

CONSTITUTION  
PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH  
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

ADOPTED 1994

AMENDED 1999

AMENDED 2006

AMENDED 2010

AMENDED 2020

(Approved at congregational meeting on November 8, 2020.)

**PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH  
LAWRENCE, KANSAS**

**CONSTITUTION**

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this congregation shall be Peace Mennonite Church, also referred to as PMC. Its principal office is located at 615 Lincoln Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

**ARTICLE II: IDENTITY**

As a congregation in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition of faith, we seek to be an authentic community of healing and hope. We promote non-violence in all areas, from personal conflict resolution to political engagement.

Mission Statement:

Peace Mennonite Church is a Christ-centered community that seeks to create peace, work for justice, care for creation, serve others, and nurture thoughtful faith.

Welcome Statement:

We welcome into the full life of Peace Mennonite Church all who seek to follow Jesus' way of peacemaking and compassion. We rejoice in the diverse characteristics each person brings to our community, and we embrace differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental ability, economic status, marital status, and age.

**ARTICLE III AFFILIATION**

PMC is a member congregation of Mennonite Church USA and of Western District Conference. We are also a member of the Supportive Communities Network of the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests.

**ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION**

Claiming the Christian faith and becoming a member of a Christian congregation involves uniting with God and with other Christians. Those who wish to join Peace Mennonite Church express their desire to deepen their connection to God and to the people who are part of the church. We welcome all seekers and disciples who wish to travel with us.

All prospective members, including those transferring their membership from another church, are to consult with the pastor and participate in appropriate counseling and study in preparation for membership. The Coordinating Committee will affirm those seeking membership for presentation to the congregation. The congregation will affirm and welcome new members. The Coordinating Committee will be responsible for the maintenance of membership rolls.

*Membership privileges:*

1. Serving on the Coordinating Committee
2. Serving on the Ministry Team
3. Voting at congregational meetings

*Membership responsibilities:*

1. A basic understanding and acceptance of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian faith. It is understood the members will vary in the faith emphases, but members of PMC will not teach in opposition to the accepted Anabaptist peace position or other central tenets of the faith.
2. Adult baptism or adult affirmation of baptismal vows. Adult baptism is a ritual of great significance to Anabaptists both historically and presently. Through the symbolism of life-giving water, we as a church celebrate not only the individual's new life but the continued renewal of the entire body of believers by the presence of the Holy Spirit. As such, we ask that all members receive baptism or choose to reaffirm their baptism in the presence of the community when joining the church.
3. Participation in the life of the church. We expect that those who choose to join PMC will share of their time and talents to enrich the life of the congregation and to support the church in service to the broader community. We appreciate that each person will contribute in their own unique way according to their spiritual gifts and life circumstances.
4. Financial contribution to the church. The Bible indicates that God's people are expected to tithe: to give a tenth of one's income as an offering to God. Each Christian must determine what it means for them to be faithful with their finances. A suggestion is to give at least five percent of their net income to PMC, and another five percent to PMC or other organizations doing God's work in the world.

*Participation of non-members*

While church membership signals one's fullest formal commitment to PMC, as a community seeking to promote loving openness and sharing, we affirm the participation of all non-members. All church participants are encouraged to take an active role in the life of the church, including participation in congregational meetings, understanding that if a formal vote is required (as described in Article VI.3), this responsibility is reserved solely for active members.

See Appendix II for Policy on Relationships, Church Polity, and Membership.

## ARTICLE V ORGANIZATION

### 1. *Coordinating Committee*

The Coordinating Committee is responsible for the leadership, administration, and oversight of PMC.

The Coordinating Committee initiates and maintains programs in the interest of the congregation, conceives and enacts church policy, drafts the church budget and approves expenditures, creates and oversees all other church committees, manages personnel needs, and schedules and facilitates congregational meetings at least once each quarter.

This committee shall comprise active church members, including the pastor, the moderator, the moderator-elect, at least one member at-large, a treasurer, and a recorder if possible. The person affirmed as moderator-elect will serve on the Coordinating Committee for two years: one year as moderator-elect and the following year as moderator. All other terms are for one year and renewable.

