

JOY MENNONITE CHURCH

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

The previous constitution and bylaws of Joy Mennonite Church were replaced by the following new constitution at a Quarterly Business Meeting of the congregation on August 26, 2012.

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20) We, believing that God’s will can best be done through united efforts and, as the scripture teaches, “let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40), have come together and set forth the following guiding principles to foster growth and unity among the members.

ARTICLE I

FAITH AND PURPOSE

A. Our Founding

Joy Mennonite Church was founded on October 7, 1990, with roots going back earlier to several Mennonite projects/church planting efforts in the Oklahoma City area: Oklahoma City Mennonite Volunteer Service Unit (1966-late 1980's), Oklahoma City Mennonite Church (1966-1971), Trinity United Presbyterian Mennonite Church (1971-1979) and Oklahoma City Fellowship/Joy Community Fellowship (1979- 1990).

B. Faith Foundation

“FOR NO OTHER FOUNDATION CAN ANY ONE LAY THAN THAT WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST.” I Corinthians 3: 11

This scripture, Menno Simon’s motto, continues to guide our faith and life. It points us toward the true source and object of our love, it instructs us where to find help in our ethical decisions and gives the right focus for our commitment to the Kingdom of God.

We commit to the path of Anabaptist movement and its radical call to follow the nonviolent and revolutionary teachings of Jesus Christ, wherever it takes us.

We acknowledge the “Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective” as an expression of Mennonite unity. We recognize that it is a teaching document but is not seen by us as a creed for the church.

C. Purpose

(Our mission statement, once it is written, will go here.)

ARTICLE II RELATIONSHIPS

As a Christian church we have much in common with all other churches who worship Christ as Lord. We are open to cooperating with them in ministries of mutual benefit which glorify Christ and help proclaim the Kingdom of God.

As a Mennonite church we also affirm our Anabaptist Mennonite heritage. In order to benefit from the counsel of others in our heritage and in order to participate in ministries we cannot accomplish by ourselves, our congregation will seek to remain an active member of the Mennonite Church USA and the Western District Conference. We shall also maintain relationships with Mennonite Central Committee, the Mennonite World Conference and other Mennonite-related groups, as well as inter-denominational/religious groups. However, in all these relationships, the congregation remains ultimately responsible before God in its decisions and commitments.

We also shall maintain relationships with non-Mennonite churches and organizations working for the purposes of peace and justice in Oklahoma City and around the world. We seek to learn and be enriched by our brothers and sisters in other faith traditions.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP

We hold to a high view of membership that is rooted in the persecution experiences of the early Anabaptist movement and our desire for deep and intimate Christian community.

A. Membership Categories

1. Full Membership

This membership status is open to those followers of Jesus who seek to follow the nonviolent principles of the Kingdom of God, who are open to the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who have received Christian baptism as the symbol of their commitment and covenant, and who are committed to being part of the community of Joy Mennonite Church.

2. Associate Membership

This membership status is for people who support the work of Joy Mennonite Church and want some formal tie with our congregation.

3. Dual Membership

We will accept as both full and associate members, those who are members of another faith community.

B. Expectation of Members

Church membership carries with it responsibilities as well as privileges. As members are able, they shall attend services of worship, participate in the ministries of the church; support the church's programs with spiritual and material resources; attend the business meetings of the congregation, and be a part of the fellowship and congregational life of the church. All members shall be eligible to participate in the business meetings and hold elective office, but only full members may vote on constitution amendments and for decisions regarding the calling or termination of staff.

We as a congregation accept that our members will not agree on all issues. We encourage our members to follow their conscience in their understanding of the way of Jesus.

Because of our belief in the reconciling love of Jesus, no person will be denied membership on the basis of their socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status, or disability.

C. Reception of Members

1. Reception of Full Members by Baptism

Persons may become members of Joy Mennonite Church upon baptism as a confession of faith, after the following takes place: (1) a vote of acceptance by the congregation, (2) the new member pledging to take on the responsibilities of church membership and (3) the congregation pledging to provide pastoral care and support to the new member.

