

Constitution & By-Laws

First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

902 West Springfield Ave
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Approved at
FMC Annual Meeting
January 22, 2023

First Mennonite Church Constitution

I. Our Vision

We are called by God to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as a community of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flows through us to the world.

II. Our Mission

To follow Christ. To nurture community. To seek a just peace.

We are a community grounded in the way of Jesus, shaped by an Anabaptist Mennonite theology and spirituality, and embodying creative worship, study, prayer, and service that embraces and challenges all people, inclusive of diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic or social class, education, and physical or mental condition.

We commit to relationships of love and care, supporting one another, celebrating together, and accompanying each other as we grow, struggle, and flourish in faith and life.

We commit to joining God's work of peacemaking and reconciliation and sharing Christ's love in the Champaign-Urbana community and beyond. We are called to care for creation, learn from other faith traditions, connect with Christians locally and around the world, and serve the local community.

We commit to blessing, and being blessed by, all persons, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. We seek to engage our communities in ways that undo our society's legacies of patriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism.

III. Membership

As we seek to experience the full richness of the community of Christ, we welcome into fellowship and membership all who confess faith in Jesus Christ. Members are baptized individuals who affirm their commitment to following Jesus and participating in the life of the church. Associate Members make the same commitments as Members, but choose to maintain membership in another congregation.

Through the fellowship, worship, service, and witness of First Mennonite Church, members are called to seek transformation by God's grace; pursue wholeness, justice, and peace; gather for worship and fellowship; learn from one another; honor and care for one another; give and receive joy, love, encouragement, time, resources, and counsel; and rest and play together.

All Active Participants in the congregation are invited to seek membership through public affirmation of faith, baptism, or transfer of membership. An Active Participant has been consistently attending church events for at least six months.

IV. Governance

Our model of governance seeks to empower participants to follow Jesus Christ in service of each other, our neighbors, and the world. Participants are encouraged to bring their gifts and callings into the work of the church.

- A. Decision Making: All Active Participants are encouraged to join in discussion, clarification, and discernment, including participation on Committees and Church Council. The congregation controls its property and programs by decision-making of the whole, by delegation of authority to Church Council, and by authorizing church staff, committee members, and those in other appointed roles. Congregational decision-making processes strive to be clear, transparent, and adaptable to changing contexts, seeking levels of input appropriate to the impact of the decision at hand.
- B. Congregational Meetings: The date, time, place, and purpose of congregational meetings will be announced through written and verbal congregation-wide communication channels at least two weeks in advance.
 - 1. Annual Meeting: The church year is January 1 through December 31. The Church Council will conduct an annual business meeting with the congregation in January to:
 - i. Receive and discuss written reports from Church Council, the Pastors, Treasurer, Standing Committees, and others as requested by Council.
 - ii. Approve an annual spending plan.
 - iii. Conduct other congregational business.
 - 2. Special congregational meetings may be called by Church Council or the Pastor/s or by signed petition of at least twenty Members and/or Active Participants.
 - 3. Voting
 - i. Absentee ballots may be arranged at Church Council's discretion.
 - ii. A quorum consists of those eligible voters who attend the meeting.
 - iii. An eligible voter is an Active Participant who is 14 years or older or a Member.
 - iv. Resolutions pass with a simple majority vote, unless a higher threshold for affirmation is indicated by this Constitution or Church Council.
- C. Church Council: Serves as the congregation's administrative body providing financial oversight and visionary leadership. Council is composed of seven voting members (chair, chair-elect, elders (2), members-at-large (3)) and three non-voting members (Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, Treasurer). Four voting members constitutes a quorum.
- D. Pastoral Leadership: Pastors are accountable to, and directed by, Church Council acting on behalf of the congregation. Origination or renewal of a pastoral call requires an 80% congregational vote of affirmation. Termination of a pastoral relationship

requires a simple majority congregational vote at a meeting called for that purpose.

- E. By-Laws: The congregation will establish and maintain By-Laws to clarify and discharge the mandates of this Constitution.

- V. Amendments: Revisions to this Constitution or By-Laws may be made with the affirmation of two-thirds of all votes at a congregational meeting.