- a. The Moderator serves as chair of the Coordinating Committee and presides at all congregational meetings, exercising general supervision over the business of the church. The moderator, pastor, and other members of the Coordinating Committee work together to set the agenda for both the coordinating committee and the congregational meetings. The moderator can sign church legal documents.
- b. The Moderator-Elect works with the moderator as necessary. If the moderator is unavailable or unable to perform the duties of this office, the moderator-elect may assume those duties. In the absence of a recorder, the moderator-elect assumes those duties. The moderator-elect can sign church legal documents.
- c. The Church Recorder takes minutes at all congregational meetings and Coordinating Committee meetings. A record of these minutes shall be maintained by the church office.
- d. The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining adequate and correct accounts of the property and financial transactions of the church, depositing all monies in the name and to the credit of the church, preparing quarterly financial reports, ensuring timely filing of reports with state and federal governments, and assisting the Coordinating Committee in drafting the yearly budget. The treasurer can sign church legal documents.
- e. The Member At-Large serves on the Coordinating Committee and may take on special duties as determined appropriate by the committee.

With encouragement, coordination, and direction provided by the Coordinating Committee, several committees work to help the church live out its mission.

## 2. *Worship Committee*

Working closely with the pastor, this committee plans and coordinates all worship services, seeking to promote the spiritual vitality of the congregation through our shared worship.

## 3. *Ministry Team*

Consisting of the pastor and church members, this group oversees the spiritual care of the pastor and congregation. The Ministry Team supports the pastor in their work and performs the role of caring for congregational participants in times of crisis or need. Team members may offer anointing, prayer, or other healing ministries as requested. The Ministry Team also oversees the church's benevolence fund.

## 4. *Building and Grounds Committee*

The PMC Building and Grounds Committee is responsible for the oversight of all aspects of PMC real property. This includes, but is not limited to, building, parking lot, and grounds maintenance, as well as repair and remodeling. This committee is also responsible for organizing work days as needed and for checking the building after outside groups use it. This committee has the authority to fund critical and emergency repairs with approval of at least two people from the Coordinating Committee.

## 5. *Christian Education*

This committee is responsible for coordinating church activities that “nurture thoughtful faith.” The committee may work as a single unit or be comprised of two or more groups which are each given specific responsibilities related to age and/or activity.

## 6. *Social Committee*

This committee is responsible for the ministries of community-building and fellowship.

## 7. *Peace and Social Justice Committee*

Reflecting Menno Simons' assertion that true faith cannot lie dormant, this committee coordinates and encourages the congregation's active service in projects that promote justice and wholeness for all of God's creation.

## 8. *Nominating Committee*

Entrusted with the task of discerning participants' gifts and requesting that they serve in particular roles, this short-term group of 2-4 people is appointed by the Coordinating Committee and affirmed at the fall congregational meeting. Nominating Committee members work with the pastor to develop each year's recommended slate of church leaders,

committee members, and others who will hold designated responsibilities. The Nominating Committee presents these nominees for congregational affirmation at the January congregational meeting.

All committee terms begin upon approval of nominees at the January congregational meeting. All terms (unless otherwise noted) shall be for one year with the ability to renew. The Coordinating Committee may also create working groups as well as add to or delete from the above list of standing committees.

## **ARTICLE VI     DECISION-MAKING**

We esteem the historical Anabaptist affirmation of the “priesthood of all believers,” according to which every believer shares authority and responsibility in the life of the church. In order to safeguard that legacy, we will abide by the following process:

### *1. Congregational meetings:*

- a. As the central governing body at PMC, the Coordinating Committee schedules all congregational meetings.
- b. Agendas for congregational meetings are set by the Coordinating Committee, with the understanding that it is responsive to suggestions made by other church participants. Minutes are kept by the church recorder or other person designated by the Coordinating Committee.
- c. At least four congregational meetings are held each year, with additional meetings scheduled only as needed.
- d. Congregational meeting dates and times will be scheduled and announced as early as possible to provide PMC participants every opportunity to plan their attendance. A meeting’s time and place must be published at least two weeks in advance and in at least two separate communications before the meeting occurs.
- e. When the above conditions for calling a meeting and informing PMC participants of its approach have been met, those participants attending – however great or small in number – constitute a quorum, and their decision shall be binding.

### *2. Decisions requiring congregational consensus:*

- a. Approve the annual church budget.
- b. Approve any purchase or expenditure exceeding \$3,000 which is not already included in the budget. See Article V.4. Building and Grounds Committee for an exception to this rule.

- c. Approve all church statements, policies, endorsements, and organizational documents.
- d. Approve decisions regarding the purchase, sale, or lease of a building for congregational use.
- e. Approve the hiring, evaluation, and termination of all PMC pastoral staff, with the exception of interim pastors. Coordinating Committee has the authority to hire interim pastors.
- f. Approve any new staff positions.
- g. Affirm PMC delegates to Western District and MC USA convention.

