

**CONSTITUTION OF THE
FAITH MENNONITE CHURCH
LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO**

(AS AMENDED January 2011)

Our concern as believers in Jesus Christ is to live, worship, and work together, and to carry out our responsibilities to God and the Church in an orderly and efficient manner. This concern leads us to lay down the following pattern of organization and activity as a guide for our work as a Church.

ARTICLE I

NAME

This Church shall be known as the "Faith Mennonite Church", Leamington, Ontario.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation is to maintain a fellowship of Christian activity that will extend the Kingdom of God in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

ARTICLE III

GOVERNMENT AND AFFILIATION

The government of this Church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. This congregation is prepared to recognize and sustain the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation as a member congregation of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and through the affiliation with Mennonite Church Canada.

ARTICLE IV

CONFESSION

SECTION A

We acknowledge the "Statement of Doctrine" of the General Conference Mennonite Church as adopted at Souderton, Pennsylvania, in 1941, and *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, adopted by the delegate sessions of the General Conference Church and the Mennonite Church, at Wichita, Kansas, July 1995.

Accepting the full Bible and the Apostolic Creed:

1. We believe in one God, eternally existing and manifest as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, born of the virgin Mary in His perfect humanity, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection from the dead, and His personal triumphant return.
3. We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state determined by divine judgment.
4. We believe in the divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God and the only trustworthy guide of faith and life.

5. We believe a Christian is one saved by grace, whose life is transformed into the likeness of Christ by His atoning death and the power of His resurrection.
6. We believe that Christ lived and taught the way of life as recorded in the scriptures, which is God's plan for individuals and the race; and that it becomes disciples of Christ to live in this way, thus manifesting in their personal and social life and relationships the love and holiness of God. We believe that this way of life also implies non-resistance to evil by carnal means, the fullest exercise of love, and the absolute abandonment of the use of violence, including warfare. We believe further that the Christian life will of necessity express itself in nonconformity to the world in life and conduct.
7. We believe in prayer as fellowship with God, a desire to be in His will, and in its divine power.
8. 8We believe that the Christian Church consists of believers, who have repented from their sins, have accepted Christ by faith and are born again and sincerely endeavour by the grace of God to live the Christian life.
9. We believe in the community of the redeemed created by God.

SECTION B

In addition to the generally accepted evangelical doctrines, we hold that the Scriptures teach:

1. That baptism shall be administered to persons, who have reached the age of understanding, upon their repentance and confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.
2. That Christians should be peaceful and loyal citizens, clearly recognizing the importance of the state, but remembering that their highest loyalty belongs to God. Christians should give first loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Church, so that association with any other organization, secret or otherwise, will not usurp the priority they give to Christ and His Church.
3. That war is utterly contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. Difficulties between nations as well as individuals should be settled by peaceful and non-violent methods. Christians should practice love and goodwill even toward enemies, voluntarily offering themselves to service and reconciliation between nations, races, classes, and individuals, and opposing all forms of hatred, injustice and evil. Christians should practice love, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness and self-control. (Galatians 5:19-20.)
4. That Christians should speak the truth under all circumstances. The swearing of oaths is therefore unnecessary and should not be practiced by Christians. Affirmation is the form used by members of this Church in legal matters
5. That a life of simplicity and stewardship is truly in keeping with the life and spirit of Jesus and is to be the ideal and rule in all of life's relationships.

ARTICLE V

ORDINANCES

1. Religious instruction shall precede the sacrament of baptism. The customary form of baptism is by sprinkling, but we recognize other forms as valid.
2. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be observed at least twice a year, the Church Council setting the dates for its observance. All members of the congregation and all Christian friends of the Church are privileged to participate in this service.
3. Parents may present their children to be consecrated to the Lord, pledging thereby to lead such children to the knowledge and truth in Christ Jesus.
4. Marriage is an ordinance of God. The Church, recognizing the importance of the proper marriage relationship in God's Kingdom, regards it the duty of the parents and the Church to give proper and timely instruction. Because of its sanctity and permanence, the marriage of members of the Church shall be consecrated by a Minister of the Gospel in accordance with the laws of the Province. The names of the bridal couple should be announced to the church before the wedding ceremony takes place.

