

**THE CONSTITUTION**  
**of the**  
**COLUMBUS MENNONITE CHURCH**

**PREAMBLE**

Christian fellowship is most effective when the members of a group have a free and spontaneous exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of Christ-like love. This Constitution should in no way hinder this spontaneous Christian interaction and should serve as a statement of basic beliefs to persons in, as well as outside the church, and should aid the church in conducting its affairs in an orderly, efficient manner. The members bear the primary responsibility for this Christian fellowship and growth.

**ARTICLE I. NAME**

The name of the corporation shall be the Columbus Mennonite Fellowship. The name of this congregation shall be the Columbus Mennonite Church, Columbus, Ohio.

**ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

We, the Columbus Mennonite Church, exist to visibly express our commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord within the framework of the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite belief and practice.

We come together as a Christian community for worship, learning, discernment of gifts, personal support, fellowship and mutual accountability.

We seek to lead persons from outside the church to make commitments to Christ by actively sharing the Gospel's call to conciliation, service, peacemaking and wholeness.

**ARTICLE III. CONFESSION**

We confess an identity with Judeo-Christian tradition, the canon of the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Church.

We believe that Jesus Christ, Son of God, is the foundation of our faith and that those committed to Him are known by their love to one another.

We believe that God continues ministering to people through the power of the Spirit.

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are a guide to develop a healthy and fulfilling Christian life.

We affirm the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as adopted by Mennonite Church USA as our guide to faith and practice.

## **ARTICLE IV. GOVERNMENT AND AFFILIATION**

Government of this congregation is vested in the body of believers who are its members. It recognizes the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among the Mennonite churches. This congregation is affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and Central District Conference.

## **ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP**

A. **Body of Members:** The congregation welcomes into its membership all persons who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Christian experience is a dynamic relationship with Jesus where each individual continues in the discovery of the Christian way.

B. **Membership:** Consists of members and associate members. Members and associate members will be introduced to the congregation by means described in Section E, Introduction of New Members. Associate members have the same rights accorded members. An associate membership will be temporary as the associate may not wish to sever membership in the home congregation.

To encourage growth as Christians in the Anabaptist tradition and to promote the Christian life in ourselves and in those around us, we commit ourselves to the following:

We believe Christians are called to a committed fellowship of believers. Thus we pledge ourselves to the other members of this church to share openly our problems and concerns, to care for the spiritual and physical needs of each other, and to make this fellowship a vital part of our life. Working out the problems of church life, Christian ethics, and church discipline will be the task of the entire group.

We believe Christians are called to regular private and public worship of God. Thus we pledge ourselves to regular private and family worship. We pledge ourselves to preparation for, attendance at, and active participation in the various worship services of the congregation.

We believe Christians are called to a basic knowledge of the Bible to ensure faithfulness to God. Thus we pledge ourselves to a vital Christian education program including continued study of the Bible, good Christian literature, and relevant human issues. We pledge ourselves to diligently teach our children the Bible and lead them in family and public worship.

We believe all our material things belong to God and are ready to have the church guide us in the best stewardship of these possessions. As part of our stewardship, we pledge to give liberally of our total income for the work of the Christian church.

We believe that we are responsible to actively seek to lead people to Christ and to demonstrate Christian concern for their total needs. Thus we pledge to allow sufficient time for the work of the congregation, to involve ourselves in the outreach of the congregation, and to seek justice for the poor and the oppressed.

C. **Personal Commitment:** Members of Columbus Mennonite Church should aid each other in experiencing the Christian life. Members should be willing to devote special talents in their Christian life to certain tasks of the church.

Commitments range from specific to general. Specific commitments include acceptance of an appointed, selected or volunteered church office or task. General commitments include willingness to participate in

certain areas of church activity. Families may make family unit commitments.

- D. Privileges: All members and associate members are eligible for office and may act or vote in the transactions of the congregation.
- E Introduction of New Members: All applicants for membership will be considered by the Shepherding Commission and/or Pastor, then recommended and welcomed into membership by the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service. Members from other congregations will be accepted as members according to the above procedure upon presentation of proper church letters, or may be accepted through baptism or affirmation of faith.
- F. Withdrawal of Membership: Any member desiring a letter of dismissal or transfer is entitled to it upon written request to the Shepherding Commission, indicating the reason for such action.

Any member who becomes inactive for a period of more than one year shall be contacted by the Shepherding Commission regarding his/her reason for inactivity. If the member no longer desires fellowship with the congregation, or if Shepherding Commission is unable to contact the member after 5 years of inactivity, his/her name shall be removed from the membership list and placed in the permanent file of the former members. A person whose membership has been terminated may be restored upon the recommendation of the Shepherding Commission.

