



**THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE
BETHEL BERGTHALER
MENNONITE CHURCH**

**MISSION STATEMENT:
The purpose of Bethel
Church is to make and
develop disciples for
Jesus Christ, locally
and around the world.**

REVISED – April 2024

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THE PREAMBLE

The Scriptures admonish the believers that everything should be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40). Every organized corporate body must have certain rules and regulations according to which its affairs are guided. The following constitution shall aid in the governance of the church in its work and shall in no way assume undue prominence nor in any way minimize the importance of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE I THE NAME

The name of this congregation shall be the Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

ARTICLE II AFFILIATION

The Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church is not officially affiliated with a specific denomination and is considered independent.

ARTICLE III PURPOSE

The purpose is to fulfill the Mission Statement by using the following “E’s” as a guideline:

1. To exalt Christ as Savior, as risen Lord and King of kings (Luke 1: 46 & 47; Acts 5:31; Phil 2:10)
2. To equip the saints for service and for ministry. (2 Timothy 3:17; Hebrews 13:20 & 21)
3. To edify believers and their families in their daily walk of faith (1 Cor. 14:26; Romans 14:19; 1 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 14:5)
4. To evangelize the lost by proclaiming and demonstrating the Good News for salvation in Jesus Christ, making disciples as commanded. (Matt 28:19 & 20)
5. To extend Christ’s love in practical ways, including the financial support of individuals in need. (Matthew 25:31-40; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Timothy 5:3; Titus 3:13,14; James 1:27).

ARTICLE IV CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. We believe that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments, are the Word of God, divinely inspired and infallible, the only trustworthy guide; in faith and life. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21; I Thess. 2:13)
2. We believe in the one, living, true and triune God who exists from all eternity as God the Father, Creator, Sustainer and Ruler; God the Son who became fully human and fully God in Christ Jesus; God the Holy Spirit who is one with the Father and the Son who indwells believers. (Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Matthew

16:16; Luke 1:31-33; John 14:16 & 17; John 15:26; John 16:7-14).

3. We believe in a visible church, the body of Christ, made up of those who through repentance and regeneration have come to the Christian faith, have received the Holy Spirit, and have become members of the fellowship on earth. Jesus Christ is its head and foundation. It is responsible to preach the Gospel to all people according to the command of Christ. It will be characterized by its evangelical faith, teaching, love, behavior, works and the observance of its ordinances according to the command of Christ. It will be preserved by Christ until the end of the age of grace (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18; Acts 17:30, 20:21; Gal. 3:26).
4. We believe in the following biblical ordinances:
 - 4.01 Baptism

We believe that all who through repentance and faith in Christ have been regenerated and have become children of God, should, upon confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, submit to water baptism according to Christ's command.
(Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27)
 - 4.02 Lord's Supper

We believe in the observance of the Lord's Supper as a privilege and a responsibility of believers, celebrated as a memorial of the suffering and death of our Savior Jesus Christ and for fellowship with God and with fellow believers. We believe further, that each person who partakes of this meal needs to go through a self-examination in order to be in true fellowship with others and with the Lord. (I Cor. 11: 23-29)
5. We believe in the institution of marriage of one man and one woman who are of one faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a union should not be dissolved by separation or divorce. (Matt. 19: 1-9; I Cor. 7).
6. We believe that the ordination of pastors and ministers is taught by Holy Scripture, and shall be carried out in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. (I Tim. 4:14; 5:22; Titus 1:5-9; I Tim. 3:1-13).
7. We believe in the biblical teaching of peace and love as Christ Himself practiced this in His life and as we learn it from the teachings of Christ and the apostles. (Matt. 5:38-48; 26:47-56; Luke 6:27-38; John 18: 33-37; Romans 12:17; I Cor. 13; I Peter 3:9).
8. We believe in affirming the truth, therefore we do not practice swearing an oath on the Bible. (Matt. 5: 34-37).
9. We believe in the practice of church discipline according to New Testament teaching. (Matt. 18: 15-18; I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 6:1-7; Titus 3:10; Gal. 6:1)
10. We believe that we have been called with a holy calling to live a life of separation from sin and the world. (Eph. 1:4; I Peter 1:15; Col. 1:22).
11. We believe in the personal, visible, imminent, return of Christ. (Acts 1:11;

John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7, 5:9,10; 20:4-6).

