

Germantown Mennonite Church

Bylaws of the Congregation

I. Name

Congregation of Germantown Mennonite Church

II. Purposes

- A. To provide for a community of believers united in a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- B. To establish a community committed to each other in discerning the will of God in our lives.
- C. To encourage each other in our Christian faith and walk, so as to testify to their relevance to all areas of life in our world today.
- D. To perpetuate the simple and nonresistant gospel of our Mennonite heritage by providing channels for evangelism, Christian education and service.

III. Affiliation

We were formerly affiliated with both the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church. As the first and oldest continuous Mennonite congregation in North America, we seek to continue our Mennonite tradition and Anabaptist theology. We desire to be reconciled with Mennonite Church USA while maintaining our identity and mission as led by the Holy Spirit.

IV. Membership

- A. There are three categories of membership in the congregation: full membership, associate membership and affiliate membership.
 1. Full membership may be held by those who have confessed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, have been baptized upon confession of faith and express a desire to be united with the congregation, submitting themselves to its doctrine and discipline.

Membership from other congregations may be transferred, provided the applicant has been a member in good standing in his or her former congregation and have confessed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

2. Associate membership may be held by those who desire to enjoy the fellowship of the congregation and to participate actively in its life, but do not wish to sever the formal relationship with the congregation they previously attended. Such persons may apply for associate membership provided they have confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and have been baptized.
3. Affiliate membership may be held by those who desire to identify with Germantown Mennonite Church and its vision but who by circumstance or geographic distance cannot actively participate in its congregational life.

B. Understandings of membership

1. Full and associate members shall publicly accept the congregation's Covenant of Membership before membership can be granted.
2. Only full and associate members shall be elected to Church Council or Vision Team or as a committee chair.
3. Any applications for membership require the affirmation of congregation.
4. The church may rescind membership for cause. The process shall be based on the principles manifested in Matthew 18. Members of the congregation are expected to engage one another personally and privately. If resolution cannot be reached between members, the Vision Team shall act in a confidential, pastoral capacity to address the matter. If the Vision Team decides that a membership should be rescinded, it will refer the matter to Church Council; otherwise, the matter is closed. Meeting in executive session, Church Council may recommend by three-fourths vote to rescind membership and forward its recommendation to the congregation for consideration. The congregation, meeting with proper notice, may remove a member by a three-fourths vote of those members in attendance.
5. Church Council in consultation with the pastor shall annually review the membership roll to consider changes in the status of members who are no longer active in the life of the church. If a member moves away or ceases to participate regularly in the life of the congregation, after two years his or her membership may be changed or removed after attempts have been made to contact him or her. Any action on membership by Church Council shall be recorded in the minutes of Church Council.
6. Letters of transfer shall be given by the congregation to members in good standing who wish to join another congregation.

V. Congregational Meetings

- A. The Annual Congregational Business Meeting shall be held on or close to the last Sunday in January to review the previous year's program, the congregation's activities and its fiscal report and to approve a proposed budget for the coming year.
- B. The election of officers, Vision Team members and committee members shall occur at an Annual Congregational Elections Meeting held on or close to the first Sunday in June. Newly elected persons shall take office on the first day of July.
- C. Additional congregational meetings shall be held throughout the year as needed. These shall be called by Church Council.
- D. Meeting Procedures
 - 1. A quorum shall consist of those who attend the meeting.
 - 2. Only full and associate members shall vote.
 - 3. Affiliate members, regular attenders of services who are not members and guests may speak from the floor but may not vote.
 - 4. Absentee and proxy votes shall be acceptable if presented in writing to the chair.
 - 5. Any action requiring a three-fourths majority and any specially called meetings shall require prior notification to the congregation.
 - 6. Proper notice of meetings shall constitute the congregation being provided with prior notification by verbal announcement or bulletin announcement on the two Sundays prior to the day of the meeting.
 - 7. The rules of procedure contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the congregation's business in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the congregation may adopt.

