

8-18-2013

CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH
HALSTEAD, KANSAS

Article I- Name

This organization is incorporated as the First Mennonite Church, Halstead, Kansas.

Article II - Purpose

Our mission as First Mennonite Church is to be a community of believers who follow Jesus Christ as we receive and share God's love through our ministries of:

worship,
caring for one another,
stewardship of resources and talents,
hospitality through fellowship and outreach,
nurture of spiritual growth through study and prayer,
mission, both local and global, that encompasses witnessing,
serving and peacemaking.

Article III - Affiliation

The congregation is a supporting, cooperating member of Mennonite Church USA through the Western District Conference, and to Mennonite World Conference through the denomination.

Article IV - Statements of Faith

We confess the Lord Jesus as the only Savior and Redeemer of sinners and with I Corinthians 3:11 we confess that, "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Thus the gospel of Jesus Christ, as discerned through the Bible, is the final authority in matters of faith and practice. We, the congregation, affirm the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the statements of Mennonite Church USA and the Western District Conference.

Article V - Members

Meaning of Member

The church is the Body of Christ, and, as a body is composed of various members, each member in the body has function, attachment, mutuality, and interdependence with the other members in the body for the greater good of the body.

Persons are received as members who:

- offer freely an informed, public confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord as expressed through the vows of baptism,
- enter into the members covenant of the congregation,
- and are commended to the congregation by the Church Council after a process of instruction and discernment.

Avenues for Becoming a Member:

- *Baptism* upon public confession of faith and completed instruction.
- *Letter of Transfer* in which the person, being a member in another congregation, is commended by that congregation to our fellowship as being a Christian in good standing.
- *Reaffirmation of Faith* by which a person who has made a previous confession of faith and has been a member in another congregation but is unable to obtain a letter of transfer, publicly reaffirms the vows of baptism.

Categories of Members:

- *Full Member* – Persons who are actively living in covenant with the members the congregation as God gives them the ability.
- *Resident Associate Member* – Persons who are actively living in covenant with the members in the life of this congregation as God gives ability, while also remaining as members in a previous congregation. Their member status discontinues if they no longer reside in the area.
- *Nonresident/Non-active Member* – Persons who wish to remain regarded as members in this congregation while having established permanent residence outside the local area or have become non-active and still live in the area. Nonresident members are encouraged to become active in a congregation in their residing area. Nonresident/Non-active members do not vote and are not included in the members count.

Article VI – Members Covenant

8-18-2013

As God initiates covenant with his people, so too we respond by living in covenant with God and with one another as expressed in the vows of baptism. As members in Christ's body living out his example together, we covenant to

- Confess Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, live out his gospel of grace, discipleship, and salvation, and follow the Bible as the guide and authority for living;
- Participate in the mission of the church through the congregation, sharing in its ministry and supporting it by prayer, time, talents, attendance, loyal service and faithful stewardship as God gives ability;
- Share in the bonds of Christian fellowship, giving, seeking, and receiving counsel in Christian love, and sharing and bearing one another's joy and pain.

Recognizing that we will fall short of this covenant, we trust in grace, forgiveness, encouragement, and correction to help restore us to one another and to faithfulness in Christ. The words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 are our guide toward peace and reconciliation.

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (NIV)

An individual will no longer be regarded as a member by making personal request to discontinue or by action of the Church Council.

Article VII - Pastor

The pastor is called to lead the congregation through word, deed, and example toward spiritual maturity and faithfulness in its covenant and mission. In turn, the congregation empowers the pastor to this calling. The pastor-congregation relationship is based on mutuality, confidence, grace, and performance. Congregational reviews will be scheduled by the Church Council with the guidance of the Conference Minister as an important aspect in maintaining a healthy and effective relationship. The first congregational review will be in the third year of the pastor's service, with, as a usual practice, each subsequent review scheduled every three years, followed by a congregational vote on the pastor's calling. The pastor's initial and extended calling require at least a seventy-five percent affirming vote of the congregation. The pastor will be credentialed through the Western District Conference.

The organizational structure will provide for a standing group to serve as a resource to the pastor for job description, accountability, counsel, and support, and to make an annual assessment of the pastor-congregation relationship. Additionally, the pastor will be provided an annual Covenant of Understanding. The pastor or congregation will give at least a three-month notice before concluding a pastor's time of service.

