

# Church Governance Policy Manual



2014

**First Mennonite Church**  
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## Preface

This manual provides the policies and procedures within the governance structure of First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas. It is provided as a help to the congregation in order to heed the Biblical instruction that “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). The constitution of First Mennonite Church provides the governance structures of the congregation and should be referred to in matters of congregational composition, membership, and business.

### I. The Pastoral Staff

- A. The member of the pastoral staff called as Lead Pastor will serve as the administrator of the congregation and supervise other members of the pastoral staff and the office staff. Working with the Caregiving and Membership Commission, the Lead Pastor will ensure that the Church Record Book is kept up-to-date. Administratively, the Lead Pastor will be responsible to the Church Board.
- B. Pastors will be called by the congregation for specific terms. Recommendations to call pastors will be presented to the congregation by the Church Board. The Church Board will have authority to appoint members of the pastoral staff serving less than one-half of full time. Such appointments will be reported to the congregation. Recommendations to the congregation to call pastors will be announced to the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the congregational meeting at which recommendations are presented for voting. A call will be extended when three-fourths or more of the votes cast at a congregational meeting are affirmative.
- C. The resignation of a pastor will not be effective sooner than three months after it is submitted. However, the congregation may grant an earlier release to a pastor who resigns. The congregation may request the

resignation of a pastor when two-thirds or more of the votes cast at a congregational meeting support such action. A three-month severance allowance may be given to a pastor terminated by the congregation.

## II. Church Board

The following core policies of the Church Board may be changed **only** by action of the congregation.

The duties of the Church Board will be as follows:

- A. Lead the congregation in formulating, interpreting, and implementing its mission and vision.
- B. Conduct its work according to the mission of the congregation.
- C. Call, appoint, and employ staff, and terminate the call, appointment, or employment of a staff person.
  1. Determine the qualifications, number, and kind of staff to be called, appointed, and employed.
  2. Recommend to the congregation the calling of pastoral staff who serve at least half-time.
  3. Appoint pastoral staff who serve less than half-time.
  4. The board will receive recommendations from the Church and Staff Relations Committee and/or any review or search committee when calling, appointing, or employing staff or in taking action to terminate the call, appointment, or employment of a staff person. Furthermore, in connection with calling, appointing, or employing a staff person, the board will receive as a recommendation from the Church and Staff Relations Committee a written memo of understanding setting out the conditions and terms of the call, appointment, or employment.

D. Establish and administer personnel policies as follows:

1. Approve the personnel policy manual, recommended by the Church and Staff Relations Committee, which outlines the employment guidelines for all church staff. Personnel policy changes deemed by the Church Board to have significant impact on the whole congregation may be brought to the congregation for discernment.
2. Approve position descriptions for pastoral staff as recommended by the Church and Staff Relations Committee.
3. Receive reports from the Church and Staff Relations Committee on pastoral staff performance reviews and from the Property Committee on custodial staff performance reviews.
4. Receive reports and recommendations from the Church and Staff Relations Committee concerning the call, appointment, and employment of members of the pastoral staff as well as the renewal of their appointments.
5. Based upon the recommendation of the Church and Staff Relations Committee, recommend to the congregation the salaries and wages for all staff as part of the presentation of the annual local mission budget. Recommendations to the congregation for salary and benefits of pastoral staff will be according the guidelines published by Mennonite Church USA. Exceptions may occur which require special consideration by the Church Board.
6. Recommend to the congregation the salary and personnel benefits package in conjunction with a proposal for an initial call or appointment of a new member of the pastoral staff.

E. Manage and oversee the congregation's business affairs and property as follows:

1. Designate depositories for the congregation's funds as well as the persons authorized to sign checks, notes, deeds, contracts, and other

- legal instruments on behalf of the congregation. Authorize the Financial Stewardship Committee to serve as fiduciaries of the Congregation's funds as described in Section V, B of this Policy Manual.
2. In light of the mission of the congregation, discern the acceptance and allocation of special gifts, bequests, memorials, and endowments in consultation with the Financial Stewardship Committee.
  3. Receive the annual budget recommendation from the Financial Stewardship Committee. If adjustments are needed, return the proposed budget to the Financial Stewardship Committee for their further consultation with committees and commissions. Approve the annual budget for recommendation to the congregation at the Fall congregational meeting.
  4. Administer the budget, and arrange for fiscal audits. The board will have authority to authorize expenditures over the budget not to exceed three percent of the total budget amount in a fiscal year, except in emergency situations.
- F. Appoint delegates to the Western District Conference and Mennonite Church USA meetings, and representatives of the congregation to other organizations as required by the wider Mennonite body.
- G. Deal with congregational matters of faith and practice in cooperation with the commissions and committees of the congregation; discern when to refer such matters to the congregation as may be appropriate.
- H. Lead commissions and committees in focusing on the mission of the congregation. Facilitate coordination among the commissions and the committees.
- I. The Church Board will meet at least quarterly. Meetings will be called by the Chair. At the first meeting of each new year, the Church Board will orient itself to its mission and role. As early as possible in the new year, the Church Board will convene an orientation for all members of ministry commissions and resourcing committees to their role within the mission of the congregation.

