

St. John Mennonite Church
Constitution

ARTICLE I

Name and Affiliation

Our congregation calls itself the St. John Mennonite Church of Pandora, Ohio, and is a non-affiliated Anabaptist church.

ARTICLE II

Mission Statement

St. John Mennonite Church is a community of believers striving to know Christ and to make Him known through word and deed.

ARTICLE III

Statement of Faith

We believe in the historic statements of faith as expressed in the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds, Biblical Mennonite and Anabaptist truths, and Christian beliefs for marriage, relationships, and the sanctity of life. We seek to live our faith so that all people may put their trust in God and receive Jesus Christ as Savior from the guilt and power of sin and serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of this church.

Section 1: Truth about the Nature of God

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are wholly inspired by God, infallible and the only supreme and final authority in faith and life (Psalm 19 and 119; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:19-21). We believe in the centrality of Christ as the Scriptures are interpreted and applied in our daily lives. "For no other Foundation can man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor.3:11).
2. We believe in One God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6). We believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
3. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, not made, full of grace and truth (John 1), born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:22-23), in His perfect and sinless humanity (II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:22), His atoning death and the cleansing power of His blood (Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 9:11ff), His bodily resurrection from the dead (Luke 24), His ascension into heaven (Acts 1) and His present life there for us as our High Priest and Advocate (Heb. 7:25-8:13). We believe in His personal, triumphant return (Matt. 24; Acts 1:11). We believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets, and is our comforter and helper and teaches us all things.

Section 2: Truth about the Nature of Mankind

We believe that man was created in the image of God as male and female (Gen. 1:26-27); that they sinned, and thereby incurred the death which is separation from God (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23); and that all human beings are sinful by nature and in need of redemption which is accomplished alone by the grace and power of God through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 3:23-24; 5:1, 2, 6-12; I Cor. 15:21-22). We believe in the reality of Satan and his kingdom of darkness which opposes the kingdom of light (Matt. 4:1-11; Eph. 6:10-18; I Pet. 5:8, 9; I John 2).

Section 3: Truth about Salvation

1. We believe in the immortality of the soul (Luke 12:20; John 3:16-17), the resurrection of the dead (I Cor. 15) and the translation of the living at the return of Christ (I Thess. 4:13ff). This is a future state determined by a just and righteous divine judgement either to life everlasting with God unto blessing for the saved, or to life everlasting apart from God unto condemnation for the lost (Matt. 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; II Thess. 2). We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9, 10; I Cor. 6:9-11).
2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; is the only way to the Father and the only mediator between God and man and that all who believe in Him are justified freely on the ground of His sacrificial death, and become heirs of eternal life through His resurrection. (Rom. 3:24; Rom. 8:17; I Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 3:28- 29; Titus 3:7, I Tim. 2:5; John 14:6).
3. We believe that God has always acted with grace and mercy to bring about personal salvation. A child of God is one who has been moved by the Holy Spirit to accept by faith the gift of eternal life which leads to repentance and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Luke 13:3; John 16:8; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Rom. 10:9,10; Eph. 2:8-10; I Pet. 1:3-5; I John 3:1).
4. We believe that the ordinances of Baptism (Rom. 6:1-14) and the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:17ff) and the opportunity for foot washing (John 13:1-17; I Tim. 5:10) do not bestow grace but rather are symbols and reminders of our salvation and walk with Christ in obedience to His commands (Col. 2:6-23).