In every case, decisions made by the congregation by consensus or a three-fourths majority vote shall supersede decisions made by the Coordinating Committee.

3. *Decision-making model for congregational meetings:*

- a. In all matters, PMC regards consensus as the ideal model for congregational decisions. Consensus is a group decision which some members may not feel is the best decision, but which all members can live with, support, and commit themselves not to undermine. At PMC the ultimate goal of consensus is to make discerning judgments that are faithful to the Holy Spirit and the dynamic scriptural and Mennonite traditions of which we are a part. For a detailed description of the consensus model, see Appendix I.
- b. If participants at a meeting cannot reach consensus (as defined above) on a newly-presented item, no vote may be taken at that meeting. The moderator, after consulting with those present, may schedule another meeting for further discussion, consensus-seeking, and possible vote.
- c. Should the congregation find it necessary to move from consensus to a vote, three-quarters majority of members voting is required to adopt a proposal.

## **ARTICLE VII CHURCH FINANCES**

The church's fiscal year shall be January 1 through December 31.

The Coordinating Committee shall designate at least two individuals with signing authority on PMC's bank accounts, to deposit contributions and pay church expenses. These individuals will typically be the treasurer and the administrative assistant. The pastor will not have signing authority on the church bank accounts.

## **ARTICLE VIII CHURCH STAFF**

The church shall employ staff as needed to carry out its mission. All staff positions will be approved by the congregation, upon recommendation from the Coordinating Committee. The positions will be filled by the Coordinating Committee. If appropriate, the Coordinating Committee will also prepare job descriptions for each position.

The pastor will provide general oversight of the staff.

## **ARTICLE IX PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

1. *Selection:* The Pastor(s) shall be selected by the congregation.
2. *Recruiting and Calling a Pastor:* The Coordinating Committee, in consultation with Conference Minister(s), shall be responsible for the process of identifying, screening and recommending persons with potential for pastoral leadership to the congregation. A call must be extended as a result of formal congregational action, following the decision-making model outlined in Article VI.
3. *Periodic Reviews:* The call of the pastor shall be reviewed by the congregation every three (3) years, and continuing or terminating the call shall be discerned by consensus as outlined in Article VI. After a pastor has served two (2) three-year (3) terms, the succeeding calls will be for five-year (5) terms.
4. *Termination of Pastoral Relationships:* If at any time either the congregation or the pastor(s) desires to terminate the pastoral relationship, a notice of at least three (3) months shall be given, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon. If the congregation wishes to terminate the pastoral relationship, a recommendation for the termination of the pastor(s) shall be brought by the Coordinating Committee to the congregation, following the decision-making process outlined in Article VI.

## **ARTICLE X ARCHIVES**

Important church documents shall be archived at the Spencer Research Library on the campus of the University of Kansas.

## **ARTICLE XI DISSOLUTION**

The congregation may be dissolved by consensus or by a three-quarter (3/4) vote of the active members, according to the decision-making process outlined in Article VI. In the event of dissolution, no member shall be entitled to any distribution or division of the congregation's property or its proceeds. Upon wind-up or dissolution of PMC (after all costs, charges and expenses and all debts of this church are paid) all remaining assets shall be distributed equally

between Mennonite Central Committee, Western District Conference, and Mennonite Church USA, or as the membership of PMC sees fit.

## **ARTICLE XII    AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended or repealed by a congregational decision reached in accordance with Article VI.

*Adopted by Consensus, September 14, 1997*

*Amended in 1999, 2006, 2010*

*Latest amendments adopted by Consensus on November 8, 2020*

## APPENDIX I

### CONSENSUS PROCESS

This process is arrived at through a process whereby the issues are fully aired, all participants feel they have been adequately heard, in which everyone has equal power and responsibility yet influences on the group by virtue of individual stubbornness or charisma are avoided.

The process requires participants to be emotionally present and engaged, frank in a loving, mutually respectful manner, and sensitive to each other; to be selfless, dispassionate, and able to set aside personal agendas and viewpoints for the sake of an open dialogue; and to possess a paradoxical awareness of the preciousness of both people and time.

#### 1. *Setting the Tone*

The moderator (or a designated facilitator) will be responsible for enabling the group to quiet itself or become attuned. The goal is for group members to become more sensitive, not only to one another, but primarily to the mysterious motion of God in the Holy Spirit.