VI. Church Council

- A. Church Council shall be the decision-making and administrative body of the congregation. It shall articulate and implement the congregation's policies.
- B. Church Council shall be composed of the Congregational Chair, who shall serve as its chair; the congregation's pastors; one Vision Team member; the Secretary; the Treasurer; one Member-at-Large; one youth representative, if available; and the chairpersons, or his or her designated representative, of the Education Committee; the

Hospitality Committee; the Worship Committee; the Peace and Social Concerns Committee; the Trustees Committee and the Stewardship Committee.

- C. Church Council shall have administrative authority over all committees, church facilities and the financial affairs of the church.
- D. The above committees and Vision Team represent the central aspects of church life and ministry. Subcommittees may be formed by Church Council to address specific needs. In addition, Church Council may delegate responsibilities to individuals or special ad hoc committees to perform specific tasks.
- E. Church Council shall supervise an annual review of church programs.
- F. Church Council should meet at least eleven times a year. All meetings are open to members and regular attenders of services except when Church Council meets in executive session.

VII. Vision Team

- A. The Vision Team, consisting of the congregation's pastors and three members of the congregation, is responsible for two areas of congregational life:
 - 1. Leading the congregation in considering, articulating and refining its vision. In this capacity, Vision Team shall not tend to detail so much as focus on the congregation's overall vision. Vision Team helps keep the congregational vision before the pastors, Church Council, standing committees and the congregation as a whole. The Vision Team shall also periodically review the covenant of membership and suggest any changes to Church Council.
 - 2. Tending to the congregation's general pastoral needs.
- B. A Vision Team member other than a pastor shall serve on Church Council during that member's last year of service, unless the Vision Team designates an alternate member to serve on Church Council. Except for the pastor and the other Vision Team member who is designated to serve on Church Council, Vision Team members should not serve on Church Council so that they can devote adequate time to their Vision Team role.
- C. Selection of Vision Team members shall be initiated and carried out by Church Council. Prospective Vision Team members shall be members of the congregation or willing to join the congregation upon joining Vision Team. Candidates for Vision Team shall be approved by three-fourths of the votes cast at the congregational meeting at which the vote is taken.

VIII. Pastor

- A. Pastoral responsibilities shall include shepherding the congregation, preaching, facilitating and coordinating the work of the congregation, conducting the ordinances of baptism, communion and reception of new members, counseling, offering hospitality, and nurturing and maintaining ties with the larger Mennonite church.
- B. Other responsibilities of a pastor will be set forth in his or her contract with the congregation.
- C. Each pastor will be a member of the Vision Team, Church Council, and Worship Committee and an ex officio member of all other church committees.
- D. Each pastor will work closely with the Congregational Chair and will be accountable to the Congregational Chair, Church Council and the congregation.
- E. Each pastor will be evaluated at the end of one year of service and at successive three-year intervals through a process established by Church Council.
- F. Each pastor will be installed during a worship service.
- G. After one year of service, a pastor will be eligible for ordination, initiated by Vision Team.
- H. When a pastoral candidate is declared, the congregation, meeting with proper notice, shall approve the pastoral candidate by seeking consensus. If any are opposed to the candidate, they may state their opposition. The group listens, then any in opposition to the candidate have the opportunity to defer to the group or stop the decision. Only members eligible to vote may stop the decision. If a consensus is not reached after one congregational meeting, the candidate may be approved at a meeting held seven to fourteen days later by three-fourths of the votes cast.

IX. Elected Committees of the Congregation

- A. The chairpersons of the committees listed below shall be members of Church Council. If a chairperson does not wish to serve on Church Council, then the committee will appoint one of its members who is a full or associate member of the congregation to serve on Church Council.
- B. Education Committee shall consist of the Education Director, the Assistant Director, the Librarian and three additional members. The committee is responsible for coordinating teachers and materials for all Sunday School classes; keeping in touch with the educational needs of any club program; meeting with teachers occasionally for planning and feedback; coordinating class assignment space; working with Worship Committee on the relationship of Sunday school to worship content; and facilitating youth fellowship.