Section 4: Truth about Believers and the Church

1. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to live according to our citizenship in the kingdom of light in the midst of the kingdom of darkness (Eph. 5:8-16; Phil. 3:20). This lifestyle seeks to honor the teachings and examples of Christ and His apostles as we know it from the New Testament (Matt. 5:1-7:48; Luke 6:36; I Thess. 1:6-8; I Pet. 2:21; Eph. 5:1; Phil. 2:5; Heb. 12:2).
2. We believe in the fellowship of believers visibly united in the local church (Acts 2). We believe in prayer (Matt. 6:5ff; Phil. 4:6-7), the call to do God's will enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit according to the Word of God and a lifestyle of holiness and obedience (Eph. 4:17-5:20; I Pet. 1:15-16).
3. We believe we are a priesthood of believers (I Peter 2:9) struggling together against the flesh and the world. We encourage, admonish, and disciple one another in mutual respect and submission according to the gifts and talents God gave each person. We believe in regularly gathering together in order to hold fast to our confession of hope, to stir up love and good works among each other, and to exhort one another as we look forward to the return of Christ. (Rom. 12; Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:1-17; Heb. 10:24-25; I Peter 4:7-11).
4. Because God dealt righteously and justly with our sin through Christ's death and resurrection, we believe that we are to walk in truth with all men, not needing to take oaths, join secret societies or engage in unethical alliances (Exodus 20: 3-5; Matt. 5:33-37; II Cor. 4:1-4, 6:14-7:1; James 5:12) but to refrain from all forms of evil (Rom. 12:21), and to support and aid those who are unjustly treated and oppressed (James 1:27; ch 2).
5. We believe in the spiritual separation of church and state (John 18:36). Christians are called to be peaceful citizens and loyal to their government (Rom. 13; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:17; I Tim. 2:1-2). Yet, in conflicts of conscience the highest loyalty is to God and His Word (Acts 4:18-19, 5:29; Daniel 3 and 6).

Section 5: Truth about Relationships

1. We believe in living our lives by applying the grace and peace as expressed in every opening phrase of the New Testament epistles (Rom. 1:7b; I Cor. 1:3). Grace teaches that we are utterly dependent upon God for salvation and life (I Cor. 15:10; Eph. 1), both here and in eternity, and demands a response of love, compassion and forgiveness (Matt. 6:1-4; 23:23; Luke 6:36; Eph. 4:32). Peace teaches that by God's grace we have peace with Him (Rom. 5:1). Therefore, we believe that we are called to have peace with all men, if that is possible (Rom. 12:16-18; I Pet. 4:8-10), refraining from any form of retaliation or violence and overcoming evil with good. This call to peace applies to our relationship with our closest loved ones, our brothers and sisters in Christ, our neighbors and even our enemies (Matt. 5:38-48; Rom. 12:21; I Pet. 2:21ff; 3:8ff).
2. In all our diversity we believe that all should defend the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and do everything possible to preserve the unity of this local body (Rom. 14; I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:1-3) as we seek the mind of Christ (Rom. 15:5, 6; I Cor. 1:10; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1-5).
3. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture.
4. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male and female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
5. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between one man and one woman who are married to each other (I Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4).
6. We hold that believers should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers in marriage (II Cor. 6:14-16). Those who desire to be married in the church should seek to counsel with the pastor(s) (Prov. 1:4), and those experiencing marital problems are urged to seek the confidence and help of the pastor(s) or other believers, as divorce is to be avoided as contrary to the will of God (Malachi 2:16; Matt. 5:31-32).
7. We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including, but not limited to adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Lev. 18, Matt. 15:18-20; I Cor. 6:9-10).
8. We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect and value human life (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139; Prov. 6:16-17; Jer. 1:4-5; Luke 1:41,44).
9. We believe that God instructs us to be responsible stewards of God's creation, material resources and time that He has entrusted to us, , calling people to repentance and holiness (Gen. 2:15; Prov. 30:7-9; 31:10-31; Eccl. 5:18-20; Matt. 25:14-29; Luke 21:1-4; Eph. 5:16; I Tim. 6:6-11).

ARTICLE IV

Church Membership

Section 1: Definition

1. Church membership is a commitment to the one true church, the body and bride of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-30) and to the building of His church (Eph. 4:11-16). The membership of St. John Mennonite Church shall be composed of individuals: who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of the St. John Mennonite Constitution; who offer evidence by their confession and their conduct; who are living in accord with their affirmations and this constitution (and bylaws), and; who are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism (by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion) is a person's public confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to His earthly church. Baptism symbolizes a believer's identity in Christ (Rom 6:1-10).
2. A member of this church is one who attains the age of 16, confesses their faith in Jesus Christ and upon that confession is baptized (either at this church or at a prior time), completes a membership class of this church and is then recommended by the Elder Board and Church Council for membership and accepted by the church membership.