Attunement requires yieldedness and emptying. It involves an attitude of vulnerability, openness to pain, joy, the unknown, and the unexpected. Participants need to know that they are in a safe place where they may speak freely, where they may receive and impart love, forbearance, and forgiveness.

A period of silence, a spoken prayer, a meditation, a reading from scripture or other written material, or a combination of the above can be helpful in developing the group's sense of hearing. This step in the process is vital. It should never be viewed as an extraneous formality that can be rushed so that the group can get to the "real" business of the agenda.

#### 2. *Preparing for Group Discussion*

- a. The moderator/facilitator posts the agenda, including:
  - i. clearly stated topic(s) for discussion
  - ii. the action(s) to be taken for each topic, i.e., an announcement, a report, a discussion, or a decision
  - iii. the estimated time needed for each topic
  - iv. the name of the person responsible for introducing each topic.
- b. When introducing a topic, the person responsible includes:
  - i. a clear definition of the topic
  - ii. a clear statement of what has to be decided, i.e., what needs must be filled or what problem must be solved by the decision

iii. any necessary background information.

### 3. *Group Discussion*

- a. Following the introduction of the topic, any individual so led provides a responsive idea for discussion. This may be an opinion, a further definition of the problem, a suggested approach to the issue, or a proposal for a decision.
- b. Another individual responds to that idea. The second speaker's statement is a combination of his/her own opinion and that of the previous speaker. It includes a response to the first speaker's idea and his/her own thoughts as they have been influenced by the previous statement.
- c. A third person develops the ideas further. This person's contribution is different from what it would have been if the two previous speakers had not shared.
- d. Other people begin responding to earlier statements and offering their views.
- e. The moderator/facilitator and other participants are responsible for:
  - i. keeping the discussion focused on the topic
  - ii. providing clarification or re-phrasing as needed
  - iii. summarizing underlying agreement and differences
  - iv. identifying new issues as they arise
  - v. ensuring that all viewpoints are heard and understood by the group
  - vi. identifying problems with the group process and attempting to remedy them.
- f. When most viewpoints have been expressed and/or some part of the discussion begins to be repeated, the moderator/facilitator or someone else states the conclusion toward which the group appears to be moving. At this point it is essential that objections and ambivalence be heard. Ideally, participants will readily voice their opinions. If a consensus is not clear, the moderator/facilitator or another participant may suggest a polling that proceeds around the circle, soliciting each one's response to the stated conclusion. Participants may pass if they choose. Though cumbersome, polling may help to confirm the conclusion and move the group into the decision phase, or it may reveal that more discussion is needed.
- g. If the tenor of the discussion becomes unruly, unfocused, or otherwise undesirable, the moderator/facilitator may suggest a period of silence and re-centering.

### 4. *Making the Decision*

- a. The moderator/facilitator states the conclusion arrived at in Step 3.f. above and asks if there are final objections or if consensus has been reached.

- b. Final concerns are discussed and the process of developing agreement continues until a decision is endorsed by the meeting as a whole. This occurs when the facilitator records all pertinent details (from flip-charts, white board, etc.) that make up the decision in full view of the participants and there are no further objections or suggested changes.
- c. The group will sit in silence while the church recorder records the decision in the minutes.
- d. Finally, the recorder will read the decision out loud to test if it is indeed the “sense” of the group. If there are no final objections, the moderator/facilitator will declare that consensus has been reached.
- e. If the decision requires action, responsibilities are clarified and some method for ensuring action is developed. This may require reporting back to the group when the task is completed, writing down the outcome and posting it, etc. Implementation plans should be recorded in the minutes.

#### 5. *If the Group Cannot Agree*

- a. The group may not have enough information to make a good decision. A decision may need to be deferred until more facts can be gathered and/or participants have more time for prayer and reflection.
- b. Disagreement and dissent: Consensus does not imply unanimous enthusiasm for a decision. Rather, one must be able to live with, support, and commit oneself not to undermine the decision. When the process has fully run its course and an individual does not agree with the decision being endorsed by the group, there are two possible responses:
  - i. Standing aside: The person disagrees but will not prevent the group from endorsing a decision.
  - ii. Principled objection (blocking): The dissenter states that a passage of the decision would be a violation of deeply held values and convictions, and asks the group not to endorse the decision. In such instances, two options remain: a) continued processing under the consensus model, or b) a formal vote by members, called at the discretion of the moderator and/or the Coordinating Committee.

Note: the distinctions between less than enthusiastic consent and “standing aside,” between extreme personal preference and “principled objection,” may be slight. The process should help an individual reach some degree of clarity. Unconsidered use of the dissent categories can only serve to decrease their meaning and seriousness.

