

Constitution of the Cornerstone Mennonite Fellowship

July, 2021

PREAMBLE

I recognize Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation. I have accepted Him as my personal Lord and Savior, God as my heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit as my guide. I accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and believe that all Scripture is given by direct inspiration of God. I therefore base my faith, life, and practice on its written message. My goal is to live according to Jesus' teaching of love, peace, and reconciliation in all my relationships. I affirm and accept the doctrines of the Bible as expressed in the 1963 Mennonite Confession of Faith.

Recognizing the Christian's deep need for fellowship, I will faithfully support our congregation's life by participating in the worship experience and the discipling ministries. I will support our leaders, my brothers and sisters, and all our activities in prayer (Hebrews 10:25, Luke 4:16).

I will carefully cultivate a personal devotional life by regular study and meditation in God's Word combined with prayer for myself and others (Psalm 1:2-3).

I pledge to live openly and lovingly with my brothers and sisters, to share their joys, problems, and concerns with a caring heart. I will always be ready for reconciliation and secure it without delay by willingly receiving and giving counsel in love, if offenses (sin) should arise (Matthew 18).

I will take seriously Jesus' great commission. By my daily words and life, I will testify to those around me and to the world at large of God's saving and enabling grace (Matthew 28:18-20).

I recognize that the things I possess are really a trust of God committed to me as His steward, therefore, I will use them responsibly by contributing time, gifts and offerings to the ministry and mission of the church (II Corinthians 9: 6-15, Ephesians 4:28).

I believe marriage is between one biological man and one biological woman and is a permanent, sacred bond terminated only by death (Romans 7:2-3, Mark 10:2-10). I believe marriage problems must be dealt with redemptively. God does not sanction remarriage following divorce.

I believe that any sexual relationship outside the marriage bond is sin. Anyone involved in the following; fornication, adultery, homosexuality, transgenderism, or any other sexual perversion needs to repent to stay in fellowship with God and the body of Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Timothy 1:10, Romans 1:23-32).

I believe the husband must diligently fulfill his role as leader in the home, modeling a Christ-like life in all relationships, loving his wife, and being sensitive to provide for the needs of each member by God's help (Ephesians 5).

I believe Christian men shall have short hair and not have their head covered when praying or prophesying (I Corinthians 11:4,7,14).

I believe the wife likewise must fulfill her Biblical role and be in submission to her husband. I believe the woman's head should be veiled when praying or prophesying as a sign of authority in light of God's headship principle. I believe the sisters should also have long hair (natural length) as taught in I Corinthians 11:1-16.

I believe that children should obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1).

I believe that Christians are to maintain a non conformed lifestyle that rejects the evil of the world. I will endeavor to keep my body clean and healthy, to find my joy in the pursuit of godliness, to wear simple, economical and modest clothing, to seek the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit rather than submitting to the standards of beauty that the world dictates such as jewelry and elaborate hair styles (I Corinthians 6:19-20, I Peter 3:3-5, I Timothy 2: 9-10).

I will carefully choose leisure activities that build a wholesome body, character, and thought life. Recognizing the tremendous impact of television and other forms of mass media, I will allow the Holy Spirit to guide me in controlling their impact on my life. I will refrain from practices which would grieve the Spirit and hinder my witness for Christ (Ephesians 2:1-11, Ephesians 4:22-30).

I believe that human life has its beginning at the time of conception and the taking of human life, whether by abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, or in any other circumstance is murder and is forbidden by scripture (Psalm 139:14-16, Exodus 20:13). I will avoid violence and endeavor to live at peace with all men. I will be a conscientious objector to any form of military service. I will obey the government in all areas that do not conflict with my higher loyalty to God (Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 1:4-5, John 18:36, I Peter 2:21-23, Romans 13).

I understand that this covenant is intended to encourage and guide us in our Christian growth and commitment to each other within the body of believers at Cornerstone Mennonite Fellowship. By the grace of God and with the help of the Holy Spirit and my brothers and sisters, I desire to follow this covenant.

I. (Article 1) This congregation is known as the Cornerstone Mennonite Fellowship, located near Ephrata, Pa.

II. (Article 2) Purpose and Goals

A. Purpose

1. To be an evangelical community of believers who covenant together to maintain doctrinal stability, along with focused worship in the corporate service.
2. To maintain a focus on the spiritual condition of the heart.

