

## **Constitution of the East Goshen Mennonite Church**

### **Article 1 - Name**

The name of this organization shall be the East Goshen Mennonite Church.

### **Article 2 - Mission**

Since God as sent Jesus into the world to live and die for our salvation, raised Jesus up from the dead, made Jesus both Lord and Christ, and established the church as the visible body of Christ in the world,

Our response and mission as a congregation is to worship God, to be transformed by God's Word and Spirit, to communicate the good news of the Kingdom of God in word and action, to make disciples of Jesus Christ from among all people, and to invite them into the fellowship of the community of believers.

### **Article 3 - Relation to Conference**

The congregation shall accept the constitution and discipline of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. The Congregation shall provide adequate means to give and receive counsel from the Conference, and support its activities for the building of the church.

### **Article 4 - Membership**

**A. Qualifications of Members.** Members shall be persons who profess faith in Christ and follow him in life. They shall commit themselves to this Congregation and its covenant, and shall support the teachings of the Mennonite Church.

**B. Reception of Members.** The Pastoral Care Commission shall review and recommend applicants for membership. They may become members by baptism, confession of faith, or letter of transfer.

**C. Privileges of Members.** Members of the Congregation may take part in all its activities, including voting and elections. They may be candidates for any office.

**D. Responsibility of Members.** Members shall seek to follow Christ in their conduct and relationships both in the church and elsewhere. Using the Church Covenant as a guide, members shall do the following as able: gather for worship, nurture and fellowship, care for each other, and support the mission of the Congregation.

#### **E. Ending Membership.**

1. Membership may be ended:
  - a. by letter of transfer,
  - b. at a member's request,
  - c. when a member joins another church,
  - d. when a member consistently walks contrary to faith in Christ, rejects the counsel and covenant of the church, or fails to participate as able in the life of the church, or
  - e. when a member has moved away permanently.

2. The Pastoral Care Commission shall define and carry out the above process.

**F. Property Rights.** Persons whose membership ended for any reason forfeit all rights to property belonging to the Congregation.

**G. Nonresident Members.**

1. Members occasionally cannot take part regularly in the Congregation, yet seek to grow in faith and maintain a relationship with it. They may become Nonresident Members.
2. Nonresident members do not have property rights, nor may they take part in elections and voting.
3. The Pastoral Care Commission shall define and carry out the above process.

**H. Associate Members.**

1. Persons who are on short-term leave from their home congregation may wish to participate fully in the life of this Congregation while retaining membership in their home congregation. They may become Associate Members while they attend this Congregation.
2. Associate members do not have rights to property of the Congregation; they may take part in elections and voting.
3. The Pastoral Care Commission shall define and carry out the above process.

**Article 5 - The Congregational Meeting.**

**A. Authority.** The Congregational Meeting is the final authority in all congregational matters.

**B. Meetings.** The Church Council shall name the time and place for congregational meetings, and shall notify members of the agenda at least two Sundays before the meeting. The Church Council shall call a Congregational Meeting at least once a year to receive reports and adopt a budget.

**C. Quorum.** A quorum for the meeting shall be the members present.

**D. Chairperson.** The Congregation shall elect the chairperson of the Congregational Meeting.

**E. Voting.** The total number of those voting shall be the sum of those voting *yes* or *no*.

**F. Elections.**

1. Process. At least two Sundays before elections the Gifts Committee shall notify the Congregation of its recommendations for candidates to elected offices. The Congregation shall have elected a candidate if 85% or more of those voting approve the recommendation.
2. Ballots. Elections shall be by ballot unless the Church Council decide otherwise. The Congregational Chairperson shall make absentee ballots available two Sundays before elections.
3. Offices. This Constitution identifies in the article concerning Organization the offices that the Congregational Meeting fills. The Church Council elects other corporate officers.
4. Who may vote. All members and associate members of the Congregation may vote in elections.
5. Terms of office. Only paid employees may serve more than six years consecutively in one

elected office. This time accumulates from the beginning of the first full term of office. The Congregational Meeting may annul this rule in any particular case. Terms begin on September 1.