Section 2: Rights and Duties

All members should seek to accept the rights and duties as a member of this church.

1. A member is one who takes an interest in the ministries and life of the church and manifests that interest by regular attendance (Heb. 10:25), prayer (Eph. 6:18), and loving support through time, talent and means (Gal. 6:10). Faithful participation in this congregation's worship, discipleship and service opportunities are particularly important. Members of this church who are non-residents (students, missionaries, etc.) and support the work of this church with interest and prayer will be considered active members.
2. A member is one who seeks to live a life of Christian discipleship in obedience to the Scriptures, bear the burdens of others in the spirit of Christian love, demonstrate concern for their welfare and in humility consider others more important than themselves (Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12-15).
3. A member is one who honors the guidelines of this constitution, as interpreted from the Scriptures, and seeks the various offices and positions in the church according to their talents, giftedness and calling so that the church may function as a healthy and growing body of believers (I Cor. 12:4-7 & I Cor. 14:12). All members have the privilege and responsibility to discuss and vote concerning the affairs of the congregation and graciously accept and abide in unity with the decisions made (Eph. 4:11-16).
4. A member is one who contributes cheerfully to the needs of this church according to the budgetary priorities of the congregation, home and foreign missions and other Christian causes, thereby seeking the unity of the body of believers and in so doing, strengthening and edifying the church in all its phases, so that others may be added by winning souls to Jesus Christ through word and deed (II Cor. 9:6-8).
5. A member is one who abstains from practices that may cause others to stumble or bring reproach upon the Church of Christ (Rom. 14:13).
6. If a member is continuously absent from church activities or is out of sympathetic and harmonious relationship with this church or its Statement of Faith, diligent efforts shall be made toward reconciliation and participation in the fellowship. If such efforts fail by the Elder Board and members of the

congregation, such a person will be asked to voluntarily resign their membership or their name shall be brought before the congregation for a vote of removal as a member when so determined by the Church Council upon recommendation by the Elder Board (Matt. 5:23-24; Heb. 3:13 & Heb. 10:24-25).

If a member violates the duties and privileges as set forth in this constitution by conduct not befitting a believer in Jesus Christ, thereby disrupting the fellowship or destroying the witness of the church, then the pastor(s) and Elder Board of the church shall deal with such a member in the spirit of Matthew 18, I Corinthians 13 and Galatians 6 seeking redemptive correction. If this cannot be found, their name shall be brought before the congregation for a vote on their removal from the membership upon the recommendation of the Church Council. A disciplined member shall be reinstated upon repentance and return to conduct befitting a follower of Jesus Christ.

7. We value the Christian home as integral to a living church and we believe that a living church is essential to a Christian home. Though not all families are made up of believers (I Cor. 7:10-16), each member of a church, whether single (I Cor. 7:8, 25-28) or married, has a duty through word and deed to contribute to the formation of a Christian home (Col. 3:17-21). Those called to marry are to marry a believer (II Cor. 6:14-15), abhor divorce (Mal. 2:16), establish a home according to God's design of mutual submission (Eph. 5 and 6) and train their children in the way of Christ as their sincere duty (Deut.6:4-9). The character of a Christian home includes having family prayer and Bible reading and seeking the salvation of those who do not as yet believe.

8. Any member requesting a letter of transfer to another church is entitled to receive this transfer. If a member is continually absent from church activities they will be contacted in regard to the status of their membership and could be placed as an inactive, nonvoting, non-attending member of St. John Mennonite Church.

9. Any non-resident member is encouraged to fellowship with a believers' church with the intent of becoming fully involved in that local church.

ARTICLE V

The Congregation

Section 1: The role of the Congregation

We believe that God will lead His people as a whole to understand who should be recognized as members and leaders, what should be believed, and what should be done relying on the diligent examination of Scripture to guide us (Deut. 4:5-6; Acts 17:11; II Tim. 2:14-16; Heb. 4:12). Scripture also makes it clear that all believers in Christ are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and that the same Spirit equips each of us in different ways; therefore we know that there is a need for collective wisdom in the body, as all spiritual gifts and all wisdom do not exist in any one person (Prov. 11:14; I Cor. 12; Eph. 2:19-22). At all times in discussion, decisions and enactment by leaders and members, the unity of the church should be a ruling principle, unless obvious spiritual principles are neglected or rejected (Eph. 4:1-6).

