

Constitution of Ebenezer Mennonite Church

Revised March 14, 2010

ARTICLE I — Name

This body of believers will be known as the Ebenezer Mennonite Church.

ARTICLE II — Purpose

It is the purpose of this Church to glorify our God and Savior Jesus Christ by:

1. Encouraging a vibrant life of worship both individually and corporately.
2. Reaching those who need Christ with the Gospel of God's grace.
3. Building solid Christ like character through Christ-centered Bible teaching.
4. Caring by promoting and developing the participation in ministry by each member through use of their gifts and abilities.
5. Expressing the love of God to our neighbors, community and the world through Reaching, Teaching, and Caring.

ARTICLE III — Statement of Faith

1. We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the divinely inspired Word of God. This inspiration extends through every word of the original writings (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21). We believe the Bible is God's complete and final revelation of Himself to man (Proverbs 30:5, 6, Revelation 22:18, 19) and is the supreme authority in all matters pertaining to Christian faith and life (John 14:21, Joshua 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. We believe in one infinitely perfect God who exists eternally and equally in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4, John 10:30, Acts 5:3-4, John 1:1, 14, Titus 2:13).
3. We believe Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:27, 35) and is in one person true God and true man (Matthew 1:23, 1 Timothy 3:16). He lived a sinless life (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15), died on the cross as the substitute for our sins (Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 3:18), arose bodily from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6) and ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Father, He is now our High Priest and Advocate (Acts 1:9, Hebrews 8:1, 1 John 2:1).
4. We believe in the existence of Satan (1 Peter 5:8). He is the ultimate source of all sin and the embodiment of all evil (John 8:44). He leads a host of fallen angels against God, the Church and all mankind (Ephesians 6:12) who tempt the believer to sin (1 John 3:8, 1 Peter 5:8). He accuses the believer in the presence of God (Revelation 12:10, Job 1:7-11) and, having been defeated at the cross (Hebrews 2:14), will himself finally be cast into the Lake of Fire forever (Revelation 20:10).
5. We believe mankind was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) which places special value on them. However, this image was marred by sin as a result of Satan tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which then infected mankind. Because of this sin nature, mankind sins and, (Romans 3), by this choice, is separated from God. Sin brings forth both physical and spiritual death (Genesis 3:19, Romans 6:23). Mankind is incapable of restoring his relationship with his Creator. Salvation is fully a work of the grace of God brought about through Christ's shedding of blood, death on the cross, and resurrection from the grave and realized on man's part by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 3:4-6, John 3:5, 16).

6. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for the sins of all men (Isaiah 53:5-6, 1 Peter 3:18), and all who receive Him as Savior by faith are born again into the family of God (John 1:12, 3:5-7, 5:24, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 2:8, 9) and on the grounds of His shed blood are forgiven, justified and possess the assurance of eternal life (John 10:28-29, Romans 8:35-39, Ephesians 1:7, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 5:11-13).
7. We believe it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to glorify the Son (John 16:14). At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Galatians 4:6) and baptizes them into the body of Christ which is His Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). He is the Divine Comforter, available to all Christians to guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and effective service by sovereignly bestowing various spiritual gifts upon all believers (John 16:13, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:13-14, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 1 Peter 4:10).

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at the time of conversion and is the act of placing the believer into the body of Christ, but is not a second work of grace. It is different from the filling of the Holy Spirit which is an ongoing process that may occur at any time in the believer's life. Neither of these aspects is normally accompanied by unusual signs such as speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 5:18).
8. We believe in the Great Commission and making disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing, them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."(Matthew 28:19-20). All who respond and are born again in this age comprise the true Church of Jesus Christ. All born-again believers are members of the true Church and therefore are eligible for membership in this local Church (Ephesians 2:17-22). We believe during this present dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2), two ordinances are enjoined upon the Church, baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 6:3-4, 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, Galatians 3:26-27).
9. We believe in the personal, visible, pre-tribulation rapture and imminent return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 4:13-18, Revelation 19:11-16), and in His millennial reign upon the earth (Zechariah 14:9, Revelation 20:1-6).
10. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust (John 5:28-29), the saved to everlasting life and joy in the presence of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:51-54, Revelation 21:1-4), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:41, 46, Revelation 20:11-15).