## 6. *Meeting Closure*

Whether a decision is reached or deferred until another meeting, formal closure is important. A hymn, for example, is quite suitable.

The facilitator shall give special attention to closure of meetings in which a decision has been made by voting.

## 7. *Proxy and Presence*

By definition, the consensus process assumes presence; thus the concept of proxy is not applicable to this model. Persons who cannot attend a scheduled meeting, or those who must leave early, may convey sentiment for the group to consider in their absence, but they cannot block consensus if absent.

- \* Credits: Much of the material on the consensus process is adapted from Chapters 2-5 of Building United Judgement; A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making, ©The Center for Conflict Resolution, 1981. The definition of consensus is copied with the permission of The Foundation for Community Encouragement and Valley Diagnostic and Surgical Clinic.

## APPENDIX II

### POLICY ON CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS, CHURCH POLITY, AND MEMBERSHIP

#### 1. *Theology of Relationships*

In response to God's gracious welcome, we seek to know God and to live as just, holy, and peaceable people. We accept Christ's invitation to be radical disciples and to extend Christ's example of unconditional love to the relational dimension of our lives. We embrace the cross as an inherently Christian metaphor that exemplifies for us the sharing of one another's burdens. Especially for those among us whose cross is heavy, we seek to be a caring and compassionate community that lightens the load which some are called to bear. We embrace and actively pursue nonviolence, justice, and wholeness in all relationships. We strive to live a life of material simplicity, generosity and service. Because all who come into God's presence as believers in the community of faith have a place at the Lord's table, we affirm the uniqueness that we each have to offer as a special gift from God. As we relate to one another in our church community and in the world, we strive to become peacekeepers and peacemakers in every relationship of life and love.

#### 2. *Church Polity and Membership*

It is our responsibility as members of the body of Christ to accept the challenge of spiritual unity in the midst of individual differences. Following Jesus takes many expressions, and we do not understand unity to be synonymous with uniformity. We seek to stay connected with one other and to love one another, even when we disagree. Rather than drawing boundaries of exclusion, we extend God's invitation to love one another as God has loved us, nurturing and forgiving one another along the path of faith. We recognize these differences in our own community of faith at Peace Mennonite Church and within the larger church community. In all such cases, we seek an openness to share and to listen intently as we explore together the meaning of Christ's love and grace.

With respect to membership, it is our responsibility as a congregation to define our church's identity and to clarify the meaning of our faith. Through our Statement of Faith, our Mission Statement, our Welcome Statement, our Constitution, Sunday worship, and spiritual formation activities, we seek to be as clear as possible about who we are and what we believe. In our life together, we seek to be guided by the scriptures and informed by our siblings in the Anabaptist tradition. We view such denominational statements as the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (1995) and other adopted statements as formative for our understanding of faith and practice.

It is the responsibility of members to share individual and community perspectives on faith. It is the responsibility of inquirers and prospective members to learn about the church and to decide whether or not they wish to join the congregation as members. Only individuals can answer the questions: Do I share the commitments of this congregation? Can I live with tension at points of

disagreement? Am I ready to support and enrich the church through the gifts I have to offer? Am I willing to be shaped by active participation in the ongoing life of Peace Mennonite Church?

Church membership is a commitment that involves all of life. Membership extends the promise to those who enter into our midst that they will always be loved and nurtured in the faith. It also includes the responsibility to affirm the teachings of Christ for all dimensions of our lives with sincerity and inner peace. By approaching membership in this way, we hope to retain our distinctiveness and history as an Anabaptist church and to be open to the diversity of experiences and insight that enriches us.

**APPENDIX III**  
**PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH**

PMC, as a member in good standing of the Western District Conference and Mennonite Church USA, recognizes and respects the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. We understand the *Confession* to be currently descriptive of the faith commitments of the wider church of which we are a part. We expect those who choose to become members of PMC to have a working knowledge of and a lively dialog with this document.

Our understanding of Christian discipleship, as reflected in the *Confession*, is based on the Anabaptist/Mennonite vision of the church. In keeping with that heritage, we want to be of service to others. We endeavor to live simply and to contribute to the achievement of a just and sustainable order for all creation. We promote non-violence in our total lifestyle, from personal conflict resolution to political engagement. By our words and actions, we hope to serve a prophetic role, calling others to follow the way of Jesus.

\*You can read the text of the *Confession* at:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/who-are-mennonites/what-we-believe/confession-of-faith/>