#### **G. Making Decisions.**

1. Preamble. The primary purpose of making decisions in the Congregation is to be guided by the Holy Spirit to find unity in God's purpose. Discussion before voting should move the Congregation toward consensus.
2. Voting. All members and associate members present at the Congregational Meeting may have one vote on issues brought to the meeting. The Congregational Meeting approves a question if two thirds of those voting affirm it.
3. Major Decisions. A Major Decision exists if the Congregational Meeting or the Church Council decides that significant unity on a question is important for the spiritual health of the church. For Major Decisions the Church Council shall propose a congregational process to decide the question. The Church Council will notify the Congregation at least two Sundays before a vote on a Major Decision.
4. Recommendation for Pastor(s). The Congregational Meeting approves a recommendation for one or more pastors if the proportion of those voting who approve the recommendation is equal to or greater than the proportion that the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference advises.
  5. Removing persons from office. The Congregational Meeting may remove any person from congregational office if two thirds of those voting affirm the question for removal.
6. Amendments to the Constitution or Articles of Incorporation.
  - a. Constitution. Only the Congregational Meeting has authority to amend the Constitution.
  - b. Articles of Incorporation. Both the Church Council and the Congregational Meeting must approve amendments to the Articles of Incorporation. The Church Council shall vote to amend the Articles of Incorporation before the Congregation considers the question.
  - c. The Congregational Meeting may approve an amendment in one of two ways;
    - 1) If the Church Council notifies the Congregation of the proposed amendment at least thirty days before the meeting, the amendment shall be approved if two thirds of those voting affirm it.
    - 2) If the Church Council notifies the Congregation of the proposed amendment less than thirty days and at least seven days before the meeting, the amendment shall be approved if ninety percent of those voting affirm it.

### **Article 6 - Organization**

#### **A. Elders**

1. Authority and responsibilities. The authority and responsibilities of the Elders shall be the following:
  - a. Oversee the Congregation in worship, pastoral care and in issues of life and doctrine.
  - b. Submit for approval by the Church Council recommendations for congregational decision.
  - c. Carry out assignments that the Church Council has delegated to it.
2. Members
  - a. Elders shall be members of the church who possess wisdom, experience, spiritual

- maturity and personal integrity.
  - b. Elected Elders. The Congregation shall elect six Elders for terms of three years, two beginning each year. Elected Elders shall not be pastors employed by the congregation.
  - c. Pastors. The Church Council shall elect no more than two pastors to serve as Elders. Their terms shall be three years.
- 3. Organization. The Elders shall organize themselves to carry out their responsibilities in an effective way. They shall choose a chairperson annually.

**B. Program Team**

- 1. Authority and responsibilities. The authority and responsibilities of the Program Team shall be the following:
  - a. Administer and generate resources for the church to carry out its mission and vision.
  - b. Coordinate the planning and tasks of the program commission.
  - c. Submit for approval by the Church Council recommendations for congregational decision.
  - d. Carry out assignments that the Church Council has delegated to it.
- 2. Members
  - a. Chairpersons of program commissions shall be members of the Program Team.
  - b. The Church Council or the Congregational Meeting may name members of specific organizations or committees to be members of the Program Team for terms of one year.
  - c. The Church Council may name a pastor to be a member of the Program Team.
- 3. Organization. The Program Team shall organize itself so that it can carry out its responsibilities in an effective way. It shall choose a chairperson annually.

**C. Church Council**

- 1. Authority and responsibilities. The authority and responsibilities of the Church Council shall be the following:
  - a. Coordinate the work of the Elders and the Program Team, in order to integrate vision and its implementation.
  - b. Review issues and proposals for congregational decision and information.
  - c. Recommend to the congregation a plan to consider Major Decisions.
- 2. Members
  - a. Elders. The chairperson of the Elders, one Elder who is a pastor, and one additional Elder appointed by the Elders.
  - b. Program Team. The chairperson of the Program Team, and two other members of the Program Team appointed by the Program Team.
  - c. Members at large. The Congregational Meeting shall elect three members of the congregation to the Church Council for three year terms, one beginning each year.
  - d. The Congregational Chairperson.
- 3. Organization
  - a. Meetings.
    - 1) The Church Council shall meet at least quarterly to carry out its responsibilities.
    - 2) Members of the congregation may observe Church Council meetings.
  - b. Organization
    - 1) The chair of the Congregation shall be the chair of the Church Council.
    - 2) The Church Council shall organize itself so that it can carry out its responsibilities in an effective way.
  - c. Making decisions.
    - 1) Decisions for the Congregational meeting. The Congregational Chair shall present an

issue to the Congregational Meeting if four of the members of the Church Council vote to present the question.

- 2) Interim decisions. The chairs of the Elders, Program Committee and the Church Council may meet as an Executive Committee to decide urgent questions within the authority of the Church Council. Such decisions shall remain in effect until the Church Council meets to consider the question.

#### **D. Commissions and Committees**

##### **1. Commissions**

###### **a. Authority and responsibilities**

- 1) Each commission shall make decisions in its areas of responsibilities and carry them out.
- 2) Each commission chairperson shall:
  - \* Convene the commission at least once every two months.
  - \* Lead the commission so that it accomplishes its tasks effectively.
  - \* Coordinate functions of the commission with other commissions and functions of the church.
  - \* Report to the Program Team or Elders.
  - \* Carry out the directives of the Program Team or Elders, and the Church Council.
  - \* Maintain a list of functions and responsibilities of the commission.