ARTICLE VI

MEMBERSHIP

SECTION A - REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMITTANCE

1. Anyone giving evidence of a Christian Character, which is the result of a regenerated life, may become a member of this Church, by being baptized upon the confession of faith and by assuming the rights and duties of membership.
2. Members of a Christian congregation, baptized after reaching the age of understanding, wishing to unite with this congregation shall present a certificate of good standing from their home church, or, if this is impossible, they may be admitted upon a renewal of their profession of faith. Upon recommendation of the Church Council the names of such persons shall be presented to the congregation for their acceptance or rejection. Special and individual consideration will be given to persons baptized as infants.
3. All perspective members shall participate in a Church membership class.
4. Persons from other Christian Churches, who reside here temporarily and do not wish to sever their relationship with their home Church, may become associate members of this congregation. They shall have the privileges of regular members except the right to vote.

SECTION B - DUTIES OF A MEMBER

Membership in the Church of Christ, and specifically in this Church, carries with it certain obligations. Every member is expected:

1. To lead a life in accordance with the Gospel of Christ, bearing the "Fruit of the Spirit". (Galatians 5: 22-23)
2. To bear the burdens of others in the spirit of mutual sympathy and concern for their welfare.

3. To strive for the strengthening and the up building of the life of the Church in all its phases.
4. To assume willingly a share of the responsibility and work in the Church.
5. To attend regularly the services of the Church and participate in the regular observance of the Lord's Supper.
6. To contribute cheerfully, according to the measure of their means, to the support of the local Church, the Provincial and National Church with which it is affiliated, and other worthy Christian causes.
7. To support Christian pastors in their activities and to notify them in due time when their help, service and advice are needed.
8. To maintain a Christian attitude in the home, in private and vocational life, and in all other relationships and activities which they enter.

SECTION C - RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

1. Members who are in full and regular standing are eligible for office and may act and vote in the transactions of the Church.
2. Members in good standing, who desire a letter of dismissal and/or recommendation to another Christian Church, are entitled to receive it upon request.
3. Members have equal interest in the property of the Church, which shall remain indivisible; members, who withdraw or are expelled, thereby lose all claims to such interest.
4. Members who have moved out of the community, who are absent for a year or more, and who are unable to attend worship services of this Church regularly because of distance shall keep the Church informed on their place of residence, their participation in the work of other Churches, and their future membership plans.

ARTICLE VII

DISCIPLINE

Church discipline is practiced according to the instructions of Scripture as recorded in Matthew 18: 15-17 and I Corinthians 6: 1-8.

Should unhappy differences arise between members, the aggrieved member shall follow in the Spirit of Christ the rules given by Him in the above Scripture.

If any members of the congregation by un-Christian conduct bring shame and reproach upon the name of Christ and the Church, they shall be kindly admonished by the minister and if necessary, by the minister and pastoral care team together. If after such admonition and after due opportunity has been given to members to answer for themselves before the Church Council, the members still remain impenitent, then they may be dismissed from the congregation. Matthew 18: 15-18. The dismissed persons may be reinstated upon satisfactory evidence of penitence. To win such a person back in Christian love shall be the duty of each member of the congregation.

Members, who fail to attend services, support the work of, or communicate with the congregation for a period of two consecutive years, may be placed on the inactive list by action of the congregation at its annual meeting. Kindly approaches may be made periodically by letter or personal contact to persons on the inactive membership list. Faith Mennonite Church will remove someone from membership upon death or by request of the member (through withdrawal or transfer).

If Faith Mennonite Church has been unable to contact members on the inactive list, by mail, after a ten year period, there being no forwarding address available when a change of residence occurs from acquaintances or relatives, these persons may also be removed from membership by action of the congregation at the congregation's annual meeting.