2. Reception of Full Members who have already been Baptized

Persons who have already been baptized may become a member of Joy Mennonite Church by presenting a letter of transfer from another church, and/or by sharing a personal confession of faith. Persons wishing to become members who have been baptized as infants may be received by letter of transfer or reaffirmation of faith, provided they have confirmed their baptism as an adult believer.

Reception of full members who have already been baptized shall be made after: (1) a vote of acceptance by the congregation, (2) the new member pledging to take on the responsibilities of church membership and (3) the congregation pledging to provide pastoral care and support to the new member.

3. Reception of Associate Members

Persons who wish to support the work of Joy Mennonite Church and want a formal tie with our congregation may be accepted as an Associate Member, upon written request by the prospective member and a vote of acceptance by the congregation.

D. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be concluded by death, letter of transfer to another church, voluntary withdrawal, or by action of the Congregation.

If a member violates the duties and responsibilities of church membership, thereby disrupting the fellowship or destroying the witness of the church, the Congregation shall seek the restoration of the member in the spirit of Matthew 18: 5-7 and I Corinthians 13. If this fails, the Congregation shall terminate the person's membership upon a 2/3 vote.

E. Restoration of Membership

Any person whose membership has been terminated by the Congregation may be restored by the Congregation.

F. Annual Reaffirmation of Membership

An annual time of reaffirmation of our membership commitments will be made on an annual basis. Members of the congregation who choose not to reaffirm their commitment and/or who have not attended a worship service in the last year will be transferred from the Full membership rolls to the Associate membership rolls.

ARTICLE IV THE CONGREGATION

In keeping with a long Mennonite tradition of congregational autonomy and responsibility, the congregation as a body shall be the source of major decisions, including but not limited to: the church program, leadership, pastoral staff, policies, and budget. In periodic business meetings the congregation shall set the course of the church's life, review work in progress, assign major responsibilities, and commit resources.

A. Regular Meetings

The congregational meeting is the final authority and governing body of the congregation: it is the church in business session. The Congregation shall meet at least once per quarter (but may choose to meet more often), with the last meeting of the year being the meeting in which annual elections are held, appointed positions are affirmed, and the budget is approved for the coming year.

B. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by a church officer or upon petition of twenty percent of the members of the congregation. The purpose of the special meeting shall be included in the advance notice of the meeting.

C. Quorum

A quorum for all congregational meetings shall be fifty percent of the full members of the congregation, and shall be necessary for elections, calling a pastor, or other decisions.

D. Procedures for Congregational Meetings

Our business meetings shall begin with prayer. The meetings will be conducted with the the intention of reaching consensus when possible, with a majority vote being used in the alternative for time-sensitive decisions in occasions where consensus can not be reached.

ARTICLE V

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

A. Egalitarian Church Government

*Fellow laborers with me in the ministry,
Guardians and trumpeters are they,
Spiritual pillars are they,
Messengers of peace are they called,
Bishops and overseers are they called,
Shepherds are they called,
Teachers are they called,
The light of the world are they called,
The salt of the earth are they called,
Ministers are they called in Christ's stead.
Brothers and sisters, serve
but do not lord it over others.
—Adapted from Menno Simons*

As a congregation, we believe that we all are equal in the eyes of God. We reject any worldly influence on the governance of the church, and instead seek to work together through cooperative and loving methods.

All members of the church are seen as ministers of the Gospel and ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

All staff, committees and ministries of the church are accountable in the end to the Congregational Business meeting.

B. The Pastor

1. Procedure for calling the Pastor

The Congregation shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee, after the resignation of the Pastor, to seek a new pastor. The Congregation shall set the procedures for the committee to follow, as well as deciding such matters as salary, business expenses, and any other provisions to be extended. The Committee shall present their nominee at a regular or special meeting of the congregation. If a vote is taken, three-fourths of the votes cast by full church members will be necessary to extend a call to the nominee for pastor. .