###### **b. Temporary commissions**

- 1) Creation. The Church Council may create and abolish temporary commissions as needed. The Church Council shall specify the period of time that such commissions shall exist, up to one year.
- 2) Members and organization. The Church Council shall appoint the members and chairpersons of temporary commissions. Each temporary commission shall organize itself to carry out its responsibilities in an effective way.

###### **c. Permanent commissions**

- 1) Creation. Only the Congregational Meeting may create or abolish permanent Commissions.
- 2) Commission Chairpersons
  - \* The Congregation shall elect the chairpersons of the commissions for terms of three years, with the exception of the Pastoral Care Commission.
  - \* The Gifts Committee shall appoint an interim chairperson to fill a vacancy until one is duly nominated and confirmed at the next election.
- 3) Members
  - \* Members of each commission shall include persons with responsibilities for departments, tasks or groups under the authority of the commission.
  - \* The commission shall nominate other members as needed. The Gifts Committee

shall confirm these nominations.

d. Organization. Each commission shall organize itself to carry out its responsibilities in an effective way.

##### **2. Committees**

- a. Temporary Committees. The Church Council, Elders or Program Team may create, organize, supervise and abolish temporary committees as needed. The body that creates the committee shall specify the period of time that it shall exist, up to two years.
- b. Permanent Committees. Only the Congregational Meeting may create or abolish permanent committees.
- c. Gifts Committee
  - 1) Authority and responsibilities. The authority and responsibilities of the Gifts Committee shall be the following:

- \* Nominate and confirm candidates as described elsewhere in this Constitution.
- \* Discern the gifts of members and encourage their use in the Kingdom of God.
  - \* Be responsible to the Elders.
- 2) Members. The Gifts Committee shall consist of:
  - \* One Pastoral Care Commission member, chosen annually by the Pastoral Care Commission.
  - \* One Elder who is not a pastor, chosen annually by the Elders.
  - \* One Pastor, chosen annually by the Elders.
  - \* Three members at large, named by the Gifts Committee and confirmed by the Congregational Meeting. These shall have three-year terms, one term expiring each year. These members may not serve consecutive terms.
- 3) Organization. The Gifts Committee shall organize itself. The member who is an Elder shall call and chair the first meeting after annual elections.

## **Article 7 - Corporation Officers**

- A. Board of Directors.** The members of the Church Council shall serve as corporation Board of Directors.
- B. Resident Agent and Principal Office.** The chairperson of the Property Commission or other person designated by the Church Council shall be the resident agent. The Church Council shall determine any change in the principal office.
- C. Annual Report.** The church treasurer shall file the annual report.
- D. Number and Titles of Officers.** The officers of the church shall be the chairperson of the Church Council, secretary, treasurer, and other officers with titles and duties as the Church Council may determine. The chairperson of the Church Council is the president of the corporation. The treasurer is the chief financial officer of the corporation. No person may hold more than one corporate office. The Church Council shall appoint the secretary, the treasurer, and any other officer whom the members have not elected. The Church Council may change these appointments at its pleasure.
- E. Corporate Duties of the Church Council Chairperson.** The chairperson of the Church Council shall preside at all meetings of the Church Council and shall be the chief executive officer of the corporation. The chairperson shall supervise, direct and control all its activities, subject to the control of the Church Council. The chairperson has authority to vote or execute a proxy to vote shares of stock, bonds, debentures or other evidence of indebtedness of other corporations held by the church. The chairperson shall review the Congregational Handbook, verify that the information is current, and request updates from appropriate persons. The chairperson shall have other duties as required by law, this constitution, the Articles of Incorporation, or as the Church Council assigns.
- F. Corporate Duties of the Secretary.** The Secretary shall keep, at the principal office of the church, minutes of the meetings of the members and of the Church Council. The secretary shall maintain the original copy of the Congregational Handbook, and shall make it available as requested to any member of the congregation. The secretary shall perform other duties as required by law, this constitution, the Articles of Incorporation, or as the Church Council assigns.

**G. Corporate Duties of the Treasurer.** The treasurer shall keep adequate and accurate written books of account of the properties and business transactions of the church. The directors of the corporation have authority to inspect the books of account at all times. The treasurer shall deposit all money and valuables received by the church in such depositories as the Church Council designates, in the name of and to the credit of the church. The treasurer shall disburse the funds of the church in accord with the instructions of the Church Council. The treasurer shall render accounts of all such transactions and the financial condition of the church to the membership quarterly. The treasurer shall perform other duties as required by law, this constitution, the Articles of Incorporation, or as the Church Council assigns.

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