The English word *church* in Greek is *ekklesia* (literally *called out ones*) - a popular assembly -which in the Greek culture was the final decision-maker for the community. Churches, like individuals and leaders, can err or become islands of faith disconnected from God's leading and molding of His church universal (II Tim. 4:2-4; James 5:19-20). The congregational membership is the final decision-maker, in the context of humility and unity, giving consideration to the wisdom provided by congregational leaders and the larger Mennonite and Christian church (Eph. 4:11-16). Faithfulness and love for the universal church (the Bride of Christ) reveals our true faith (John 17:20-23).

Thus the role of the congregation is the final decision-maker in questions of:

1. Recognizing and choosing servant leaders (Acts 6: 3-6).
2. Discipline and reconciliation when unresolved by the Elder Board (Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:4-8; 5:11-6:6; II Cor. 2:5-11).
3. Doctrine (Acts 17:11). All of the New Testament epistles, except Philemon and the pastorals, were written to churches as a whole, instructing them in doctrine as a body. We believe that all Scripture is given by God for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness to all believers to know and to practice (II Tim. 3:16).

Section 2: Congregational Meetings

1. Worship services shall be held on Sunday, the Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:19-25).
2. Two regularly scheduled congregational membership meetings are to be conducted per year.
 - a. The annual election of officers shall be held in November unless otherwise designated by the Church Council.
 - b. The annual business meeting shall be held in the first quarter of each year unless otherwise designated by the Church Council.
 - c. The congregational membership is to be informed of the exact date and tentative agenda at least one month prior to these meetings.
3. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Church Council at any time or upon the request of twenty-five (25) members. All special congregational meetings and their purpose shall be announced publicly two Sundays prior to the scheduled meeting.
4. All congregational meetings will be led by the Congregational Chairman, who is responsible for appropriate devotions and the orderly conduct of the meetings (I Cor. 14:40).

Section 3: Congregational Decision-making

Decision-making is a part of the congregational life of worship. It is a time of closure and new beginnings that should be done with humility of mind, regarding one another as more important than oneself (Phil. 2:1-4). Participation in decision-making is the privilege and responsibility of church members, and is another opportunity to yield to the Holy Spirit's leading. Appropriate time before decision making should be given for prayer and fasting (Acts 1:24; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23). Showing love for one another in the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-6); pursuing what is good, both for ourselves and for all (I Thess. 5:15); and seeking those things which make for peace to edify one another (Rom. 14:19; 15:1-7), should surround these moments in a believer's church.

1. The following decisions are to be by a simple majority (greater than 50%) vote or affirmation of the members of the congregation voting on the particular issue; but any member at the meeting may call for a ballot vote:
 - a. Positions not specified in this constitution as presented by the Church Council
 - b. Approving recommendations from the Church Council not specified but permitted by this constitution
 - c. Accepting new members
 - d. Removing members (see Article IV, Sec. 2, #6)

2. The following decisions are to be by a 2/3-majority vote of the members of the congregation voting on the particular issue:
 - a. Approving the annual budget
 - b. Changing a budget line item greater than 3% of the total budget (exception: Article VII, Sec. 2, #3)
 - c. Purchasing or selling of real estate or erection of new buildings
 - d. Electing/renewing pastors, lay elders, deacons(nesses) and other Council level members
 - e. Approving a multi-year vision plan
 - f. Adopting and amending the constitution
 - g. Establishing a new church plant
3. Voting procedure:
 - a. All decisions requiring 2/3 vote shall be by paper ballot.
 - b. Absentee ballots are available for decisions requiring 2/3 vote and a standard procedure for absentee voting shall be established by the Church Council.
 - c. Any meeting requiring a decision by the membership shall require a motion, a second and allow for discussion.
 - Exceptions shall concern accepting new members.
 - In situations requiring a simple majority decision for passage, amendments may be allowed.
 - In situations requiring a 2/3 majority decision for passage, discussion shall be limited to comments and observations, and amendments shall not be accepted when prior congregational meetings for changes have been held.

