
 - Serve as a support team for the Pastor;
 - Serve as members of the Administrative Council.
 - May sign legal documents in the absence of the congregational chair.
- C. The Gifts Discernment Committee will appoint two Elders for two-year alternating terms.

ARTICLE VII – Choosing Leadership

Section 1. Gifts Discernment Committee

- A. Purpose: To select and appoint persons to leadership positions based on input from the congregation and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Membership:
 - Annually, the Pastor, Elders, and outgoing Gifts Discernment Chairperson will select the Gifts Discernment Committee.
 - The Chairperson and Vice-Chair will serve two-year terms, with the Vice-Chair becoming Chairperson in the succeeding year.
 - Three other members will serve a one-year term.
 - The Pastor, who will call the first meeting, will orient the congregation and the Committee members as to their responsibilities, and be involved in the gifts discernment process.
- C. Responsibilities:
 - Become aware of the gifts and interests of persons;
 - Become aware of functions and responsibilities of positions within the church;
 - Ask the congregation for suggestions to fill positions within the church. These suggestions will be used to discern and make appointments.
 - Coordinate Gifts Discernment Committee efforts with the ministry chairpersons in appointing persons to responsibilities within the various ministries.
 - Present the appointments to the congregation for confirmation.

ARTICLE VIII – Administration

Section 1. Administrative Council

- A. Purpose: To provide leadership for the congregation in the administration of the church.
- B. Membership:
 - Pastor
 - Congregational Chairperson
 - Elders
 - Three members-at-large, each serving three-year alternating terms
 - Church secretary, who serves as recording secretary
- C. Responsibilities:
 - Assume legal responsibility and ownership of the church. (See Article IV, Section 1, A)
 - Determine which decisions shall involve the entire congregation, which decisions shall be made by the Administrative Council, and which decisions shall be passed on to other committees and persons.
 - Determine when and how the congregation shall make a decision.
 - Approve charters of programs of the church, such as the Student Aid Committee and the Bethel Homework Help program.
 - Amend and revise the constitution.
 - Set the date and agenda for congregational meetings.
 - Recommend choosing of a Pastor to the congregation.
 - Review the Pastoral Memo of Understanding each year.
 - Determine the evaluation process of the Pastor, using the job description as a base. (See Article VI, Section 1, D)
 - In the absence of the congregational chair, one of the elders may sign legal documents. (See Article VI, Section 3, B)

Section 2. Coordinating Council

- A. Purpose: To carry out the ministries of the church, using the gifts and resources of the congregation. This Council has broad discretion to carry out tasks according to the gifts God provides and the direction set by the congregation and the Administrative Council.
- B. Membership
 - Pastor
 - Youth Pastor
 - Congregational Chairperson, who chairs the meetings
 - Chairpersons of the five ministries (Worship, Nurture, Fellowship and Mutual Care, Mission, and Stewardship)
 - Church secretary, who serves as recording secretary

C. Responsibilities

- Meet on a regular basis.
- Provide clear communication among the ministries and with the congregation.
- Coordinate efforts of the ministries with regard to timing, resources, and facilities.
- Explore opportunities and resolve problems among the ministries.
- Give guidance and support to each other and the work of the Pastor.
- Maintain a current Church Handbook including job descriptions.
- Meet on a regular basis with the Administrative Council.

Section 3. Congregational Chairperson

A. Purpose: To insure that the work of the church is being carried out by the councils and committees within the church.

B. Responsibilities:

- Serves a three-year term as appointed by the Gifts Discernment Committee.
- Chairs the Administrative Council, Coordinating Council, and Congregational meetings.
- Signs legal documents as the Administrative Council representative.
- Works with the Pastor to formulate agenda for meetings.
- Makes sure the responsibilities of the Pastor are being met, during times when the church has no pastor.

Section 4. Ministries

A. Purpose: To carry out the work of the church with the five ministries of Worship, Nurture, Fellowship and Mutual Care, Mission, and Stewardship.

B. Membership:

- Chairperson, who is appointed by the Gifts Discernment Committee for a two-year term. Ministry chairpersons may not be members of the Administrative Council.
- Special persons and/or committees to fill specific needs as deemed necessary to carry out the purpose of the ministry. Long-term appointments may be included in the Gifts Discernment process, and should be approved by the Coordinating Council.

C. Responsibilities:

- Provide leadership through their ministry in congregational life.
- Be aware of and respond to the needs of the congregation.
- Evaluate and establish goals, and periodically check to see if the goals are being attained.
- Recommend a budget to the Ministry of Stewardship Chair.
- Follow through on the decisions of the Administrative Council.
- Give and receive counsel with the Administrative Council.

ARTICLE IX – The Ministries

Section 1. THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP

- A. Purpose: To provide leadership in planning for the worship celebrations of the congregation.
- B. Membership:
 - Chairperson
 - Pastor
 - Others, as designated by the Coordinating Council
- C. Responsibilities:
 - Plan a program of congregational worship and spiritual growth.
 - Plan leader training for worship.
 - Plan for worship opportunities which involve the Sunday School and other special programs.
 - Appoint positions to help facilitate worship, which may include sound system operator, power point operator, ushers, and floral arranger.