B. Goals

1. To guide each individual to put his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and to love him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Matt. 22: 37, Rom. 10:9-10, Heb. 11:6)
2. To instill a deep and living trust in the Word of God, in its authority over our lives and practice, realizing it is the basis by which we must give an account of ourselves at the judgment seat of Christ. (John 12:48, Matt. 5:17-20, II Tim. 3:15-17)
3. To guide each believer to a life of discipleship, giving total commitment to Christ, develop meaningful personal devotions, and allowing the Bible to establish our priorities. (Luke 9:23-24, Matt. 6:33, John 15:3-4)
4. To help each believer discover his spiritual gift and to encourage him to exercise his gift in expressing God's love to the members of the body of Christ. (I Cor. 12, Rom. 12:3-8, Eph. 4:7-13)
5. To train each believer to edify one another and make the church strong by sharing what God is doing in each others life. (Eph. 5:19, I Cor. 14:26)
6. To demonstrate our love to the Lord and our loyalty to each other by giving only a good report of each other. If a good report cannot be given, we will follow Matthew 18 in a spirit of restoring rather than exposing. (Gal. 6:1, Matt. 18:15-19)
7. To build Christ's character in individuals, in marriages, and in families so that we will be above reproach and be an example of the Christian faith. (Col. 1:28-29, Eph. 5:22-33, Titus 2:3-4, Exodus 20:12, Col. 3:20)
8. To learn and apply God's principles of stewardship so that we may give a good account of ourselves and that the financial needs of the family and Church may be met. (Mal. 3:10, Luke 16:10-12)
9. To encourage each believer to a life of holiness and separation from the world, recognizing Satan as the ruler of this present evil world whose purpose is to oppose God and destroy souls in eternal perdition. (Eph. 6:11-12, I Pet 5:8, Eph 2:3)
10. To challenge each other in evangelizing the world through personal testimony, Christian service and by supporting Christian missions. (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, II Cor. 5:20)

III. (Article 3) Membership

A. Local church membership is a solemn commitment of ourselves in the sight of God and man. To be a functional member of Christ's local visible body we will:

1. Actively participate in the program of the Church according to our talents and gifts.
2. Regularly support the Church program financially according to our means.
3. Advance the purpose and interests of Christ around the world and in the community through the Church.
4. Adopt the Christian lifestyle of the body that is separate from the world and dedicated to God.
5. Unite together with the congregation in acts of worship and prayer, caring and sharing, protection and correction.

B. Membership Requirements

1. Give evidence of new birth by faith in Christ and repentance from sin.
2. Admission may be through water baptism, transfer of membership, or confession of faith of previously baptized individuals.
3. Adults: willing to affirm the church covenant as a statement of belief, and support the Constitution. Children: willing to submit to the authority and discipline of the home.
4. Be willing to use your spiritual gifts for the well being of the whole body.

C. Covenant Clarifications

1. Wedding Rings: We realize that there are varying views on the wearing of the wedding band and we do not necessarily see someone who wears it as living in sin; however, based on the teaching of I Timothy 2:8-10 and to avoid offenses, we will refrain from its use.

2. Hair: Our understanding of long hair is natural length. When a woman cuts her hair except for straightening of the ends in the back, it will be seen as a symptom of a spiritual problem. The Board is given permission to use discernment in cases of extremely long hair and for health reasons. The veiling is considered part of the sister's attire.

3. Shorts: Because we feel the wearing of shorts borders on immodesty, can leave a poor testimony, and to avoid offenses, we will refrain from wearing them with exceptions like water related activities and when worn in the realm of privacy.

D. Termination

1. Requests for transfer will be made known to the congregation. If in good standing, a letter will be granted. If not in good standing, a report will be given to the effect.

2. Sin without repentance, or disregard for teachings of the church, or unwillingness to reaffirm the covenant will subject one to forfeiting their membership. The rule of Christ according to Matt. 18 and/or Gal. 6:1-2 shall be followed.

3. Discontinuance of church attendance or continual neglect of preparatory and communion services will be considered as not desiring continued membership.

4. If a member decides not to resign the Covenant, their membership would be inactive until they would again sign the Covenant. An inactive member does not have membership privileges, but will be able to receive a church letter (with an explanation). If at the end of one year they have still not signed the Covenant, and if no transfer has happened, or an extension has not been granted by the board, they will no longer be a member of Cornerstone Mennonite Fellowship. This also applies to any youth that reach the age of 20 and are not able to sign the Covenant as their own statement of belief.

IV. (Article 4) Congregational Leadership

A. All leadership and teaching positions of mixed adults (youth class and up) shall be filled by men. (I Tim. 2:12)

B. Office Designations

1. Board of Elders

a. The Board of Elders shall consist of: The Pastors, Deacons, and three Laymen who are chosen by the congregation to serve a rotating three-year term, are charter members, or have been members for a minimum of three years, and demonstrate Christian maturity.

(1) The board shall organize, using the gifts represented to fill the offices of board chairman and secretary. (The lead pastor is not eligible)

b. The Boards responsibilities shall be to:

(1) Plan the agenda for business meetings.

(2) Plan the offering schedules.

(3) Give leadership in the decision making process.

(4) Be sensitive to the spiritual direction of the congregation and the needs within the congregation.

c. Lay members of the Board may succeed themselves one time.

2. Pastor

a. The Pastor shall be one of the ordained brothers from the congregation, chosen by the congregation to serve as Lead Pastor.

b. He shall coordinate the preaching schedule and other special services. He shall be responsible to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and be available for counseling and to visit the sick. He shall be accountable to the Board of Elders.

c. He shall have the liberty to attend Board meetings at his discretion and/or at the Boards' request.

d. There shall be a reelection for Lead Pastor every six years by the congregation.