ARTICLE VI: Officers and Personnel

We believe that God has placed leaders over the local congregation with authority, responsibility and accountability (I Thess. 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1) as fellow believers in the faith, (II Cor. 1:24) who must act with compassion and gentleness as servant leaders (II Tim. 2:24-26). They are to be in accord with the constitution of the St. John Mennonite Church and be members of the church in good standing.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of St. John Mennonite Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to St. John members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by St. John Mennonite in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to abide by the positions in Article III, the Statement of Faith, of this constitution (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; I Thess. 5:22).

Approved job descriptions are required for positions filled or to be filled.

Section 1: Elders

1. All elders (*presbuteros*) whether pastoral staff or lay are the overseers (*episkopos*) and shepherds (*poimen*) of the church (Acts 20:17-35), but not all elders are on the elder board. They are to be men full of the Spirit and wisdom, above reproach, the husband of one wife (the wife not being a gossip but a woman of faith). Elders are to be temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. They must be able to manage their families well with obedient children. They must not be a recent convert and must have a good reputation with those outside the church. They must be grounded in the faith so that they can encourage others with sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (I Tim. 3:1-7, II Tim. 2:24, 25; Titus 1:5-9).

2. Elders are to:
 - a. Be ministers of the Word
 - b. Be committed to prayer (Acts 6:4)
 - c. Be responsible for worship
 - d. Be responsible for benevolence
 - e. Be responsible for the spiritual guidance of the church
 - f. Shepherd the flock, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not lording over those in their care but being examples (I Peter 5:1-4), to whom the members are to submit in spiritual matters (Heb. 13:17)
 - g. Recommend to Council nominations for elective offices
 - h. Recommend to Council all church members for acceptance or removal
 - i. Recommend to Council any interim pastoral staff
 - j. Hold each other accountable to the ministry to which they were called.
3. The number of lay elders shall be determined by one elder per annual average 100 attendees or a fraction thereof with a minimum of three and a maximum of seven. They are to be elected by the membership with staggered three year terms.
4. Those elders who have served the church faithfully in the past and are members of the church in good standing may be called upon to serve the church with their wisdom and experience as non-active elders as long as the Lord gives them strength.
5. Statement on Final Authority Concerning Matters of Faith and Conduct: The St. John Mennonite Church Board of Elders shall lead the congregation in the interpretation of the Church's Statement of Faith, rules and regulations.

Section 2: Pastors

1. Pastors are to meet the same qualifications with the same responsibilities and expectations as their fellow elders. They shall be recognized and approved by the congregation as particularly gifted and called to the ministry and receive due compensation for preaching, teaching, shepherding and/or discipling (John 21:15-17; I Tim. 5:17-18).
2. Specific duties may include:
 - a. To teach and preach God's Word in purity, power and prayer (II Tim. 4:1-5)
 - b. To shepherd the flock in servanthood and integrity (I Tim. 4:12)
 - c. To stimulate Christian lifestyle and discipleship by example, instruction and counseling (II Tim. 2:14-16)
 - d. To assist the congregation in worship
 - e. To assure the regular observance of the ordinances of the church and child dedication
 - f. To oversee all ceremonies including marriages, funerals, etc.
 - g. To visit and give comfort to those who are ill, aged or in need of care and shepherding (Matt. 25:34-40; Gal. 6:1-2; James 1:27).
3. A pastor's calling to this congregation shall be re-confirmed every five years by a 2/3 vote of the membership participating.
4. The lead pastor shall insure the supervision of all staff according to the organizational chart.

5. The pastors and staff of St. John Mennonite Church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. The facilities and property of St. John Mennonite Church shall only host weddings between one man and one woman. God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman and Himself, therefore St. John Mennonite Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman.

Section 3: Deacons & Deaconesses

1. *Diakonos* (deacon) is translated servant or minister in English scripture. Those who fill this position are to be men or women (Romans 16:1, I Tim. 3:11) "filled with the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3), "worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve" (I Tim. 3:8-10).