Section 2. THE MINISTRY OF NURTURE

- A. Purpose: To provide settings for meeting the spiritual needs of the congregation and to enable persons to grow into Christ-likeness.
- B. Membership:
 - Chairperson
 - Sunday School representatives
 - Others, as designated by the Coordinating Council
- C. Responsibilities:
 - Determine the nurture needs of the congregation and implement a strategy for meeting those needs, including but not limited to programs for Christian Education, children’s activities, youth activities, library, and history keeping.
 - Consider the needs of the community for nurture, and determine how the congregation can participate in meeting those needs.
 - Plan for the nurture and incorporation of new participants.

Section 3. THE MINISTRY OF FELLOWSHIP AND MUTUAL CARE

- A. Purpose: To strengthen relationships within the congregation by ministering to emotional, relational, spiritual and physical needs.

- B. Membership:
 - Chairperson
 - Others, as designated by the Coordinating Council

- C. Responsibilities:
 - Plan for the inclusion of new participants into the life of the church, and encourage all persons to become and remain a vital part of the congregation.
 - Promote and provide hospitality services within the church body and church community.
 - Assess and implement ways to meet the perceived relational, physical, and emotional needs of the church.
 - Strengthen the church body through improved interpersonal relationships.
 - Promote and develop small group participation.
 - Develop programs to strengthen home life.

Section 4. THE MINISTRY OF MISSION

- A. Purpose: To work in the congregation at birthing and nurturing a missions and evangelism passion which captures the heart of God for people.

- B. Membership:
 - Chairperson
 - Pastor
 - One to three persons appointed by the Gifts Discernment Committee
 - Others, as invited

- C. Responsibilities:
 - Inform the congregation of local, national, and world opportunities for mission, and serve as the link to global agencies such as Mennonite Mission Network.
 - Provide leadership for evangelism and service outreach ministries.
 - Coordinate the work of directors of special projects and ministries, and meet at least annually with these directors.
 - Coordinate congregational service and missions projects and activities.

Section 5. THE MINISTRY OF STEWARDSHIP

- A. Purpose: To be faithful stewards of the material resources of the congregation, and to encourage others to faithful stewardship.

- B. Membership:
 - Chairperson
 - Trustees
 - Treasurer
 - Others, as designated by the Coordinating Council

- C. Responsibilities of the membership:
- Establish and administer policies and procedures for necessary accepting, holding, and disbursing of congregational funds.
 - Review and recommend an annual budget for church monies.
 - Provide for mutual aid within the congregation in conjunction with Everence as appropriate.
 - Set the salaries of the Church Secretary and Treasurer.
- D. Responsibilities of the chairperson:
- Consult with the trustees regarding their duties and responsibilities.
 - Administer the Brotherhood Fund with an Elder, the Pastor, and in consultation with the Everence Advocate as needed.
 - Review the Pastoral Memo(s) of Understanding each year with the Administrative Council.
 - Give regular financial reports to the congregation.
 - Hire the Church Secretary, in conjunction with the Pastor.
 - Hire the Church Treasurer, in conjunction with the Ministry of Stewardship.
- E. Responsibilities of the trustees:
- Serve as the official caretakers of all church real estate, and the authorized representatives of the congregation to:
 - Keep the church buildings and equipment in good repair.
 - Make necessary purchases.
 - Hire janitorial workers and establish their pay.
 - Three trustees, each serving a three-year term, will be appointed, with a new trustee appointed each year. The third-year trustee will serve as chairperson.
- F. Responsibilities of the treasurer:
- Be responsible for all church accounts that consistently carry a balance of over \$2,000, and deposit them in a recognized banking institution.
 - Make authorized disbursements.
 - Keep a record of all financial transactions.
 - Keep the accounts of the Student Aid Program and Committee as directed by the policy/charter adopted by the congregation.
 - Keep the accounts of the Bethel Homework Help program, in conjunction with the Bethel Homework Help Board of Directors.
 - Prepare reports for meetings of the ministry and the Annual Business Meeting.

ARTICLE X – Congregational Business Meetings

- Section 1. Congregational Business Meetings
- A. The Annual Business Meeting will be held in October.
 - B. Other congregational business meetings will be held as needed.
 - C. The Administrative Council will set the date and agenda for all congregational business meetings, and will inform members at least two weeks in advance of said meetings.
 - D. The quorum for all congregational business meetings will be based on the membership present.
- Section 2. The Church Secretary will be the recording secretary for meetings.
- Section 3. The fiscal year will be October 1 to September 30.

ARTICLE XI – Changing the Constitution

- Section 1. This constitution may be amended or revised by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present in a regularly called business meeting of the congregation. A copy of the proposed changes shall be circulated to the membership of the congregation at least two weeks prior to the business meeting at which the proposed amendments or revisions will be considered.
- Section 2. This constitution may also be amended or revised without prior notice of the congregation by a unanimous vote of the members present at a regularly called business meeting.

ARTICLE XII – Dissolution

- Section 1. The congregation may be dissolved by a three-quarter (3/4) vote of the active members. In the event of dissolution, no member shall be entitled to any distribution or division of the congregation's property or its proceeds. All funds and property of the congregation shall be transferred to a charitable or religious organization as decided by a majority of the active members.

Adopted: September 26, 1963
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