First Mennonite Church By-Laws

I. Congregational Leadership

A. Church Council: Acts on behalf of the congregation in addition to matters of general administration. Decisions or actions discerned to have significant impact on congregational life are brought by Council before the congregation as a whole. Council is composed of seven voting members:

1. Chair: serves a one-year term as Council chairperson. Acts as an administrative spokesperson and chairs congregational meetings. Also serves as a member of the Spiritual Leadership Team and the Pastor Congregation Relations Committee.
2. Chair-Elect: serves a two-year term on Council, as a voting member in the first year and as Chair in the second year. Serves a third year as Chair of the Pastor Congregation Relations Committee, which is not a member of the Council.
3. Elders (2): serve on Council and the Spiritual Leadership Team for two-year terms with alternating starting years. An elder is encouraged to serve up to two consecutive terms.
4. Members at large (3): serve two-year terms. Each serves as Council's liaison to a Standing Committee.

Council membership includes three non-voting members:

5. Treasurer.
6. Lead Pastor and Associate Pastor.

Council's responsibilities are to:

7. Direct congregational priorities, mission, and vision.
8. Facilitate the annual discernment of new leadership, including Council members, elders, committee chairs and members, church representatives, and other appointments.
9. Oversee committees.
10. Direct pastoral search processes.
11. Employ pastoral staff and direct pastoral evaluations.

12. Direct the use of church property and approve major financial decisions.
 13. Oversee the integrity of congregational finances, including expenditure of reserve funds, designation of special offerings, and recommendation of an annual spending plan.
 14. Establish and maintain written policies and procedures.
- B. Church Treasurer: Appointed by the Church Council for a two-year term and may be reappointed for two additional consecutive two-year terms. Responsibilities are to:
1. Receive and disburse all church funds.
 2. Maintain financial records, as directed by Council.
 3. Distribute designated gifts according to congregational policy.
 4. Provide a written financial report monthly to Church Council.
 5. Attend Church Council upon request of the Chairperson.
 6. Provide a written financial report annually to the congregation.
 7. Assist Council, committees, and staff in the development of an annual spending plan.
- C. Spiritual Leadership Team: Nurtures the spiritual health of the congregation through visitation, prayer, encouragement of spiritual gifts, fostering spiritual growth, providing support, and strengthening congregational relationships. Composed of pastor/s, elders, and Council Chair. Responsibilities are to:
1. Plan Communion, baptism, footwashing, and other special ceremonies.
 2. Receive and process requests for church membership.
 3. Maintain membership records.
 4. Form and nurture small groups.
 5. Distribute Mutual Aid and Adoption Funds.
 6. Oversee a youth mentoring program.
 7. Assist the pastors in administering policies for the prevention of abuse and neglect.
- D. Elders: Nurture the congregation and assist the pastors with services for Communion, baptism, footwashing, and other special ceremonies. Support and give counsel to the pastors, and act on behalf of the pastors in their absence. Model a mature and growing spirituality.
- E. Pastor Congregation Relations Committee: Tends to the pastors and the relationship between the pastors and the congregation. Serves in a consulting role and makes recommendations to Council. Composed of the current Council Chair, the Chair-Elect, and the immediate past Chair who chairs the committee. Responsibilities are to:
1. Attend to the concerns and well-being of the pastors.

2. Consult with the pastors to create and annually update memorandums of understanding, job descriptions, and salary and benefits, with recommendations for action sent to Council.
3. Assist the pastors in assessing goals, responsibilities, workload, priorities, boundaries, and staff relationships.
4. Facilitate pastoral and congregational evaluations at Council's direction.
5. Review pastors' sabbatical plans for Council approval.
6. Assist the Lead Pastor in hiring and employing support staff.
7. Maintain personnel files for each pastor.
8. Mediate conflicts between the congregation and the pastors.