ARTICLE V

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

We believe that the Church is made up of believers who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord; that it is the Body of Christ here on earth and that we are members of one another. We do not belong to ourselves, but to Christ and to each other as believers. Church membership therefore has both privileges and responsibilities. (1 Cor. 6:15; 1 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor. 12:14; 20-31)

Section I

Admission of Members

1. Prerequisites for Membership:

Any mature person may become a member of the Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite church who:

- 1.01 Professes faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord.
- 1.02 Is baptized upon confession of faith and recognizes Jesus Christ as Lord. Such a person is committed “to seek first the Kingdom of God” and is willing to live unselfishly and sacrificially for the Lord, this church, and live a life of discipleship.
- 1.03 On other matters, agrees to the constitution of the church, having attended its services a sufficient length of time to know what is involved and is known in the church.

2. Reception of Members from other churches:

Persons from other evangelical churches or other denominations may be received into the church if they meet the following provisions:

- 2.01 They have been baptized upon their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- 2.02 They can give testimony to the membership about their regeneration.
- 2.03 They are in accord with our Confession of Faith and the Constitution of this church.
- 2.04 Upon contact with a representative from Bethel, the previous church leadership recommends the person to be accepted as a member of Bethel Church.

3. Admission of New Members:

A prospective member shall apply for membership on application forms available for this purpose from the Ministerial. Two members of the Ministerial interview the candidate; Ministerial reviews the application and presents the application for approval to Church Council. Intention to join is announced at a regular Sunday morning service not less than two weeks before testimony is to be given.

The prospective member is received into the church through the extending of the right hand of fellowship by the officiating minister.

Section II Rights of Members

1. Legal Rights of Membership

Any member withdrawing from or in any other way losing membership in the congregation thereby forfeits all rights and privileges to any and all properties belonging to the congregation. All properties of the church shall be held in common by all members and shall not be divided.

2. Privileges of Members

Each member of the Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church is entitled to participate in all activities of the church as directed in this Constitution. Each member is eligible to vote on all questions brought before the church. All male members are eligible to fill the position of a Church Officer as listed in Article VI to which they may be elected or appointed.

3. We believe that men and women are created equal in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and woman-hood. We also believe that the Scriptures teach that redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation. We believe that God has, from Creation, specifically ordained roles and responsibilities for each gender. Accordingly, we believe that both the Old and New Testaments affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the redeemed community. We believe, therefore, that certain governing and teaching roles within the Church are restricted to qualified men.

(Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28; I Tim. 2:11-3:13; I Cor. 11: 3-16; et al.)

Section III Duties of Members

1. To lead a consistent life of Christian discipleship.
2. To attend regularly the services of the church, and to participate regularly in the observance of the Lord's Supper. (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
3. To strive for the unity, strengthening, and building up of the Church in all its phases.
4. To bear the burden of others in humility and with genuine sympathy and concern for their welfare. (Gal. 2:2)
5. To assume willingly their share of responsibility and work in the program of the church.
6. To observe regular home and family worship.
7. To contribute cheerfully to the support of the Lord's work through the budget of the church as well as through other channels, according to the measure of their means. (They shall seriously consider tithing according to the Scriptures.) (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:7; Mal. 3:10)
8. To abstain from membership in secret societies.

(Matt. 5:33-37; Col. 1:18; 3:17; II Cor. 6:14).

Section IV Transfer of Membership

Upon written request to the Ministerial, letters of transfer shall be granted on behalf of members in good standing. The Ministerial, Church Council and the membership shall be informed as soon as is practical.