### III. Officers

Duties of the officers may only be changed by action of the congregation. The terms of the Church Board Chair and the Secretary will end on alternate years as those of the Moderator and the Treasurer.

- A. The Moderator will call meetings of the congregation, establish agendas in consultation with the Church Board, preside at all meetings of the congregation, and appoint tellers to assist in congregational meetings including counting ballots. If the Moderator is unable to assume the Moderator's duties, the Chair of the Church Board will serve in his/her stead. The Moderator serves on the Church Board *ex officio* without vote.
  
- B. The Chair will be the executive officer of the congregation and his/her duties will be as follows:
  - 1. Call and preside at meetings of the Church Board.
  
  - 2. Maintain the Church Board's focus on the mission of the congregation.
  
  - 3. Give reports and present recommendations from the board to the congregation with the assistance of the Secretary, the Treasurer, and other persons as may be deemed necessary and appropriate.
  
  - 4. Facilitate coordination of the ministry and work of the Church Board, the ministry commissions, the resourcing committees, and auxiliary groups.
  
  - 5. Represent the Church Board in a consultative and supervisory role in relationship with the Lead Pastor.
  
  - 6. Serve as a member of the Church and Staff Committee.
  
  - 7. In the event that the Chair is absent or unable to assume the duties of the Chair, the Chair will delegate his/her duties to another member of the Church Board. If the Chair is unable to make this appointment, it will be made by the Church Board at a meeting called by the Secretary.

C. The Secretary will record and maintain a file of the proceedings of all the meetings of the congregation and the Church Board and perform other duties as assigned by the Chair.

D. The Treasurer will have the duties as follows:

1. Keep detailed records of all money received and disbursed by the congregation, including that of the Local Mission Fund, Sunday School classes, and other groups of the congregation in accordance with policies and procedures established by the Church Board.
2. Pay all bills and make disbursements in accordance with budgetary provisions upon authorization or request of the Church Board, ministry commissions, resourcing committees, or individuals having responsibility for the program for which the funds are to be disbursed.
3. File all necessary reports having to do with the business operation of the congregation to governmental, church, and other agencies.
4. Prepare and regularly present reports concerning the congregation's financial transactions and status to the Church Board, the congregation, and others who may properly receive such reports.

The Moderator, the Chair, the Secretary, and the Treasurer will be elected for two-year terms (up to a maximum of six years) at the Fall congregational meeting. The officers will not be eligible for re-election as members of the board for one year after having served three consecutive terms, with the exception of the treasurer (see Constitution, Article VII, Section 3).

## **IV. The Ministry Commissions**

Ministry commissions established by the congregation will plan, give leadership, and carry out the mission of the congregation according to the provisions of the constitution and the policies of the Church Board and the congregation. Each commission will submit their budget requests to the



Financial Stewardship Committee to be used in the development of the annual budget for the congregation.

Members of ministry commissions will be elected by the congregation and serve two-year terms, renewable twice, for a maximum of six years. Commission members are eligible for reelection one year after having served three consecutive terms. No more than 60 percent of the positions on any commission will end in the same year.

Ministry commissions will be composed of a majority of congregational members, with the exception of the Caregiving and Membership Commission, which will be composed entirely of active congregational members. (See Constitution, Article VII, Section 4.)

Commissions will select their own chair and representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

The ministry commissions and their responsibilities will be as follows:

- A. **The Caregiving and Membership Commission**, through its ministries, helps us experience love in Christian community as follows:
1. Promotes the spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and economic well-being of members and other participants by developing structures and resources for caring and support within the congregation.
  2. With the pastoral staff, discerns the spiritual commitment and readiness of candidates for baptism, approves candidates for membership, commends them to the congregation, and encourages members to full participation in congregational life.
  3. Maintains a membership roll of members/active and members/inactive by processing membership requests and acting on membership termination requests. Is responsible for contacts and relationships with inactive members, and has authority to move persons to inactive membership, pending communication with both the Board (by report) and the congregation (by the yearbook). Members/Inactive will be

defined as persons who have neither attended (although able) nor financially supported the church for at least one year.