2. They are the servants, leaders of ministries, stewards of the people of the church and its material (Acts 6: 1-7). They are to oversee the various ministries and ministry leaders which may vary with need and availability of giftedness.

3. Lay deacons(nesses) shall be elected to staggered three year terms and may be renewed by the congregational membership without limit to number of terms, and paid deacons(nesses) shall be elected to five year terms.

Section 4: Congregational Treasurer and Assistant

1. The Treasurer shall be a man or woman of integrity and spiritual commitment, gifted and experienced with financial skills and insight, and shall serve a two-year term.

2. The responsibilities involve:

- a. Overseeing the keeping of adequate records of all giving and disbursements
- b. Being responsible for the preparation of monthly and yearly reports for distribution to the congregation
- c. Informing the Council and the congregation of the financial status and needs of the church through public announcements
- d. Being a part of any financial committee including chairing the Finance Committee
- e. Counting the offerings accompanied by members of the Facilities Ministry (the trustees).

3. The Assistant is to be trained to do the tasks of the Treasurer in case of his or her absence and upon completion of the term. The Assistant shall be elected by the congregational membership to a two-year term and then shall serve two years as Treasurer.

Section 5: Council Clerk

1. The Council Clerk shall be a man or woman of integrity and spiritual commitment, with the skills to record and report the business of the church. The person should be gifted with attention to detail, accuracy and organization. Responsibilities involve the keeping of the minutes of all Church Council and congregational meetings and making monthly, special or any other summaries for congregational distribution.

2. The Council Clerk shall be elected by the congregational membership to a two year term without limit to number of terms.

Section 6: Ministry Leaders

1. A Ministry Leader is a person who leads a particular ministry and is ultimately responsible and accountable for that ministry.
2. Those that desire to lead a ministry need to be recommended by the appropriate deacon(ness) to the Council for their approval and the congregation then duly informed.

Section 7: Other Officers

1. Temporary positions may be filled from the congregation by the Church Council.
2. Representatives to various organizations shall be appointed from the membership by the Church Council.
3. Interim pastoral staff shall be considered by the Council for approval upon recommendation by the Elder Board for a six month period with the possibility of re-approval not exceeding a total of three such consecutive periods in a two year span without congregational approval. Interim pastoral staff may be asked to attend Elder Board meetings as a non-voting member for their input and counsel.

Section 8: Support Staff

1. All support staff employees are asked to walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ as a faithful attendee of this body and to support this constitution (excluding contracted staff). He or she should have sufficient ability to perform his or her assigned work.
2. Support staff positions are not represented on the Church Council or Elder Board.

ARTICLE VII: Boards, Councils, Ministry Teams and Committees

Section 1: Elder Board

1. The lay elders and Lead Pastor shall form the Elder Board of the church. They shall care for the spiritual well-being and benevolence of the church and its members and shall be accountable to the congregation for the keeping of the faith.
2. Shall meet prior to the monthly Church Council meeting for discussion and prayer and to present pertinent issues to the Church Council. A chairman of the Elder Board will be chosen from the Board membership to preside when declined by or in the absence of a Lead Pastor.
3. Members and friends concerned about spiritual, disciplinary or benevolent matters or are sick and desire prayer and/or anointing with oil (James 5:14) should make these known to any of the members of this board.
4. Other Pastoral staff may attend Elder Board meetings at the invitation of the elders.

Section 2: Church Council

1. Shall meet monthly in public meeting to administer, oversee and seek the general welfare of the congregation and supervise the care and maintenance of the church property. Executive session may be utilized in the discussion of personnel issues and shall include all elected lay officers and any others as deemed necessary by the chairman. Others may be invited to report as needed. At the first meeting of the year the Church Council shall elect from among the lay elders, upon recommendation from the Elder Board, the Congregational Chairman who shall preside over Council and congregational meetings and vote in cases of a tie.

2. Shall consist of the Lead Pastor and two lay elders, two Deacons(nesses), the Council Clerk, the Congregational Treasurer, and two congregational members. These include:

- the Lead Pastor
- two lay elders as chosen by the elders, including the Congregational Chairman
- the Deacon(ness) of Facilities
- the Deacon(ness) of Missions
- the Council Clerk
- the Congregational Treasurer
- two at-large congregational members elected to staggered three year terms
- (ex-officio) the Office Administrator

Unpaid officers shall always be a majority in total membership; if a current unpaid position should become a paid position then another lay elder should be added to the Council membership.