2. Term and Reviews of the Pastor

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The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite term. Periodic reviews and evaluations shall be done as the Congregation or Pastor desires, at least every three years, using resources such as those available from the Mennonite Church USA.

3. Responsibilities of the Pastor

The Pastor shall have the non-exclusive responsibility of coordinating the preaching/teaching ministry of the church; serving as an ex-officio member of church committees; visiting the sick and bereaved; encouraging members in their Christian walk; conducting membership classes; administering baptism; solemnizing marriages; and officiating at funerals. The Pastor will also participate, to the extent possible, in meetings of pastors in our conference and denomination.

The Pastor is not “the boss” of the church and is urged to work in a spirit of cooperation and love. Major decisions of the church are to be made by the Congregation and not by the Pastor alone.

4. Termination of the Pastor

The Pastor or the congregation may initiate termination. Normally, a ninety day notice shall be given by either party. If the congregation wishes to terminate the Pastor, a simple majority vote of the full members at a regular or special congregational meeting is required.

C. Other Ministerial Staff Positions

The Congregation may choose to call other ministers besides the pastor to serve in special areas of concern. These ministers may be either credentialed through Mennonite Church USA (according to the polity of our conference and denomination) or called by the congregation alone. The terms of the call of commissioned and lay ministers shall be set by the congregation.

D. Deacons

Deacons are members of the congregation who we recognize have been called for specific lay ministry.

The Congregation shall call Deacons who show themselves to have a heart for service and love for God and God's people. Deacons shall be called for either a fixed or indefinite term.

E. Other Special Service Positions

The congregation shall elect members to serve in special service positions which include but are not limited to: Moderator(s), Secretary and Treasurer. These positions are elected for one year terms with no term limits.

1. Moderator

The Moderator is called with the unique task of shepherding a meeting with the goals of maximum participant involvement and civility.

The facilitator will also prepare proposed agendas for regular church business meetings (in cooperation with the pastor and other church members).

The Congregation may also choose alternate Moderator(s) to serve in the absence of the Moderator.

2. The Secretary

The Secretary is tasked with the job of preserving a record of the official business of the church. This includes keeping minutes (to be preserved in permanent form for future congregational use), posting and distribution of minutes to members in a timely manner, keeping a permanent record of all church members and their contact information, and performing other duties as prescribed by the congregation.

3. The Treasurer

The Treasurer shall keep the accounts and financial records of the congregation, receive and deposit all contributions and offerings, pay valid bills, pay church staff, and distribute monies as directed by the congregation.

The treasurer shall give a report of the church's financial affairs at every regular meeting of the congregation and shall serve as the chair of the Finance committee.

Other members of the church may be appointed to assist the Treasurer with these tasks as needed.

Section F. Church Committees

Due to our congregation's small size, we seek to have as simple of a structure of church government as possible. The congregation may appoint committees and special ministries to serve on a temporary or permanent basis, but the congregation will seek to have as few committees as is possible.

Committees are permitted to act autonomously subject to the review and oversight of the congregation.

The only current permanent committee of the church is:

1. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will provide proper stewardship of the congregation's resources and gifts. Throughout the year, the Finance committee will work with the Treasurer to oversee all accounting and banking operations.

The finance committee will also prepare a proposed annual budget each year by November 1 (to be used for the upcoming year).

Section G. Auxiliaries

Auxiliaries may be organized by the congregation. They exist to serve special needs and interests of the church. They elect their own officers and prepare their own programs and budgets, and shall make regular reports of their activities to the Congregation.

ARTICLE VI AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the congregation. Notice of the proposed amendment shall be given at two consecutive preceding weekly worship services of the congregation. Two-thirds of the votes cast shall be required to adopt an amendment, and at least fifty percent of the members must be present at such a meeting.

Only full members may vote on constitution amendments.