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a pastor search committee that is representative of the congregation will be appointed by the Church Council. The search committee will work within the guidelines of the Western District Conference. Interim pastor arrangements will be made by the Church Council in consultation with Western District Conference Minister. The call to an interim pastor is extended by a majority vote of the Church Council.

Article VIII - Officers

Church Chairperson

The church chairperson is annually selected by congregational vote, with the assignment of presiding over congregational meetings and the Church Council, and working closely with the pastor and other leaders of the congregation for clear direction, organization, process, and communication. The term is one year and renewable.

Church Secretary

The church secretary is annually selected by congregational vote, with the assignment of keeping records of all proceedings of the congregation and of the Church Council. The church secretary maintains a current copy of the manual of policies, practices, and procedures. The term is one year and renewable.

Church Treasurer

The treasurer is annually selected by congregational vote, with the assignment of keeping detailed financial records for the congregation, including making an annual written report of receipts and expenditures properly audited by some person or persons previously appointed by the Church Council. All checks drawn shall be in the name of the church. The treasurer is designated to sign for the church in legal matters. The term is one year and renewable.

Article IX – Organization and Ministry Structure

8-18-2013

The Church Council

The government of this church is vested in the local body of believers who are members. The Church Council is the central leadership group, and may make decisions on behalf of the congregation in policy and legal matters. The Church Council is annually selected by congregational vote. The Church Council coordinates the activity of the various committees and ministries of the congregation through representation. It provides a forum for reporting, cooperating, advising, accountability, planning, goal setting, decision making, and proposing congregational action. The pastor and church officers serve on the Church Council. Additional composition of the Church Council is specified in the congregation's manual of policies, practices, and procedures. Persons serving on the Church Council must be members in the congregation. The term for those serving on the Church Council is one year and renewable. The Church Council, assisted by the gifts discernment process, may appoint or elect individuals to such other positions and committees as are deemed necessary to carry on the work of the church.

Committees and Positions of Ministry

Committees and positions for the ministry of the congregation are specified in the manual of policies, practices, and procedures. Each committee or individual position in the congregation's organization and ministry structure is grouped within one of the ministries represented on the Church Council in order to enhance communication, coordination, and accountability. Committees and positions can be filled through the gifts discernment process, or invitation by ministry chairpersons or the Church Council. All terms are one year and renewable.

Gifts Discernment

As the Spirit equips and calls each Christian for ministry, an active, ongoing gifts discernment process for identifying each person's gifting and calling, and for encouraging the use of these gifts in ministry is essential for guiding and vitalizing the congregation's ministry. Through the gifts discernment process, each year a slate listing the proposed members for the Church Council is presented to the congregation for a vote of affirmation. The group that is to serve with the elected chairperson of the gifts discernment process is appointed each year by the newly elected Church Council.

Policies, Practices, and Procedures

The congregation's organization and ministry structure, committees and positions for ministry, job descriptions, responsibilities, and accountabilities, policies, practices, and procedures will be detailed and

kept current in a manual of policies, practices, and procedures within the authority of the Church Council. The manual may be amended by a majority vote of the Church Council.

Article X – Meetings

The congregation meets weekly for public worship services. In addition, other public gatherings for worship, fellowship, education, and special events will be scheduled throughout the year by the congregational leadership.

Members will meet annually for the purposes of selecting congregational leaders, approving the fiscal year budget, hearing reports, and conducting other business of the congregation. The dates of member meetings shall be set by the Church Council. Additional members meetings may be convened by the Church Council or by a written request of at least ten members. All member meetings for the purpose of conducting official action by the congregation require a notice in at least two Sunday worship services prior to action.

Article XI - Quorum

A quorum for the Church Council is two-thirds of its members. A quorum for congregational action is those members present for a properly called congregational meeting. Absentee ballots may be made available at the discretion of the Church Council for any scheduled vote of the congregation.

Article XII - Amendments

This constitution may be amended or changed by a two-thirds vote of all members voting on the amendment. Proposed amendments shall be presented to the congregation with at least two Sunday worship services prior to action.