4. Provides resources to the congregation and training for mediation and reconciliation.
5. According to the pattern of Matthew 18, seeks, with the pastors, to restore those who by their conduct and/or word have seemed to renounce their commitment to follow Christ.
6. Assists in the arrangements for baptism and serving communion.
7. Appoints and oversees the Caring Fund Committee and oversees the Everence mutual aid program in the congregation. One member of the commission will be appointed to the Caring Fund Committee.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the commission, and the commission's ministry goals for the year. The commission will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The commission is composed of 4-5 members/active with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the commission. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

**B. The Fellowship Commission**, through its ministries, helps us experience love in Christian community, as follows:

1. Provide activities and opportunities to strengthen fellowship in the congregation.
2. Be responsible for dinners, receptions, after-funeral fellowship hours, members' special celebrations, hospitality for guests hosted by the

congregation, and other fellowship events and activities as previously requested of the chair of the commission.

3. Be responsible to maintain the resources available in the kitchen.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the commission, and the commission's ministry goals for the year. The commission will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The commission is composed of 4-5 persons per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 4 with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the commission. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

- C. **The Nurture Commission**, through programs of Christian formation for people of all ages, leads us to express our love to God in worship, experience love in Christian community and extend God's love to the world as follows:

1. Oversee the Sunday School, mid-week, and summer programs, the Library, the youth fellowships, and all other educational programs and activities. The commission will be responsible for the Christmas Eve program with the Worship Commission and for Safe Sanctuaries.
2. Determine curriculum; select and procure literature and teaching materials; and maintain Christian education resources and equipment for the nurture program of the congregation. Promote the use of Anabaptist/Mennonite curricula.
3. Recruit and train teachers and other personnel to carry out the nurture program.

4. Promote enrollment of students in Mennonite schools (as per the written guidelines of the Scholarship Fund Committee, see point 5 below) and raise funds to provide scholarship aid to those enrolled. A committee comprised of at least three members will be appointed by the commission to carry out this responsibility.
5. Current working groups include: library, Safe Sanctuaries, Scholarship Fund Committee, youth ministers (under the leadership of the Pastor of Youth and Young Adults), and junior high ministry team. Others may be formed as needed.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the commission, and the commission's ministry goals for the year. The commission will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The commission is composed of 6-9 persons per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 4 with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the commission. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

- D. **The Outreach, Missions, and Peace Commission** will give leadership to our efforts to extend God's love to the world through ministries of mission, evangelism, peacemaking and social justice as follows:
1. Facilitate the congregation's ministry of making new disciples, welcoming newcomers, and encouraging a hospitable church atmosphere.
  2. Seek opportunities to develop church-based ministries that meet human needs in the community according to the example and instruction of Jesus.

3. Coordinate opportunities to increase awareness and involvement in peace-making endeavors.
4. Work with other congregations and Christians through the Western District Conference, Mennonite Church USA, and other organizations to carry out the ministries of the commission. Appoint representatives to organizations such as the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale and other mission and service organizations.
5. Promote and support both short-term and long-term mission and service activities by First Mennonite Church participants.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the commission, and the commission's ministry goals for the year. The commission will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The commission is composed of 3-4 persons per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 4 with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the commission. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

- E. **The Worship Commission**, with the pastoral staff, will give oversight to activities that help us express our love to God in worship as follows:
1. Be responsible for the public worship experiences of the congregation.
  2. Oversee and facilitate participation in worship, including worship leading, all areas of music, scripture reading, drama, operation of sound, projection, and lighting, etc.

3. Coordinate the music ministry of the congregation, including adult choir, providing for appropriate licenses (music and video), establishing music teams and groups, etc.
4. Oversee the following areas of ministry: ushering, greeting, art forms in worship (which may include flower displays, banners, and decorations), audio-visuals, the nursery, and any other areas that enhance the worship of the congregation.
5. Current working groups include: children's focus, childcare, nursery (ages 0-2), childcare (2-4), music teams (including accompaniment, special music, and worship bands), ushers, visual arts, audio tech, visual technology, drama and dance.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the commission, and the commission's ministry goals for the year. The commission will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The commission is composed of 3-4 persons per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 4 with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the commission. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

## **V. Resourcing Committees**

Resourcing committees, established by the congregation, will plan and give leadership to the internal functioning and structure of the congregation, according to its mission, in the areas of financial stewardship, gifts discernment, staffing and personnel, property, and historical record-keeping and interpretation.

Resourcing committees will be composed entirely of members/active, with the exception of the Property Committee, which may be composed of members and participants as per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 4.

Members of resourcing committees will be elected by the congregation and serve two-year terms, renewable twice, for a maximum of six years. Members are eligible for reelection one year after having served three consecutive terms. No more than 60 percent of the positions on any committee will end in the same year.