Section V Absent Members

1. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to be a member of the local church as an expression of the body of Christ. It is therefore important that members who locate to another community find ways of communicating with this church and at the same time find a like-minded church as a new or temporary church home for fellowship, for nurture, and for service. They are encouraged to contact Ministerial at least annually in order to remain a member in good standing at Bethel Berghaler Mennonite Church.
2. Members on a mission or service assignment as well as members on temporary re-location are asked to keep in touch with the Ministerial and will be encouraged to report to the church where possible.
3. All members are encouraged to be active and involved in a church which teaches the true doctrines of evangelical faith. This means that members who move to another community should seek to become established in a new community church home within one year. They should consider a transfer of membership to that congregation.
4. Members who are inactive will be contacted by the Ministerial. If there is no satisfactory response within a two-year period, the Church Council will present the case to the church membership for discernment.
5. Any person who has forfeited their membership will be contacted and encouraged to reconsider a renewal of commitment. Membership may be regained through a regular membership process.

Section VI Church Discipline

Members who persist in living a life of sin shall be prayerfully contacted by members or leaders of the church with love and understanding. If full fellowship is not restored, the church shall unitedly seek a solution in love. Only after all redemptive efforts seem to have failed shall the suspension of membership be considered and acted upon.

(Matt. 18:15-35; I Cor. 5:9-13; I Thess. 5:11-14; Acts 20:28-31; II Thess. 3:6, 14, 15)

Even though that person's membership in the church is suspended, the relationship of the congregation to that person shall continue to be one of redemptive love. Only after genuine repentance and a renewed agreement to the membership commitment has been made, can a disciplined former member be restored to the membership.

ARTICLE VI CHURCH OFFICERS

Section I Ministers

1. The church of Jesus Christ is called to ministry; to the proclamation of the Good News; the making of disciples; to baptizing and to nurturing the body of believers. This assignment includes specialized ministries as given in Ephesians 4:11 & 12. Individuals are called by the Lord, equipped and gifted by the Holy Spirit. As a church we discern these gifts and we seek the Lord's leading to affirm individuals for ministry and leadership and we do this by prayer and by seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit. The calling and the leaving of ministers is therefore a prayerful process not taken lightly.
2. Ministers who are called to pastoral leadership shall preach the Word of God, perform the Christian ordinances of the church, visit the members of the congregation and give spiritual leadership to the congregation.
3. The ministers shall have the qualifications as given in I Tim. 3:1-7; II Tim. 2:1-4; Titus 1:5-9.
4. Pastor(s)
 - 4.01 It shall be the duty of the Pastors to preach the Word of God, to provide spiritual leadership to the Ministerial and to the whole congregation. Pastors shall act as an ex-officio member of all committees and shall be free to attend all meetings and to perform such other duties as the Word of God places on him. (II Tim. 4:1-5; I Peter 5:2-4; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:28)
 - 4.02 All Pastors shall be individually called for an undetermined term of office upon recommendation by Church Council and supported by a 2/3 majority vote of the members of the church present at a duly notified and constituted meeting called for that purpose.
 - 4.03 Salaries and benefits are to be agreed upon by the Pastor and the Salary Committee / Church Council.
 - 4.04 The Pastor-Church relationship shall be reviewed annually by way of a formal or structured process as outlined in the Bethel Church Handbook.
 - 4.05 In the case where there is more than one Pastor, Church Council will maintain an active set of roles and responsibilities for each Pastor. These responsibilities will be recorded in the Bethel Church Handbook and will be provided to any church member upon request.
 - 4.06 Lay Ministers
 - i. Believing in the priesthood of all believers and values of lay and multiple ministry, the congregation may commission and/or ordain qualified individuals to assist in the ministry of the Word. If ordained ministers join the congregation as members, they will only be qualified for the ministry of the Word by the above conditions. Individual lay and ordained men,

whether they be members of the congregation or not, may be called to serve in the pulpit at the discretion of the Ministerial without congregational action.

- ii. Lay ministers are called to serve for a six-year term and may be re-elected at the end of each term.
- iii. Lay ministers are part of the Ministerial and serve along with the Pastor(s) in the different functions of ministerial leadership as outlined in Article VII.