Any associate member who moves out of the area or who requests withdrawal from our fellowship will be removed from the associate membership list. If an associate member becomes inactive for a period of more than one year, they will be contacted by Shepherding Commission in the same manner as members are contacted. If contact cannot be made, the associate member will be removed from the associate membership list.

Any member should feel free to talk with any other member when (s)he feels that Christian principles are being violated or that someone is being unfaithful to his/her commitment, as established in the constitution. Persons attempting to correct these violations should use Christ-like love. (I Corinthians 13 and Matthew 18:15-17).

## **ARTICLE VI. ORGANIZATION**

### **Section 1: Leadership Team**

- A. Purpose: It is the responsibility of the Leadership Team to meet monthly, with responsibilities to include vision, policy, finances, personnel, property, safety and accessibility. A regular report from the facilities chair and/or other commission chairs could be a part of the meetings.
- B. Members: Seven (7): Member at Large (3), Treasurer, Missions Coordinator, Secretary, and Pastor.

#### **1. Member at Large**

- a. At large members of Leadership Team, serve their three year rotation as member at large, chair-elect and chair of Leadership Team and the Congregation.

## 2. Treasurer

- a. The Treasurer shall act as banker; monitor expenditures, seeing that they are within the approved budget; and report financial transactions.
  1. The Church Accountant will generate checks (to be signed by those persons designated by the Treasurer), balance the books and create and submit financial reports, assisting the performance of the treasurer's duties.
    - a. Accountant Term: On contract basis hired or designated by the Leadership Team.

## 3. Missions Coordinator

- a. Oversee the mission budget, support individuals who lead various mission efforts, and empower new church-wide mission projects.

## 4. Secretary

- a. Keep records of the proceedings of Leadership Team and Congregational Meetings.

## 5. Pastor

- a. A report from the pastor is due at each Leadership Team meeting.
- C. Term: All but the Pastor serve rotating three-year terms.
1. Gift Discernment Committee can renew terms of the Treasurer, Missions Coordinator and Secretary.
- D. Voting: Each member of Leadership Team is a voting member.

## Section II: Ministry Council

- A. Purpose: To discuss ministry goals and challenges, coordinate activities across commissions, and determine collaborative projects.
- B. Members: The Commission Chairs will meet quarterly with the Pastor, Associate Pastor, the Mission Coordinator, the Office Administrator and the Office Assistant.

## Section III: Commissions

- A. Purpose: Commissions will be elected to provide various supporting services for the church.
- B. Members: The number of members in each commission will be agreed to each year between the Gift Discernment Committee and the current commission.
- C. Term: Members will serve in each commission for two-year terms, with nominally half of the members elected each year.
- D. Commissions and Responsibilities

1. **Christian Education Commission** is responsible for providing a framework for the Christian education of
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the congregation. Nominally part of the members of this commission shall be responsible for youth education and part for adult education.

2. **Community Life Commission** is responsible for initiating, promoting, and facilitating activities to help meet the needs of the members and others attending.
3. **Facilities Commission** is responsible for the buildings and grounds.
4. **Shepherding Commission** is responsible for counseling and caring for persons experiencing crisis or conflict, administering small groups, and welcoming newcomers and visitors.
5. **Worship Commission** is responsible for assisting the Pastor in planning worship services. The Pastor is an ex-officio member of Worship Commission.

## **ARTICLE VII. PASTORATE**

- A. The term "Pastorate" in this Article refers to one or more Pastors. The sub-items in this Article apply individually to each member of the Pastorate.
- B. The Pastor shall seek to lead, challenge, give guidance and direction to the spiritual life, and outreach of the congregation.
- C. Selection and Call:
  1. The Leadership Team shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee to evaluate and discern a person to call as Pastor. The committee shall be representative of the church membership.
  2. The Pastor Search Committee shall present the name of a nominee to Leadership Team, giving background information as to the person's qualifications and record.

When the Pastor Search Committee and Leadership Team are united on the nominee, the Pastor Search Committee shall present the name to the congregation, giving background information on the qualifications and record.
  3. Upon recommendation of the Leadership Team, the Congregational Chairperson shall call a meeting of the congregation and a vote shall be taken. Upon seventy (70) percent of the votes being favorable, the Congregational Chairperson shall invite the nominee by letter to accept the call to the pastorate. This letter shall include all relevant conditions (e.g. Memo of Understanding) of the call. The initial call shall be for a term of no less than one year and no more than three years.
- D. Subsequent Terms: At the end of the Pastor's term, the Members of the congregation will consider extending the Pastor's call for another term. A vote of the Members of the church will be taken at an annual or special meeting called for that purpose. The call shall be for a term of no less than one year and no more than three as set forth in the letter and Memo of Understanding extending the call. The terms for an extension of the contract shall require a majority of favorable votes.
- E. Accountability: The Congregation Pastor shall be accountable to the Leadership Team. This Pastor shall be reviewed annually by the Leadership Team and every three (3) years by the congregation. Other Pastors are accountable to the Congregation Pastor who will conduct annual reviews with them.

- F. Support: Leadership Team shall annually review the salary and support of the Pastor.
  - G. Termination of the Pastor: If at any time either the congregation or the Pastor desires to terminate the pastoral relationship, notice shall be given in the following manner:
    - 1. By a majority of the votes cast at a meeting of the congregation called for this purpose. The results shall be transmitted to the Pastor by the Congregational Chairperson, or
    - 2. By a letter from the Pastor to Leadership Team.
- Notice will normally be given three months prior to termination. If termination is due to misconduct in office or other ethical breach, length of notice will be decided by Leadership Team.
- H. Interim Pastor: An Interim Pastor may be called for a period of up to two (2) years.

### **ARTICLE VIII. CHURCH HISTORIAN**

- A. Purpose: To maintain and organize appropriate records of the congregation and its activities for the congregation's archives.
- B. Term: Two (2) years.

### **ARTICLE IX. CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS**

- A. Purpose: To transact all business that has not been delegated by the Constitution & Bylaws to other organizations or individuals of the Church and any other business deemed necessary.
- B. The Annual Business Meeting for Approval of the Budget: Shall be held three to eight weeks before the first day of the fiscal year. It shall be announced two weeks in advance. Leadership Team shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of the Annual Budget one week prior to the meeting.

The budget shall be approved by plurality vote. The fiscal year shall begin on January 1, unless specified otherwise.
- C. The Annual Business Meeting for Election of Officers: Shall be held three to eight weeks before the elected officers are to assume office. It shall be announced two weeks in advance. A slate of nominees shall be prepared by the Gift Discernment Committee appointed by Leadership Team and presented to the church a week before the meeting. Additional nominations may be made at the time of the meeting.

Officers shall be elected by plurality vote. Elected officers shall assume office on June 1, unless specified otherwise.
- D. Election of Leadership Slate: The selection of nominees for the offices shall be made by a gift discernment process. The Gift Discernment Committee solicits from the membership names of persons who have gifts appropriate for the various open positions, including designating the commission chairpersons. These persons are contacted by the Gift Discernment Committee members to test the individuals' willingness and appropriateness to fill the position(s).

review. The Gift Discernment Committee presents the slate to the congregation for election at the Annual Business Meeting for Election of Officers.

1. Voting for commission members shall be done by ballot.
  2. Voting by proxy shall be permitted.
- E. Method of Calling Meetings: Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the Congregational Chairperson or when requested by any of the following:
1. The Pastor,
  2. A majority of the Leadership Team,
  3. Ten percent of the Members of the congregation.
- F. Assemblies of the congregation: Shall be considered competent to transact business when called in one of the following ways and when the quorum specified is met.
1. The meeting may be held when it has been announced in the church bulletin or at a worship service on two preceding Sundays before the meeting. A quorum shall be twenty (20) percent of the church members.
  2. The meeting may be held following an announcement at a regular Sunday morning service, provided a quorum of sixty (60) percent of the church membership is present.
  3. A meeting may be continued at a future date (within two weeks) by a favorable seventy (70) percent vote, provided a quorum of twenty (20) percent of the church members is present.
- G. All members of the congregation, including associate members: Have a right to participate in the deliberation and to cast their vote. All members currently residing in the community and active in the church shall form the base for determining a quorum.
1. For passage, votes taken by the congregation shall require a seventy (70) percent favorable vote of the members present and voting, unless otherwise stated in this constitution. However, in all decisions, the congregation will continue to strive for consensus.
  2. Proxy votes will be permitted if the motion(s) have been distributed to all members at least one Sunday prior to the meeting. Proxy votes will not be permitted for motions amended during the meeting.

## **ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS**

Amendments and alterations to this Constitution and Bylaws can be made by a two-thirds majority ballot vote of the members present and voting at any regular or special congregational meeting called for this purpose. Notification of such intent and subject shall be announced in the church bulletin or at a worship service on each of the two preceding Sundays before the meeting. A quorum shall be twenty (20) percent of the church members.

*Approved by Leadership Team, April 2018*

*Approved by the congregation on April 22, 2018*