ARTICLE VIII

SECTION A

THE PASTOR

1. The pastor shall be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Church, with the assistance of the official committees of the Church. It shall be his/her duty to preach the gospel, pure and undefiled, to seek to enlist followers of Christ, to impart the special religious instruction, to administer the sacraments, to perform the ceremony at occurring Marriages, to conduct the funeral services, and to visit the sick, as well as the members in general.
2. The pastor shall be called for an indefinite term by a two-thirds vote of those present at such an election. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the Church Council, after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit shall, with the cooperation of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and others, make a canvas of available ministers, settle upon one who in their judgment should be called to the pastorate, introduce him/her to the Church and in a duly called meeting, propose his/her election. Should s/he fail in being elected, the council may present another candidate.
3. The Church may at any time by a two-thirds vote, at a meeting called for that purpose by the Church Council, request the resignation of the pastor, with the expectation that it shall take effect within three months. On the other hand, the pastor shall give three months notice in case he/she wishes to leave of his/her own volition.

SECTION B - THE CHAIR OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The chair shall be elected for a two year term, limited to two consecutive terms.
2. The chair of the congregation shall be chair of the church council.
3. The chair of the congregation shall preside at meetings of the congregation.

SECTION C - THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The vice-chair shall be elected for a two-year term, limited to two consecutive terms.
2. The vice-chair shall preside as chair in the absence of the congregational chair.

3. The vice-chair shall represent the church on the Board of the Leamington Mennonite Home and other similar organizations requiring chair representation.

SECTION D - THE CHURCH COUNCIL

1. The membership of church council shall consist of the chair of the congregation, the vice-chair of the congregation, the secretary, the treasurer, and the chair of each of the eight official committees. The pastor will serve as an ex-officio member.
2. The Church Council shall guide and coordinate the program and activities of the Church.
3. It shall act upon resignations and fill vacancies in Church offices until the next annual meeting, in consultation with the Gift Discernment Committee.
4. Upon consultation with the Committee on Stewardship and Finance, it shall recommend salaries for Church workers to the congregation.
5. It is authorized to call meetings of the congregation upon due notice.
6. It shall prepare an agenda for the annual meeting.
7. It shall appoint annually the secretary for the Church Council.

SECTION E - THE COMMITTEES

1. There shall be eight official committees:
 - 1) The Committee on Worship and Membership
 - 2) The Committee on Christian Education
 - 3) The Committee on Youth Ministries
 - 4) The Committee on Missions and Service
 - 5) The Committee on Stewardship and Finance
 - 6) The Committee on Social and Family Life
 - 7) The Committee on Gift Discernment
 - 8) The Personnel committee
2. Each Committee shall have five members (with the exception of the Gift Discernment Committee and the Personnel Committee which shall have three members), who are elected at the annual meeting for a term of three years. No one person shall be allowed to serve more than two consecutive terms or serve on more than one Committee.
3. Each Committee shall elect its own chair and secretary, whose duty it shall be to guide the work of the committee. These elections shall be held every year following the annual meeting. The chair of each committee shall represent it on the Church Council.

SECTION F - DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEES

1. The Committee of Worship

- a) It shall assist the pastor in guiding the spiritual life of the Church, through worship services, prayer meetings, devotional literature, bible study program, etc.
- b) It shall strengthen and guide the Church in Church attendance and participation, in renewing and creating interest in the Church
- c) It shall be responsible for the promotion and guidance of a welcoming program and an ushering service.
- d) It shall supervise and guide the Church music program: appointing pianists, organists, senior choir directors, acquiring music, and guiding the Church choir program.

2. The Committee on Christian Education:

- a) It shall be responsible for interpreting Church principles and doctrine to the membership and to the community at large.
- b) It shall supervise the education program of the Church, guiding the Sunday School program, providing educational literature, and training workers for the education program.

3. The Committee on Youth Ministries:

- a) It shall supervise the youth ministry of the Church.
- b) It shall be responsible for the youth mentoring program.

4. The Committee on Mission and Service:

- a) It shall promote and be in charge of the program of evangelism and Church extension.
- b) It shall be responsible for the stimulation of interest in, and the support of a missionary program.
- c) It shall stimulate interest in Christian vocations and help members to give a Christian witness in their particular vocation.
- d) It shall supervise and guide all service projects of the Church.
- e) It shall guide the Church in the area of social concerns and in its cooperation with agencies promoting such concerns: Temperance, Red Cross, Social Welfare, and others.
- f) It shall be responsible for the promotion and guidance of peace efforts and disaster service.