Committees will select their own chair and representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

The resourcing committees will have duties as follows:

- A. **The Church and Staff Relations Committee** will foster positive relationships between the congregation and members of the staff and will support staff for effectiveness and personal satisfaction in their ministry and jobs as follows:
1. Evaluate and make recommendations to the Church Board in the board's determining the kind and number of staff to be called, appointed, and employed.
  2. Develop position descriptions for staff and present them to the Church Board for adoption; regularly review and recommend changes in position descriptions to the Church Board for adoption as necessary.
  3. Serve as the core membership of all pastoral search and personnel recruitment committees appointed by the Church Board.
  4. Develop personnel policies and recommend them for adoption to the Church Board; review the policies annually or more often, if necessary, and recommend revisions to the board.
  5. Make recommendations to the Church Board on salaries and wages for staff when staff is initially called, appointed, or employed in consultation

with the Financial Stewardship Committee. Review salaries and wages for staff annually and make recommendations to the Church Board concerning adjustments through the Financial Stewardship Committee budget process. Recommendations to the congregation for salary and benefits of pastoral staff will be according the guidelines published by Mennonite Church USA. Exceptions may occur which require special consideration by the Church Board.

6. Develop a written memo of understanding, setting out the terms of a call, an appointment, or employment. Memos of understanding will be reviewed annually, according to established personnel policy, and any revisions will be presented to the board for adoption.
7. Carry out performance reviews of pastoral staff members and assure that reviews are carried out for all other staff. Report the completion of the reviews to the Church Board no later than the June meeting of the board each year.
8. Develop and present recommendations to the Church Board concerning the renewal and termination of calls and appointments of members of the pastoral staff, and the continuation or termination of the employment of other staff.
9. Provide spiritual and emotional support to staff, including being available to counsel and advise staff as called on by the staff.
10. Oversee the installation and farewell celebrations of staff members.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the work of the committee, and the committee's goals for the year. The committee will meet once per quarter minimally.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.



The committee is composed of three members elected by the congregation and the Church Board Chair. The committee will select its chair and a representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

**B. The Financial Stewardship Committee** will provide leadership and services in planning and administering the financial stewardship program of the congregation as follows:

1. Promote faithful stewardship and generous giving of financial and material resources according to Biblical principles in order to fully resource the ministries of the church
2. In consultation with commissions and committees, prepare a budget recommendation for the Church Board. Revisions, if requested by the Church Board, will be accomplished through further consultation between the Financial Stewardship Committee and commissions and committees.
3. Serve as fiduciaries of the congregation's funds using sound accounting principles, which will include investing endowment and idle funds, authorizing inter-fund loans, and borrowing money from outside sources for periods not to exceed 12 months without authorization by the congregation.
4. Be responsible for the counting of all offerings and receipts from other sources, with at least two persons participating, who will not be members of the same household and may or may not be members of the Financial Stewardship Committee. All receipts will be deposited in a bank account designated by the Church Board. The Treasurer will not participate in counting offerings and other receipts.
5. Prepare and recommend an annual offering schedule for adoption by the Church Board.
6. Make recommendations to the Church Board concerning the approval and scheduling of fund-raising events that involve the entire congregation.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the work of the committee, and the committee's goals for the year. The committee will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the committee or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The committee is comprised of four members elected by the congregation and the Treasurer. The committee will select its chair and a representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

- C. **The Gifts Discernment Committee** will lead the congregation in the joyful process of discerning spiritual gifts, abilities and talents, in order to call the people to use their gifts in congregational and community ministry. The committee will present nominations for the election of members to positions in the congregation.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the work of the committee, and the committee's goals for the year. The committee will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the commission or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The committee will be composed of six members elected by the congregation. The committee will select its chair and a representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

- D. **The Property Committee**, through its care for the congregation's physical plant, helps to provide a hospitable environment, and thus extends God's love to the world as follows:

1. Be responsible for improving, maintaining, and caring for the physical property of the congregation, including the buildings, grounds, and equipment.

2. Conduct an annual review of the physical facility, maintenance needs, and insurance coverage.
3. Supervise the services of the custodial staff.
4. Consult with appropriate groups to develop and implement major projects.

The first meeting of the year will be an orientation to the mission of the congregation, the ministry of the committee, and the committee's ministry goals for the year. The committee will meet at least once per quarter.

Changes in these policies may be initiated by either the committee or the Church Board and approved by action of the Church Board.

The committee is composed of 4-5 persons per the Constitution, Article VII, Section 5 with authority to form working groups to achieve the purposes of the committee. Conversation with the Gifts Discernment Committee will take place annually prior to developing the slate of elected lay positions.

The committee will select its chair and a representative to the Church Board, which need not be the same person.

- E. **The Historical Committee** will oversee the archiving of church records and promote awareness and appreciation of church history and the Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage. The committee is composed of three members appointed by the Church Board. The terms of the members of the committee will be two years. Members may serve on-going consecutive terms.

## VI. Changes to Policies

Each commission and committee will review their policies annually. Changes in the policies for commissions and committees may be adopted by action of the Church Board. Changes in policy for the Church Board and for the duties of the officers may be adopted by a 66 percent approval by the congregation.