A quorum is a majority of all members and shall be required for any action. All members shall have one vote but the Congregational Chairman may only vote to break a tie. A paper ballot vote may be requested by any member.

3. Shall present yearly to the congregation an annual budget for the coming year for discussion and approval. The Church Council shall not expend any sum over 3% of the annual general budget for that year on individual unbudgeted items without the congregational membership's consent, except a facilities repair emergency with unanimous consent of the council. Purchases and sales of real estate or the erection of new buildings shall be made with the consent of the membership.

4. Shall appoint committees and task forces as needed to run the affairs of the church, seeking those willing and able to serve for the various tasks. It shall present recommendations to the congregation which affect the life of the church for discussion and approval. Its minutes shall be made available to the congregation in an appropriate way.

5. Shall consider reports from the various ministries, and shall consider for approval ministry plans, the organization plan and job descriptions, and perform other administrative functions.

6. Shall in case of vacancy in any office of the church (excluding support staff) appoint a successor who shall serve until the next annual election of officers in November. The newly elected officer shall then complete the original term of office.

7. Shall approve employment and termination of employment of all paid support staff.

8. Shall act on any recommendation from the Elder Board (after an investigation and recommendation by the Elder Board done in the spirit of Gal. 6:1) on suspending and restricting the responsibilities of any congregationally elected staff or officer until a deciding vote is held by the membership.

9. All elected lay members of the Church Council shall be members of the church in good standing for at least one year prior to being elected.

10. Shall act on behalf of the congregation in matters of litigation and in the interpretation of this constitution. All such decisions and/or actions must be reported at the next or special congregational meeting for review, which may include a congregational vote of approval or disapproval, if requested by any congregation member in good standing.

Section 3: Ministry Teams

1. A Ministry Team consists of all individuals involved with a particular ministry. The qualifications, duties, responsibilities, and size of the team shall be determined by the deacon(ness) and/or ministry leader according to the approved ministry plan.

2. Ministry specifics are to be covered in the St. John Mennonite Church Organization Plan.

Section 4: Committees and Task Forces

Committees and task forces can be assigned for longer or shorter times to assure that specific needs and tasks are researched and done. Such committees are appointed by the Church Council, their specific tasks clearly outlined and their progress reported to the Church Council.

ARTICLE VIII:

Nomination, Election and Calling

Section 1: Of the Paid Pastoral Staff

1. When a vacancy in the pastoral staff or a need for additional pastoral staff arises in the church, the elders and the Church Council shall meet in the spirit of wisdom and prayer (James 3:13-18) to appoint a search committee. This committee shall be made up of the lead pastor (except in the lead pastor search), at least one lay elder, and other members of the church who are qualified to evaluate the potential candidate(s) according to the approved job description(s). The process shall involve the gathering of information on the potential candidates, the discussion of their merits and the final choice of one candidate most suitable for the vacancy. The information shall be made known to the congregation following a recommendation by the Church Council. The person shall then be asked to candidate in the church. After appropriate exposure, a vote shall be taken during a called congregational membership meeting based on the recommendation of the elders and the Church Council. A 2/3 majority is required for the staff person to be appointed.

2. The initial term for the pastoral staff person is five years, though an earlier evaluation is possible at the discretion of the elder board. Each consecutive term is also a period of five years to be affirmed by a congregational vote of approval. If the staff person does not receive a 2/3 majority, the elders and/or those appointed by the Church Council shall seek to resolve any problems in order to keep the peace, and call a congregational membership meeting for a final discussion and vote. If it is evident that no solution can be found, the staff person shall be given the option to resign or be dismissed. Consideration for transition may be given before compensation is terminated.

3. If the staff person finds it necessary to terminate his or her ministry, adequate notice, as required in the job description, must be given to the elders and the Church Council, so that the continuity and order of the church life is not disrupted.