ARTICLE IV —

Church Ordinances & Ceremonies

1. Ordinances

A. Baptism:

1. Baptism will be administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have given evidence of such profession (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, 16:31-33 Romans 6:1-4).
2. The preferred mode of baptism is by immersion. Alternate modes of pouring or sprinkling may be used.

B. Communion:

1. The Lord's Supper will be a memorial of His atoning sacrifice observed in obedience to the Lord's command, "Do this in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-24, Luke 22:19-20).
2. The Lord's Supper will be observed at least four times a year. All believers will have the right to participate (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

2. Ceremonies

A. Marriage:

Marriage is ordained by God. It is the first and holiest institution among people. Marriage is between one man and one woman. Marriage, therefore, should be entered into carefully and prayerfully. Pastoral approved pre marital counseling and the support of the Church will be sought, keeping in mind the following scriptural criteria for a Biblical marriage:

1. Marriage is ordained by God (Genesis 2:18, 2:24).
2. Marriage partners must be equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14).
3. Marriage is a commitment of faithfulness and trust for life (Matthew 19:4-6). Because of this unique commitment and unity, premarital sexual relations and cohabitation, adultery and homosexual relationships are considered sinful practices (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Hebrews 13:4).

Should a member consider divorce or remarriage, the deacons and the pastor will review the matter and make recommendations appropriate to the situation.

B. Child Dedication:

A service of dedication will be provided so parents may dedicate their children to the Lord in the presence of the congregation and pledge themselves to lead their children to the knowledge of the truth in Jesus Christ. The congregation pledges to support the family with love, encouragement and endeavors to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of the family (Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Proverbs 22:6).

C. Licensing and Ordination:

The Church may provide ordination or licensing for any man called by God into active Christian service. He must have been an active member for at least one year and must apply in writing to the deacons. Upon their approval, this request will be submitted to the congregation for consideration and action. Approval will require two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership present.

1. Licensing:

The candidate will be examined by the deacons with respect to call and doctrine. It is generally recognized that licensing should be a step to ordination.

2. Ordination:

After he has followed the above guidelines, the candidate will submit a written doctrinal statement and be reviewed by a council of ministers following accepted procedures and guidelines. Upon approval he will be ordained; the pastor and the candidate will jointly make arrangements for the service.

D. Missionary Commissioning:

Members who have been interviewed by the Missions Committee, approved by the deacons and are missionary appointees of an approved mission organization will be commissioned at a public service by the Church. The commissioning service may include representatives of the mission organization under whom the missionary will serve.

ARTICLE V — Membership/Partnership

1. Guidelines for Membership/Partnership

- A. Eligibility for membership in this congregation is based on the following: confession of faith in Christ, a willingness to follow the Lord in baptism (Article IV 1.A.1.-2.), evidence of Christian character, acceptance of the rights and responsibilities expressed in this constitution and affirmation of the statement of faith.
- B. Prospective members will attend the Church membership class and will be interviewed by the deacons.
- C. Upon their approval, the deacons will present the candidates to the congregation, who, by standing, will confirm the candidates' membership.
- D. Persons belonging to societies or other groups which compromise the loyalty of the Christian to the Lord and His Church, contradict Biblical teachings on sin, salvation and Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, are ineligible for membership (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Ephesians 5:11-12, James 5:12).

2. Duties of Members/Partners

- A. Lead a faithful Christian life, exercise Christian love toward everyone, attend faithfully regular congregational services and meetings and have daily personal devotions (Joshua 1:8, Hebrews 10:24-25, 2 Peter 3:18).
- B. Members will live exemplary lives of service unto Christ (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 6:17).
- C. A Christian should gratefully and obediently respond to God's redeeming love by using his resources for the fulfillment of Christ's mission in the world. Such stewardship requires the Christian to give freely and systematically of his time, talents and possessions (Proverbs 3:9-10, Romans 12:1-6, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
- D. Parents will diligently train their children (Article IV 2.B.), and as a family faithfully attend the regular services of the Church (Proverbs 22:6).
- E. Members are required to submit any possible lawsuit against other members of this Church to the deacons and pastor for mediation before submitting to civil authorities (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
- F. Participation in the armed services or war will be an individual decision according to each person's conviction.
- G. Members of the congregation who fail to communicate with the Church for a period of one year (except for the reasons of sickness, age, military service and mission work), may be removed from the roll following an evaluation of the member's status by the deacons and pastor. Before a member's status is deactivated, they will be contacted to determine the cause of the lapse and perhaps bring about reconciliation.

ARTICLE VI — Church Discipline

1. Purpose:

In the interest of Christian harmony and the development of Christian maturity, the Church should counsel its erring members so they may be restored to fellowship.

2. Scriptural Basis:

Christ sanctioned and taught discipline in conflicts between believers (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Timothy 5:19), and for those willfully living in sin (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Each member is responsible to assist erring members (Galatians 6:1-2).

3. Definition:
Erring members are those who depart from the faith by advocating divisive teachings or those contrary to the Bible as defined in the Statement of Faith, or engage in continuous unrepented sin damaging the testimony of the Church, or by their actions cause division in the Church or slander of another Church member (1 Corinthians 1:10, Titus 3:10-11).
4. Procedure:
Church members should work together to strengthen each other's faith. If any member offends another or brings reproach upon the Name of Christ and His Church, members of the congregation should act in the following order:
 - A. Speak individually to the member about the problem.
 - B. Take one or two other concerned members to the person to discuss the problem.
 - C. Bring the matter before the deacons and pastor who may counsel with the offending member and explain to him the manner in which his conduct is not Christ-like.
 - D. A member refusing to counsel with the deacons or pastor after a second invitation without giving satisfactory reasons excommunicates himself/herself from the Church. An official note of exclusion will be sent to the excluded member and he/she shall be publicly removed from the membership in the congregation.
 - E. The deacons and pastor will interpret and administer all Church discipline.
5. Reinstatement:
A person whose membership has been terminated may be restored to membership following a recommendation by the deacons to the congregation (James 5:19-20).

Article VII — Ministerial Staff

1. The Senior Pastor
 - A. Qualifications and Character:
 1. The pastor will be a man who possesses pastoral character and conducts himself as indicated in scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 4:12, Titus 1:7-8).
 2. He will adhere strictly to the doctrine as set forth in the statement of faith. (See Article III — Statement of Faith).
 3. He will preach and teach the Word of God faithfully in the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:9).
 4. He will reprove and exhort with all long-suffering (1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 4:1-2).
 5. He will encourage the congregation by setting a godly example (1 Peter 5:2-3).
 - B. Duties:
 1. He will work diligently to carry out the stated purpose of the Church.
 2. He will work with the deacons and pastoral staff to develop an overall policy, program and strategy to teach and care for the body of Christ and reach those without Christ.
 3. He will take an active part with the deacons and pastoral staff in the scheduling and implementation of Church activities, special speakers and events.
 4. He will administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, conduct child dedication services, perform marriage ceremonies and conduct funerals.
 5. He may be an advisory member of all committees.
 6. He will oversee the total ministry of the Church.

C. Selection:

The pastoral search committee will consist of the following: deacons, one member from the trustees and three members elected from the congregation. The chairman of the pastoral search committee will be a deacon. The function of the pastoral search committee will be to seek input from the members of the congregation, develop a job description, select a candidate and submit his name to the congregation. The original members of the pastoral search committee will continue on the committee until a candidate has accepted the call, even if their terms of office which prompted their service on the committee have expired.

D. Call:

An election, by ballot vote, will be held on a Sunday morning. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership present constitutes a call. The call will be for a five-year term.

E. Term and Compensation:

1. The term will be extended for up to five additional years by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership present at a special congregational meeting held on a Sunday morning (see Article IX). This process will be repeated every five years. If the pastor does not receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership present, his term of office will expire when mutually agreed upon by the deacons and pastor, not to exceed 90 days following the vote.
2. If at any time the pastor should find it necessary to submit his resignation, he must do so 60 days before he intends to leave or when mutually agreed upon by the deacons and the pastor.
3. Should a pastor's term of office be less than the call or an extension, the pastor will be compensated only through the time served.
4. The deacons will annually discuss the pastor's ministry in March with input solicited from the congregation.

F. Pastoral Discipline:

In the case of complaints against the pastor or general rising opposition to the pastor the following principles apply:

1. The deacons will investigate any formal complaint against the pastor and pursue appropriate action. (See Article VI—Church Discipline).
2. Should the deacons discover doctrinal deviation, moral misconduct or pastoral neglect, they may dismiss the pastor. In order to maintain harmony they will share the reason or reasons for the dismissal of the pastor to the congregation.
3. In all other cases, the deacons' priority will be to promote spiritual growth and reconciliation. To that end, they may recommend a disciplinary program or remedial course of instruction to the pastor to improve the situation.
4. Assistant Pastor(s) or Ministerial Staff
The call, term and re-election of Assistant pastor(s) or ministerial staff will be conducted in the same manner as the senior pastor. They will be annually evaluated by the senior pastor and will be subject to the same disciplinary procedures as the senior pastor. If at any time they should find it necessary to submit their resignation, it will be handled in the same manner as the senior pastor.

Article VIII— Church Officers

1. The Deacons

A. Qualifications:

1. The deacons will be men who are spiritually proven as indicated in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
2. A deacon elected for the first time will be installed by the pastor.

B. Duties:

1. They will work with the pastor to develop an overall policy, program, and strategy to shepherd and nourish the believers and reach the unsaved.
2. They will take an active part with the pastor in the scheduling and implementation of Church activities, special speakers and events.
3. They will assist the pastor in administering the ordinances of the Church (see Article IV).
4. They will visit the sick, comfort the sorrowing and minister to the members' needs.
5. They will grant letters of transfer and dismissal.
6. They will make recommendations to the Church concerning the salary of the pastors and staff.
7. The Benevolent Fund disbursements will be approved by the deacons for the temporal needs of the congregation as well as of those who come under its sphere of influence.
8. The following committees will be standing (permanent) committees of the deacons: Christian education, missions, music and worship ministries, outreach ministries, ushers, finances, church council, and women's ministries. Each organization will elect its own officers. Secretaries of all committees and organizations will submit minutes of each meeting to the Church office for filing and deacon review.
9. Questions of constitutional interpretation will be the responsibility of the deacons.
10. It will be the responsibility of the deacons to administer Church Discipline as described in Article VI and Article VII-F.
11. Committee Representation:
 - a. The deacons will appoint 2 representatives from among themselves to the church council.
 - b. The deacons will have authority to establish sub committees and appoint members to such subcommittees as needed for the smooth functioning of the church.
 - c. The deacons will have authority to appoint members to vacant offices that may appear on standing committees.
 - d. The deacons will appoint representatives to outside organizations in which the Church participates.

C. Organization:

1. No business will be transacted unless a quorum is present.
2. The deacons will meet monthly and as needed.

D. Representation:

A minimum of seven deacons will be elected for a term of three years each. A deacon will be elected for a term of three years and is eligible to serve two consecutive terms; then he will not be eligible for re-election for one year.

2. The Trustees

A. Qualifications:

Trustees will be men who have knowledge in business matters and who demonstrate an honest and spiritual conduct (Acts 6:3).

B. Duties:

1. The trustees will have charge of repairs, maintenance and supervision of all Church property, buildings and grounds and the capital improvements. They will approve invoices of all necessary supplies and manage the capital improvements' budget.
2. The trustees will appoint the treasurer, cemetery caretaker, sexton and custodians. The appointees will be under the supervision of the trustees unless otherwise assigned.
3. If an expenditure, asset purchase (i.e. building project) or asset sale will be more than 5 % of the current budget managed by the trustees, the trustees must receive approval from the congregation. In emergency situations the trustees have the authority to approve expenditures greater than 5 %.
4. The trustees will appoint other committees necessary for the physical operation of the Church.

C. Representation:

1. Eight trustees will be elected for a term of four years, so arranged that two will be elected each succeeding year.
2. A trustee whose term has expired will not be eligible for another term for a period of one year.

D. Organization:

1. No business will be transacted unless a quorum is present.
2. The trustees will meet quarterly and as often as necessary.

3. The President:

- A. The president will preside at all congregational business meetings. In the absence of the president, the chairman of the deacons will preside at the meeting.
- B. The president may be invited to meet with the deacons for consultation.

4. Congregational Secretary and Assistant:

The congregational secretary (or the designated assistant) will record all the proceedings of the congregational meetings. These records will be available for inspection to the members of the Church.

Article IX — Church Council

1. Church Council

The church council will consist of the Pastoral Staff, Financial Secretary, (2) deacons, Chairpersons of the Christian Education Committee, Missions Committee, Women's Ministry, Outreach Committee, Music and Worship Ministry, Finance Committee, Head Usher and Trustee Committee. A deacon will chair the committee. The council will meet a minimum of quarterly.

A. Duties

1. Develop policies and procedures for administrative operations of the church and provide the structure and supervision necessary to ensure that the policies and procedures are followed.
2. Review budgets compiled by the finance committee before forwarding to the Board of Deacons and on to the congregation, for final approval. Conduct periodic reviews of expenditures and monitor correlation to church budget guidelines.
3. Coordinate the church calendar activities such as Worship, Missions Conference, Sunday School, Adult Bible Fellowship, Drama, Wild Game Night, Women's Ministry, Special Programs etc.

Article X — Congregational Meetings

1. Congregational meetings will be scheduled by the deacons for electing officers and approving the Church budget. These meetings may be combined or held at different times of the year, whichever facilitates the operation of the Church.
2. Annual elections will include the following:
President (3 year term)
Congregational secretary (3 year term)
Assistant congregational secretary (3 year term)
Head Usher (1 year term)
Deacons (3 year term)
Trustees (4 year term)
Nominating committee members (1 year term)
and any other congregation representatives deemed necessary as well as the committee slate ballots (see Article VIII).
3. Special congregational meetings may be called by the deacons at any time. Special meetings may also be called upon written request by ten percent of the Church membership; the reason for the meeting must accompany the request. The deacons will authorize all special meetings.
4. All congregational meetings will be announced in writing on the two consecutive Sunday mornings preceding the meeting. All meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, unless otherwise stated in this constitution. The meetings will be opened and closed with singing and prayer.

Article XI — Nominations and Elections

1. Nominations:
 - A. The nominating committee will consist of one member each from each of the standing committees and two members elected at- large. The chairman of the nominating committee will be appointed by the deacons. The pastoral staff may serve in an advisory capacity.
 - B. The nominating committee will conduct a talent and interest inventory of the members as needed well in advance of the annual elections. Such information will be passed to the appropriate committees to assist them in recruiting ministry positions.
2. Elections:
 - A. Officer Elections
 1. Nominations for the Church Officers as listed in Article X 2 will be handled with a ballot vote of a simple majority of the votes cast by the membership present with provision made for two nominees for each position unless the number to be elected is three or more, in which case the minimum number of nominees will be the number to be elected plus two. If the required number of nominees are not met then the remaining nominees must have a 2/3 majority of the votes cast by the membership present individually to be elected.

B. Sub Committee Elections

1. Each committee will present to the nominating committee a prospective slate of nominations for review and revision by the committee. The final slate will be presented to the deacons for approval and recommendation to the congregation.
2. The ballot containing the slate of nominees will be presented to the congregation at the annual elections for the approval or disapproval of each individual nominee. A simple majority of the votes cast by the membership present will be necessary for any nominee to take office.
 - a. Ushers
 - b. Missions Committee Members
 - c. Christian Education Members
 - d. Women's Ministry Members
 - e. Outreach Committee Members
 - f. Music and Worship Ministry Members
 - g. Finance Committee Members

C. Members age 18 and over will be entitled to vote and hold office.

D. All persons holding an office are held responsible for that office. Should any officer of the Church prove to be unworthy of that office, then the deacons and pastor may discharge that individual and appoint a successor.

Article XII— Amendments and Alterations

Amendments and alterations to this constitution can be made following a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership present at any regular or special congregational meeting. But such proposed amendments must be announced in writing during two previous Sunday mornings.