1. The Education Director will be elected to a two-year term and be a member of Church Council.
 2. The remaining members of the committee shall be elected for two-year terms on a rotating basis.
- C. Peace and Social Concerns Committee shall consist of a chairperson and at least six other members. The committee shall provide resources for educating the congregation on local, national and international peace and justice issues and provide opportunities for action enabling the congregation to respond to these concerns.
1. The chair of Peace and Social Concerns will be elected to a two-year term and be a member of Church Council.
 2. The remaining members of the committee shall serve two-year rotating terms.
 3. The committee shall also recommend First Fruits and Special Offerings in conjunction with Stewardship Committee.
- D. Hospitality Committee shall consist of a chairperson and at least six other members. The committee shall be responsible for coordinating greeters; distributing bulletins; coordinating refreshments for the Sunday coffee hour; coordinating church dinners and potluck meals; and being sensitive to additional ways to extend hospitality and care to visitors and members.
1. The chair of Hospitality Committee will be elected to a two-year term and be a member of Church Council.
 2. The remaining members of the committee shall serve two-year rotating terms.
- E. Trustees Committee shall consist of a chairperson and at least four other members. The committee shall provide proposals to the Treasurer annually for maintenance needs such as materials, labor and personnel; maintain and upkeep the church building such as cleaning, painting and repairs; annually assess and report to the congregation long-term or major maintenance needs such as the furnace or roof ; be accountable for building security ; maintain clear lines of communication with other committees ; to coordinate a calendar for building use; and establish policy for building use.
1. The chair of Trustees Committee will be elected to a two-year term. It is recommended that the chair have prior experience as a Trustee.
 2. The remaining four members will be elected for two-year terms on a rotating basis.
- F. Worship Committee shall consist of four to six members, the Music Director and a pastor. The responsibilities of the committee include working with Vision Team to plan regular Sunday morning worship services, as well as other special meetings such as communion, baptism, reception of new members and special Sunday evening services.

1. The chair of Worship Committee will be elected to a two-year term and be a member of Church Council.
2. The remaining members will be elected for two-year terms on a rotating basis.

G. Stewardship Committee will consist of its chairperson, the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and at least one other member. The committee's mission shall be to develop and implement a stewardship ministry. This will include, but not be limited to, providing financial advice to Church Council and the congregation, overseeing church investments, developing fundraising strategies, helping the congregation understand how to be wise stewards of all its resources, coordinating annual pledges, preparing an annual budget for submission to Church Council by November and planning an annual stewardship emphasis in coordination with Church Council.

1. The committee will be responsible to Church Council.
2. The committee chairperson will be elected to a two-year term and serve on Church Council.
3. The remaining members will be elected for two-year terms on a rotating basis.
4. Stewardship Committee shall form a subcommittee to review the books and records of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. The best reviewers would be independent of the congregation. This subcommittee shall report to the congregation once a year. The Stewardship chairperson is responsible to see that this report is prepared and presented but shall not prepare this report himself or herself.

X. Regularly Appointed Committees of the Congregation

- A. Nomination Committee. The Nomination Committee shall be appointed by Church Council in March after soliciting the congregation for the committee's members. This committee will be composed of four members. The committee shall seek the congregation's input for all open positions via a written suggestion sheet. Using these suggestions and through gift discernment, the committee shall submit a written slate to the congregation for final selection at the June congregational meeting.
- B. Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee. The Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee will be appointed by Church Council each June to provide support and a sounding board for the pastor, to advocate on behalf of the pastor and to facilitate communication between the pastor and Church Council and between the pastor and the congregation as a whole.

XI. Congregational Offices

A. Congregational offices are positions of specific responsibilities created to facilitate the work of the congregation.

1. Candidates for these offices shall receive a majority vote by the congregation to be elected.
2. Unless otherwise herein specified, those elected shall serve two-year terms.
3. No elected office shall be held by the same individual for more than three consecutive terms. The counting of consecutive terms begins upon the first election following adoption of these bylaws by the congregation.
4. If any position falls vacant before the end of a term, it shall be filled by Church Council appointment.