Section II Deacons

A Deacon assists in performing ordinances, assists in the visitation of the sick, comforts the distressed, admonishes the indifferent, assists in the teaching and visitation ministry of the church. In the absence of ministers, the deacons are responsible for the personal and spiritual care of the congregation.

Section III Chairman of Congregation

The Chairman of the Congregation is the Chairman of Church Council and membership meetings. The Chairman shall receive the minutes from all committees and from Ministerial. He shall be fully informed of all official correspondence of the church.

Section IV Congregational Secretary

He shall keep a written record of all business meetings of the congregation and Church Council. He shall be responsible to file these reports and pertinent church correspondence. The secretary shall be elected for a two-year renewable term.

Section V Congregational Treasurer

He shall oversee the receipt and recording of all money received by various treasuries of the congregation in a timely manner. He shall disburse it as duly authorized by requisition or invoice. All cheques must be signed by the Treasurer and by a member of the Finance Committee. He shall present a properly reviewed written report of all receipts and expenditures at the annual business meeting. The Treasurer shall serve on the Finance Committee. In the absence of the Treasurer the chairman of the Finance Committee shall act in his place. The Treasurer shall be elected by the membership for a two-year renewable term.

ARTICLE VII ORGANIZATION

Section I The Ministerial

1. The Ministerial is composed of the Pastor(s), Lay Minister(s) and Deacon(s) of the church.
2. Lay Ministers and Deacons shall be elected to serve for a six-year term and may

be re-elected. The elections are to be staggered so that there is an election every year.

3. The chairman of the Ministerial shall be elected by the membership for a two-year term. Any lay member of the Ministerial is eligible to stand for chairman. The chairman shall call and chair the Ministerial meetings.
4. Duties of the Ministerial:
 - 4.01 The Ministerial is responsible to give overall spiritual guidance and leadership; responsible for teaching and administering of the ordinances and preparation of candidates for church membership. Together with the church, they work for edification and sanctification of all members. Ministerial is to give leadership for evangelistic work and co-ordinate the ministry of the church.
 - 4.02 The lay members of the Ministerial shall be responsible to maintain a tool which can be used to review the work of the Pastor(s) and the Pastor/Church relationship. This tool shall be part of the Church Handbook.
 - 4.03 They shall select a member from among Ministerial members, other than the Ministerial chairman, to sit on Church Council.

Section II The Church Council

1. The Church Council shall be composed of the Chairman of the Congregation, the Chairman of Ministerial, one Pastor, one Ministerial member-at-large, Secretary, Treasurer and the elected Chairmen of the four committees.
 - a. Church Council will elect one Pastor that will serve as part of Council. When selecting this person they will consider the roles and responsibilities, skills, abilities and gifts of all Pastors.
2. The Council elects a Vice-Chairman from its members annually.
3. It is the executive body of the church.
 - a. The Council shall seek to guide the congregation in matters of discipline.
 - b. It shall call the business meetings and prepare the agendas for them.
 - c. It shall designate responsibility for any function of the church not specified by this constitution.
 - d. The appointment of the Sunday School Superintendents shall be the responsibility of the Church Council.
 - e. Church Council members shall be trustees of the incorporated body of the Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church.
 - f. The responsibility of the Bethel Constitution and the Bethel Handbook shall rest with Church Council.

Section III The Committees

1. There shall be four committees, each elected by the membership; the Missions Committee; the Service Committee; the Education Committee; and the Finance Committee.

2. These shall be considered to be the arms of the church and shall be directly responsible to it. The term of office of the committee members is 3 years and they may be elected for two consecutive terms.

2.01 Organization of Committees –

- i. The congregational membership elects the chairman of each particular committee out of the members of that committee. Subsequently, a committee organizes itself and conducts its own meetings for the purpose of planning its area of work.
- ii. Any member of the Church Council may attend these committee meetings.
- iii. The appointment and organization of auxiliary committees, with representation from the main committees, shall be made whenever desirable and necessary, to involve more members in the interests of the total church work.
- iv. All major decisions of any committee or auxiliary, including the appointment of special committees, must be cleared with Church Council.