5. The Committee on Stewardship and Finance:

- a) It shall be in charge of the financial program of the Church: the treasury, bookkeeping, auditing, budget, etc.
- b) It shall prepare a Church budget which shall be submitted to the congregation at

the annual meeting.

- c) It shall appoint a treasurer for the Church.
- d) It shall promote and guide a program of stewardship.
- e) It shall be in charge of Church property: Maintenance, the appointment and supervision of a custodian, insurance, etc.
- f) It shall recommend salaries and supervise all disbursements.
- g) Wills and legacies to the Church shall be administered by this Committee.

6. The Committee on Family and Social Life:

- a) It shall be responsible to coordinate the church meals (potluck dinners, etc.)
- b) It shall be responsible to coordinate the hosting of guests for meals and lodging as required.
- c) It shall plan for social events within the church family.
- d) It shall encourage and coordinate fellowship groups within the church.

7. The Committee on Gift Discernment:

- a) It shall concern itself with discerning the gifts of members and selecting appropriate persons for the different tasks in the congregation.
- b) It shall provide names of candidates for each vacancy on committees that is to be filled at the annual meeting.
- c) It shall provide the Church council with names of candidates willing to represent the church on organizations with which the church is associated, such as United Mennonite Educational Institute, Mennonite Home, Shalom Counseling, Et-Cetera Shoppe, and others.
- d) It shall provide the Church Council with names of persons who are willing to serve as delegates to sessions of the Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada and Mennonite Church Canada.

8. The Committee on Pastoral Care

- a) Five individuals or couples are to be elected for three-year terms. There is no limit to the number of consecutive terms these persons may serve.
- b) They shall assist the pastor in guiding the spiritual life of the church, the commemoration of the Lord's Supper and the baptism service.
- c) They shall assist the pastor in visitation of the ill, the aged, visitors, new members, etc.
- d) The chair of this committee shall represent it on Church Council.
- e) The pastoral care committee shall take a relationship building role when contentious matters, disagreements and conflicts arise between members by providing a discussion forum that emphasizes consensus building, reconciliation and forgiveness while recognizing and respecting diverse viewpoints.
- f) The pastoral care committee shall implement a program of outreach to the membership by fostering a culture of acceptance, openness and inclusiveness for new and prospective members.

9. **The Personnel Committee**

Overview: The purpose of the Personnel committee (PC) is to care for the relationship between the pastor and the congregation and when necessary, to mediate conversations between pastors and members of the congregation, pastors and the church council, and between pastors, youth workers, and other members of the pastoral team. This committee would also work together with the finance committee when the contract positions are involved.

Responsibilities: The PC committee attends to both sides of the pastor-congregation relationship. In order to be effective it must maintain a balanced, third-party stance and listen to all voices. PC committee members must be alert to the potential for inappropriate triangling between other congregational committees, the pastors and the PC committee (For complete details of responsibilities see job description)

ARTICLE IX - AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

All independent organizations formed within the Church for the purpose of assisting in its various services and using its facilities are regarded as integral parts of the Church. Such organizations shall submit written reports of the activities and finances to the annual meeting.

ARTICLE X

SECTION A - FOR WORSHIP

1. Public services shall be held on the Lord's Day.
2. The Lord's Supper shall be observed twice a year, or as recommended by the Church Council.
3. Special services and meetings may be arranged by or with the consent of the Church Council.
4. No offering shall be given to an individual unless otherwise ordered by the Church Council.

SECTION B - FOR BUSINESS

1. The Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall take place in the second week in January unless otherwise determined by the Church Council. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Church Council. Notice of all meetings shall be announced on the two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting in verbal and in written form.
2. All elections shall be by secret ballot unless the congregation unanimously decides otherwise.
3. Elections shall be determined by majority vote, except election of a pastor which requires a two-thirds vote.

4. The fiscal year of the Church shall run from January 1 to December 31.

ARTICLE XI

This constitution may be amended providing that two-thirds of the members present at a regular or special meeting vote in favor of this amendment. Notice of the articles to be amended and the nature of the amendment must be given on the two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting that acts upon it.