B. Congregational Offices: Members of Church Council

1. **Congregational Chair.** The Congregational Chair shall chair both Church Council and congregational meetings; solicit and set the agenda for these meetings; serve as an administrative liaison connecting Church Council, pastors and the congregation; and work closely with its pastors.
 - a. If the Chairperson cannot preside at a Church Council or congregational meeting, a pro tem shall be appointed by the Chairperson or shall be elected at the beginning of the meeting by those members present at the meeting.
 - b. The Chairperson shall be an ex officio member of all church committees.
2. **Secretary.** The Secretary shall serve as the official congregational correspondent at meetings of both Church Council and the congregation and shall be responsible for recording and distributing minutes of these meetings.
3. **Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall project and review the annual budget in coordination with Church Council, shall provide quarterly and annual fiscal reports and shall handle all banking transactions, receiving and depositing offerings and monies.
4. **Church Council Member-at-Large.** A member of the congregation shall be elected to serve as a Member-at-Large on Church Council .
5. Other congregational offices serving as members of Church Council: Education Director, Chairperson of Peace and Social Concerns Committee, Chairperson of Hospitality Committee, Chairperson of Trustees, Chairperson of Worship Committee and a member of Vision Team.

C. Congregational Offices: Non-Church Council Positions

1. The **Assistant Education Director** shall assist the Education Director in implementing the educational program.
2. The **Assistant Treasurer** shall assist the Treasurer in carrying out fiscal responsibilities.
3. The **Music Director** shall coordinate the congregation's music program, providing for congregational singing, song leaders, special music and special musical programs; and shall serve on the Worship Committee.
4. The **Librarian** shall maintain and develop the church library and shall serve on Education Committee. .
5. **Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust Representatives.** Three persons shall be elected on a rotating basis, one each year, to serve as the congregation's representatives on the Trust's Board for a three-year term.
6. **Franconia and Eastern District Conference Representatives.** Two members of the congregation shall be elected to serve two-year terms as our congregation's representatives to each district conference . They shall represent the congregation at the biannual meetings of Eastern District Conference and the annual meeting of the Franconia Conference. They shall communicate the concerns of the congregation at these gatherings as well as report the results of these meetings to the congregation.

D. To assist the Nominating Committee, the following two items indicate which elected offices shall be filled during even or odd calendar years.

1. The following positions shall be filled in *even* years:
 - a. Congregational Chair
 - b. Chairperson of Hospitality Committee
 - c. Two Trustee Committee Members
 - d. Secretary
 - e. Church Council Member-at-Large
 - f. Music Director
 - g. Assistant Music Director
 - h. Assistant Treasurer
 - i. One Eastern District Conference Representative
 - j. One Franconia Conference Representative
 - k. One Education Committee Member-at-Large
 - l. Chair of the Stewardship Committee
2. The following positions shall be filled in *odd* years:
 - a. Education Director

- b. Chairperson of Peace and Social Concerns
- c. Treasurer
- d. Chairperson of the Trustees Committee
- e. Two Trustee Committee Members
- f. Assistant Education Director
- g. Librarian
- h. One Eastern District Conference Representative
- i. One Franconia Conference Representative
- j. One Education Committee Member-at-Large

3. Other Instructions for Nominating Committee

- a. Members of committees shall serve two-year terms unless otherwise herein specified.
- b. The terms of committee members shall be staggered as much as practicable.
- c. Individuals may be nominated for one-year terms to facilitate staggering terms or to make use of people who can serve only one year.
- d. Members of committees are not required to be members of the congregation unless otherwise herein specified.
- e. Only full or associate members can be elected to Church Council, as committee chairs or congregational officers.

XII. Amendments and Revisions

Any proposed change to the bylaws shall be presented to the congregation by Church Council two weeks preceding a congregational meeting called to consider any proposed changes to the bylaws. Adoption of amendments to or revisions of these bylaws shall require a vote of agreement of two-thirds of the votes cast.

Unless extensive revisions require the adoption of new bylaws, adopted amendments shall be appended as separate articles to these bylaws.

XIII. Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of Germantown Mennonite Church, resulting in the liquidation of assets, assets shall go to Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust to the extent possible under applicable tax laws.