F. Pastors: The Pastors provide spiritual and administrative leadership, counsel, and nurture to the congregation. The Lead Pastor assumes primary administrative responsibility for the work and worship of the congregation, including administrative oversight of the support staff. Specific duties of the Lead Pastor and Associate Pastor/s are worked out between them, with assistance from the Pastor Congregation Relations Committee and the affirmation of Church Council. Pastors are called for a specified period of time. Subsequent service is contingent upon issuance of a renewed call following a mutually agreed evaluation process. Pastoral responsibilities include:

1. Encouraging persons to follow Christ in all of life.
2. Preaching, teaching, planning worship, counseling, visiting, nurturing, and relating to all ages and groups within the congregation.
3. Modeling a mature and growing spirituality.
4. Encouraging, resourcing, and coordinating the gifts and talents in the congregation.
5. Staying abreast of the work of various committees and mission outreach.
6. Maintaining an active professional development program.
7. Representing the congregation in community, conference, and denominational contexts.
8. Relating to pastoral peers and conference ministers.

II. Standing Committees: Coordinate and facilitate congregational ministries. Committee chairs and members are appointed to two-year terms, and may serve up to two consecutive terms. Committee size is flexible, with committee membership determined by programming needs alongside consideration for the gifts, availability, and interests of congregants and pastors. Committees:

- Appoint persons or sub-committees to carry out specific tasks as needed.
- Assess the church's long-range needs in their areas of responsibility and implement programs to meet these needs.
- At the request of Council, administer ad hoc needs and projects in their areas of responsibility.

- Submit an annual spending plan proposal to the Church Council.
- Provide a written annual report to the congregation.
- Develop and maintain records of their activities to ensure continuity with the succeeding committee.

A. Christian Education Committee: Collaborates with the pastor/s to provide faith education opportunities for all ages. At least one pastor is a permanent member. Responsibilities are to:

1. Plan adult faith education opportunities.
2. Develop and oversee ministry programming and vision for youth, children, and families.
3. Ensure that educational programs align with policy for the prevention of abuse and neglect.
4. Keep informed about faith education resources from the denomination.
5. Oversee the church nursery and use of classrooms.
6. Maintain classroom supplies, cleanliness, and organization.

B. Hospitality and Fellowship Committee: Organizes fellowship opportunities and promotes a spirit of welcome and hospitality. Responsibilities are to:

1. Arrange church meals and other church social events.
2. Arrange for short-term meal provision for congregants in need.
3. Purchase and coordinate refreshments for Sunday morning fellowship and special events.
4. Maintain kitchen supplies.

C. Facilities Committee: Supervises the church's physical property. Responsibilities are to:

1. Manage a strategic finance plan to maintain and upgrade church facilities, furnishings, and equipment.
2. Maintain adequate property and liability insurance.
3. Arrange for or hire services for the maintenance of the church property.
4. Oversee maintenance of the 906 W. Springfield apartment building.

D. Service and Outreach Committee: Facilitates the outreach ministries of the congregation. Responsibilities are to:

1. Discern, propose, promote, and facilitate service and outreach opportunities to the congregation and to individuals.
2. Support and coordinate peace and justice initiatives that arise within the congregation.

3. Develop publicity to promote community awareness of First Mennonite Church among those who may wish to participate.
4. Establish procedures to welcome worship visitors and guests.
5. Distribute the committee's discretionary funds to initiatives that align with the mission of the congregation.
6. Recommend to Council an annual Missions giving plan.
7. Recommend to Council the recipients of annual special offerings.

E. Worship Committee: Nurtures the congregation's worship life. At least one pastor is a permanent member. Responsibilities are to:

1. Work with the pastors to plan Sunday worship and special services.
2. Encourage creativity, various worship styles, congregational leadership, and opportunities for all ages.
3. Provide worship leadership training opportunities for congregants.
4. Process needs related to worship accessibility.
5. Oversee and maintain worship resources, arrangement of the sanctuary, and sanctuary technology.

III. Special Committees: The Church Council may create committees or appointments to fulfill specific missions. Special committees and appointments are reviewed annually. Church Council oversees the appointment of special committee chairpersons, who may be appointed to a maximum of four consecutive one-year terms. Special Committees will:

- A. Report to the Church Council as requested.
- B. Provide a written annual report to the congregation.
- C. Submit an annual Spending Plan proposal to Church Council.
- D. Solicit membership from the congregation.