3. Assistant Pastor (s)

a. The Assistant Pastor (s) shall serve on the Board of Elders, assist the Lead Pastor, and be available to assist in all pastoral activities.

4. Deacon (s)

a. The deacon(s) shall serve on the Board of Elders, be responsible to look after the physical needs in the congregation, maintain a membership file, and be available to assist the ministry with counseling, visitation, and preaching.

b. The deacon(s) shall be responsible to annually audit all of the church financial records.

5. Overseer

a. This person shall be an Ordained Anabaptist brother who can affirm our Covenant. He shall be a Regional Overseer selected by the respective Regionals as follows: The Alliance Moderator and/or the Chairman of the Council of Overseers shall assist the ministerial members through a nomination and selection process. Two-thirds of the total congregational members voting on the matter from the regional congregations must then ratify the selection by vote. Finally, the Alliance must confirm the selection. The term of office for the Regional Overseer shall be five years with reappointment possible.

b. He shall be informed of all Board meetings and business meetings so he can attend them at his discretion. He shall receive copies of all congregational and Board meeting minutes.

c. He has the authority to call and moderate a special congregational meeting if other attempts to resolve differences are not successful.

d. During unresolved conflicts, he shall ask for help from the Counsel of Overseers, to assist him in bringing resolution to the conflict.

e. They would then have the authority to hear all the facts and make a decision as to what needs to be done.

f. If there is a problem within the Ministry or with a Board member, they would have the authority to relieve them of their charge until the problem can be resolved.

6. Nominating Committee

a. The nominating committee shall consist of three men who are charter members or have been members for a minimum of three years. They shall be nominated by the Board and chosen by the congregation to serve a three-year term.

b. Their responsibilities shall be to:

(1) Prepare a ballot for church offices.

(2) Distribute a sample ballot the Sunday prior to business meeting.

(3) Tabulate the results of the election.

7. Church Secretary

a. The church secretary shall:

(1) Maintain minutes of board and business meetings.

(2) Notify nominating committee of upcoming elections.

(3) Bring to the attention of the Board of Elders unfulfilled congregational decisions.

8. Treasurer and assistant treasurer

a. The treasurer and assistant treasurer shall be appointed by the board to serve a three-year term.

b. The treasurer shall:

(1) Pay all authorized bills

(2) Maintain accurate banking & financial records

(3) Provide a monthly report to deacons for board meetings

(4) Provide a monthly report to mission board on missionary finances

(5) Report on financial position at mid-year and year end business meeting

(6) Prepare 1099's as needed at year-end

(7) Review year-end audit with deacons

(8) Be accountable to the deacons

c. The assistant treasurer shall:

(1) Count and tabulate Sunday morning offerings with trustees assistance

(2) Prepare and make bank deposits and provide report to treasurer

(3) Maintain records for offering envelopes

9. Trustees

a. The trustees shall consist of three men chosen by the congregation to serve a three-year term.

b. They shall coordinate the maintenance of all church property.

10. Ministry Directors

- a. Job descriptions and terms to be determined by the Board with congregational approval.

C. Calling of Leadership

1. The Pastor(s) and Deacon(s) shall be men chosen from the congregation by the following method:

- a. The request for additional leadership shall come from the ministry and affirmed by the board and two-thirds majority of the congregation.

- b. Only those men who are charter members or have been members for three years are eligible.

- c. Congregational preparation would consist of special messages on leadership qualifications and special times of prayer.

- d. Votes will be taken from the congregation in the presence of the Overseer and one or two visiting ministers.

- e. Overseer and visiting ministry would meet privately with persons called to discern their calling, then present their findings to the congregation. If more than one candidate is called, the congregation would decide to call more than one or use the lot.

- f. The person(s) called would be licensed for a one year period.

- g. At the end of the one year period, a vote of affirmation would be taken for approval for ordination by the Lead Pastor/Overseer as the representative of the Cornerstone Mennonite Fellowship. Any objections would need to be submitted in writing.

V. (Article 5) Congregational Meetings

A. Meetings - Meetings shall be held semi-annually or more often whenever deemed necessary by the board or overseer for the welfare of the congregation. The Board Chairman shall call and chair all congregational meetings.

B. Quorum - The quorum for the congregational meeting shall be the members present.

C. Voting - A simple majority (or higher as deemed necessary) shall be required for a matter to be considered passed. Any consideration of business pertaining to major decisions as determined by the Board, shall be announced from the pulpit and be placed in the church bulletin two consecutive Sundays prior to the congregational meeting and shall be decided by a ballot vote.

VI. (Article 6) Amendments

A. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority membership vote. All amendments shall first be approved by the Board and shall be given in writing to members at least two weeks in advance of voting.

VII. (Article 7) Dissolution

A. Should the organization be dissolved, and after provision has been made for payment of all the liabilities of the organization, all of the assets of the organization shall be disposed of exclusively for the purposes of the organization in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for the charitable or religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended.