

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

## **ARTICLE III. VISION**

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as a community of grace, joy, and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

## **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. The congregation welcomes into its membership all persons who affirm the membership commitment statement. We choose to focus on a center that draws us in rather than sharply defining and defending a boundary line of faith.
- B. Membership: Consists of members and associate members. Members and associate members will be introduced to the congregation by means described in Article V D, 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.

Membership Commitment:

The Spirit calls us from where we are  
to walk with Jesus  
toward a more just, peaceful, and merciful embodiment  
of God's love in this world.

Ours is a story  
of those who journeyed by faith,  
whose questions opened fresh possibilities.

Ours is a story  
grounded in scripture, centered on Jesus,  
re-envisioned by Anabaptists, ever-expanding in our time.

Ours is a story  
of death and resurrection and all things made new.

To live more fully into this story,  
as individuals and as a congregation, we commit to:

Gather for worship and around the table  
where everyone is welcome;

Learn from one another,  
allowing the wisdom of all ages to teach us;

Honor all seasons of life,  
caring for one another through joys and hardships;

Share our time and resources,  
discerning our call to both work and rest;

Love our neighbors and enemies,  
pursuing wholistic peace with justice;

Care for the gift of creation  
out of gratitude and responsibility;

Seek transformation through prayerful listening,  
growing toward the fullness of our humanity.

Because we often fall short of this high calling,  
we will extend compassion and forgiveness as we journey together.

By God's grace, may we be a sanctuary,  
where we welcome, protect, and challenge one another.

- C. Privileges: All members and associate members are eligible for office and may act or vote in the transactions of the congregation.
- D. Introduction of New Members: All applicants for membership will be considered by the Shepherding Commission and/or Lead 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.

- E. **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. Lead Pastor

a. A report from the Lead Pastor is due at each Leadership Team meeting.

C. Term: All but the Lead 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 Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, the Mission Coordinator, the church office Administrative staff.

## Section III: Commissions

A. Purpose: Commissions will be approved 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 approved each year.

D. Commissions and Responsibilities

1. **Christian Education Commission** is responsible for providing a framework for the Christian education of 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 in accordance with Article IX. Upon a favorable vote, 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 in accordance to Article IX. 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.
- E. Accountability: The Lead Pastor shall be accountable to, and annually reviewed by, Leadership Team. Other Pastors are accountable to, and annually reviewed by, the Lead Pastor. In the case of a pastoral couple, both will be accountable to, and annually reviewed by, Leadership Team. In the last year of each Pastor’s term, the congregation will review the pastor before a vote is held on extending their call. In the case of a pastoral couple, the vote will be on extending the call to both.
- 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, a meeting shall be called per procedures in Article IX E and a vote taken per Article IX C. 1. b.

1. 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 and ASSEMBLIES OF THE CONGREGATION**

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. Quorum: For the purpose of Business meetings or Assemblies where decisions are being made, a quorum is required and shall be twenty (20) percent of total church members/associate members active in the church. A meeting may also be held following an announcement at a regular Sunday morning service. In this unusual situation, the quorum becomes at least sixty (60) percent of church members/associate members/living in the community and active in the church. The quorum numbers for the year shall be determined at the first Leadership Team meeting of the church year.

C. 1. When making decisions, the congregational chair should work toward consensus. If it becomes clear that consensus is not possible or that a vote is preferable,

a. eighty (80) percent of either a written ballot or show of hands is required for passage for a pastoral call/extension or Constitution/Bylaw change,

b. a majority of those present for all other decisions.

2. All members of the congregation, as defined by the criteria for establishing a Quorum, have the right to participate in the deliberation and to cast their vote.

3. Proxy votes will be permitted if the motion(s) have been distributed to all members at least one Sunday prior to the meeting, and are submitted in writing to the Congregational Chair prior to the

meeting. Proxy votes will not be counted if the motion is amended during the meeting.

4. Meetings or Assemblies require an announcement to the congregation in the bulletin and/or announced at a worship service two Sundays prior to the meeting. This announcement should include the purpose of the meeting and information that might be helpful in enabling members to make an informed decision.

- D. Annual Business Meeting:-There are three business meetings held per year, one in the fall to present the budget, one in December to vote on the budget, and one in the spring to vote on the leadership slate. The meeting to vote on the church budget is held between three and eight weeks prior to the start of the fiscal year. The meeting to vote on the slate of leadership positions, as developed by the Gifts Discernment Committee, is held between three and eight weeks prior to persons assuming their positions. Additional nominations may be made at the meeting. Leadership positions begin at the time of the annual Commission Workshop which is held in mid-May.
- 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. A Pastor,
  2. A majority of the Leadership Team,
  3. Ten (10) 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 per Article IX, C.4 and called per Article IX, E.
  2. The meeting may be held following an announcement at a regular Sunday morning service if unusual circumstances exist that do not permit advanced notice. In such a circumstance, the quorum numbers are changed per Article IX, B.
- G. A business meeting or an assembly of the congregation may be continued at a future date (within two weeks) per IX C.1b.

## **ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS**

Amendments and alterations to this Constitution and Bylaws can be made by an eighty (80) percent 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.

*Approved by Leadership Team, April 16, 2021*

*Approved by the Congregation, April 25, 2021*