- 2.02 a. Any committee member missing three consecutive meetings or more than 50% of meetings in a year may be replaced by Church Council.

b. In the case where a committee member resigns before the end of their term they may be replaced by Church Council.

c. In the case where Church Council replaces a committee member, the replacement member would serve until the next AGM. This partial year would not contribute to consecutive term limits.

d. At the next AGM the congregation will elect a member to fulfill the remaining term of any member that has been replaced or appointed since the last AGM. This elected replacement term will contribute to consecutive election term limits.

2.03 Responsibilities of Committees

- i. Missions Committee

Shall be responsible to follow the Missions Policy as outlined in the Bethel Handbook. Shall be active in the area of mission projects and mission work such as being active in local outreach and evangelism including the use of current media, city missions, home and foreign missions and all missions emphasis programs.

- ii. Service Committee

Shall be responsible for the general upkeep of the church building and grounds, including the janitors and the recruiting, training and assigning of ushers for all services at Bethel.

- iii. Education Committee

Shall be responsible to represent the educational interests of the

congregation and the community.. Other responsibilities of this committee are the Sunday School, Summer Bible School, youth program , education emphasis programs, library, Christian periodicals and audio-visual aids.

iv. Finance Committee

Shall be responsible to aid the congregation in being good stewards of all monies and assets entrusted to them. Finance Committee is responsible for the business administration of the congregation, its properties and investments. The committee is responsible to provide and maintain necessary office equipment and supplies. It shall maintain safekeeping of financial church records and legal documents. It shall prepare the budget subject to the revision and approval of the membership. It shall promote Christian stewardship.

v. Auxiliary Organizations

Bethel Ambassadors shall report to the Ministerial. Other auxiliaries shall report to Church Council or as determined by Council.

ARTICLE VIII

MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS

Section I

Business Meetings

Congregational business meetings shall take place annually, as called by church council, within four months of the year end. The church year shall be the same as the calendar year. All reports and the agenda shall be published before the meeting.

Special Membership meetings shall be called by Church Council, or upon request, in writing, of 10% of the membership. The quorum for all membership meetings required to do business or take any congregational action shall be those members present at a duly called and announced membership meeting. Decisions will be made by a majority of the members present unless otherwise specified.

Section II

Elections

Nominations will be made by a Church Council appointed nominating committee and from the floor. A simple majority of all members present shall be required for the elections of all officers, unless otherwise specified in this constitution.

The responsibility of all officers shall continue until a successor is elected or appointed.

ARTICLE IX

LIFESTYLE

1. Members of the Body of Christ are called upon to live godly lives and to practice separation from evil and from sinful practices. (Romans 12)
2. We believe that marriage is ordained by God and is a union for life between one man and one woman. When a marriage fails, we are committed to working towards reconciliation and healing, knowing that the Church is called to be

redemptive in all its efforts.

(Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7.; Romans 12:9-21)

3. Same sex relationships have been clearly condemned by God in His Word. (Genesis 19; Romans 1:24-28) Seeing God's condemnation on such behavior, we believe that it is impossible for people who live this lifestyle to be involved in ministry in our church. According to God's standards, no member or pastor, may condone, bless or perform marriages of the same sex, in or outside of our church. At the same time, we must reach out to these people with the forgiveness Christ offers and help them overcome the bondage that Satan has laid hold of in their lives.
4. We believe God's plan for human sexuality is to be expressed only within the context of marriage, that God created man and woman as unique biological persons made to complement each other. God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic male and one genetic female.

ARTICLE X AMENDMENTS

Subject to a two-week notice of any proposed constitutional change, this constitution and its by-laws may be altered, amended, or repealed by the members at a regular or special membership meeting by a vote of 2/3 of a quorum.

Adopted on May 18, 2004 by the members of Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church at a duly called meeting.