Section 2: Of the Paid Deacon(ness) Staff

1. When a vacancy in the paid deacon(ness) staff occurs or additional such staff shall be needed the same procedure used for pastoral selection above shall be used with the exception of pastoral candidating.
2. The initial term for the deacon(ness) staff person is five years, though an earlier evaluation is possible at the discretion of the elder board. Each consecutive term is also a period of five years to be affirmed by a congregational vote of approval. If the staff person does not receive a 2/3 majority, the elders and/or those appointed by the Church Council shall seek to resolve any problems in order to keep the peace, and call a congregational membership meeting for a final discussion and vote. If it is evident that no solution can be found, the staff person shall be given the option to resign or be dismissed. Consideration for transition may be given before compensation is terminated.
3. If the staff person finds it necessary to terminate his or her ministry, adequate notice, as required in the job description, must be given to the elders and the Church Council, so that the continuity and order of the church life is not disrupted.

Section 3: Of the Lay Elders, Deacons(nesses), Assistant Treasurer, Council Clerk, and at-large Council members

1. Before the election of officers, those desiring the offices or those observing the giftedness in another are urged to make this known to a member of the Elder Board. Ample time for these nominations will be given so that those requested to serve by another can be asked, and all can be reviewed by the Elder Board for recommendation to the Church Council for approval. The names must be published by the Council Clerk at least two Sundays prior to the election for the prayerful consideration of the membership.
2. In the case of nomination of elders, each nominee having accepted the nomination shall be personally interviewed by two non-active elders in good standing, drawing upon their wisdom and experience and having served faithfully in the position of elder prior to this time. If both non-active elders, after reviewing, support the nomination, that person's name shall be given to the Elder Board to consider for recommendation to the Council for approval.
3. To be considered or reconsidered for the office of elder a 2/3 majority congregational affirmation vote of the total votes cast by the members is required concerning each man put forward for the given election. If there are more new, non-continuing, candidates than positions open, the final selection will be by a casting of lots before the assembled congregation in the meeting and after prayer seeking the Lord's direction (Acts 1:23-26). Any continuing elders receiving the 2/3 majority vote are retained on the elder board.
4. To be considered or reconsidered for the positions of Church Council at-large members, candidates must be church members in good standing, as discerned by the Elder Board using the definition of Church Membership found in Article IV, Section 1 of this Constitution as the standard for eligibility. The two positions will be staggered three-year terms, which may be renewed by the congregational membership without limit to number of terms. Nominees for a new or continuing at-large position must be approved by the Elder Board and the Church Council, and must be published by the Council Clerk at least two Sundays prior to the election for the prayerful consideration of the membership. If only one nominee for the at-large position is submitted to the congregation, for either a new or continuing position, the person must receive a 2/3 majority vote of affirmation to attain or retain the position. If more than one nominee is eligible for the at-large position after a vote of affirmation, the selection will be by a casting of lots before the assembled congregation in the meeting and after prayer seeking the Lord's direction (Acts 1:23-26).

**ARTICLE IX:
Church Planting**

The mission and vision of the congregation is to grow and divide as a healthy and expanding body of Christ. The size, location and leadership of all planted churches as well as their relationship to St. John Mennonite Church, must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the congregational membership of those voting, following a recommendation by a Church Plant Deacon and Committee, and the Church Council.

**ARTICLE X:
The Constitution**

Section 1: Adoption

This constitution shall, upon recommendation by the Church Council, be presented to the congregation for adoption at a congregational meeting, with a printed copy available at least two Sundays prior to the scheduled date. Adoption shall be made by a congregational vote of two-thirds of those voting. Complete implementation of the above described Council and related offices will be no later than the next regular members meeting in November following the adoption of this constitution.

Section 2: Amendments

Amendments will come through the Church Council and upon their recommendation will be presented to the congregational membership for approval by two-thirds vote of those members voting. A printed copy will be available to the congregation at least two Sundays before the vote.

Section 3: Revision

Every five years or when deemed necessary for the well-being of the church, the Church Council shall consider reviewing the constitution. If updates are needed, they shall appoint a five-member task force, including at least one member from the Elder Board, to review the constitution and make recommendations to the Church Council for a proposal to the congregational membership.