

THE CONSTITUTION
of
TOWNLINE CONSERVATIVE MENNONITE CHURCH

This document has been amended and updated on August 30, 2017 at the “Annual Business Meeting.”

ARTICLE I. NAME:

This congregation shall be known as Townline Conservative Mennonite Church. The meeting house is located in Lagrange County, Indiana on County Road 1000W, south of County Road 200S.

ARTICLE II. CONFERENCE AFFILIATION:

The Townline Conservative Mennonite Church is a member of the Conservative Mennonite Conference and by this affiliation is willing to give and receive counsel, and to support the various ministries of the Conference.

ARTICLE III. PURPOSE:

1. A vital purpose of this congregation is to nurture its members:

- a. Through teaching and preaching the Word of God in its purity.
- b. Provide times of worship and instruction.
- c. Promote fellowship and ways of Christian service.
- d. Establish and strengthen Christian conduct.

2. Another purpose of this congregation is evangelism:

- a. To be a living witness of the life changing power of Jesus Christ.
- b. Giving ourselves to the ministry of inviting others to the faith in Christ; in our families, in our communities, and throughout the world.
- c. Support other outreach ministries which are accountable to the church and focus their work toward spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. A third purpose of the congregation is to teach that the Bible (both the Old and New Testament) is the unchanging, inspired Word of God:

- a. The verbal plenary view of the Scriptures.
- b. The Bible is God's written disclosure of His will and plan for mankind.
- c. The Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP:

1. Qualifications for membership:

- a. Confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- b. Giving evidence of a new life in Christ by one's lifestyle and attitude.
- c. Accepting the 1963 Mennonite Confession of Faith as a valid statement of faith and practice.
- d. Expressing loyalty to the teachings of the Word of God.
- e. That each member express their willingness to support and submit to the standards of conduct as adopted by the congregation.
- f. Initial membership is recognized upon confession of faith and Baptism. Transfers of membership are recognized by church letter or if a letter of transfer is not available, then upon public confession of faith.

2. Privileges of Members:

- a. All members in good standing 18 years of age and older are eligible to vote on all matters regarding congregational life. Members under 18 years of age may vote at annual Sunday School reorganization and for nominees selected for committee work.
- b. All members in good standing may hold offices and assume responsibilities to which the church calls them to.

- c. Members may exercise the ministry of visitation and the giving and receiving of counsel and encouragement.

3. Responsibilities of Members:

- a. Be committed to live a Christ-centered life in their daily activities.
- b. To nurture unity within the congregation by a loving and caring attitude to all members.
- c. Give priority to faithful and regular church attendance of all Church services.
- d. Willingness to express one's support for the work of the Church by using one's time, talents, and money.

4. Discipline of Members:

- a. Offending members shall be subject to the discipline of the Scriptures.
- b. Offending members as a result of sin shall be dealt with by the Biblical guidelines found in Matthew 18: 15-
- c. A member who ceases to participate in the functions of the congregation and chooses not to share in the communion services for a period of two years will forfeit their membership.
 - 1. Before a person is removed from the membership list, all effort will be made to contact the member and extend an invitation for him/her to renew his/her fellowship with the congregation.

2. All changes of membership status of individuals shall be reported to the congregation.

5. Forfeiture of Aid and Ownership:

- a. Members who have withdrawn or lose their membership forfeit all rights and privileges to any and all property belonging to the Townline Church.
- b. Membership status will also determine availability of any assistance in medical aid and property aid administered and supervised by the Townline Church.

6. Change of membership:

- a. Members who desire to attend another congregation may request a letter of transfer, if done within a reasonable period of time.
- b. All requests for transfer will be reviewed by the Board of Elders and shared with the congregation. Membership status shall be conveyed to the requesting congregation.

ARTICLE V. ADMINISTRATIVE AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP:

1. PASTORAL MINISTRY:

- a. The Bishop: Upon approval of the congregation and the conference to ordain a bishop, he shall be chosen by the voice of the congregation. It is assumed that the bishop will also serve as the senior pastor.

- b. Senior Pastor: Upon vacancy, the Board of Elders shall give leadership in selecting a senior pastor.
 - 1. His responsibilities shall be to give spiritual oversight, to preach and teach the Word, to give time to visitation, encouragement and counseling.
 - 2. He shall exercise leadership in church discipline in consultation with the Board of Elders and the congregation.
 - 3. He shall be in charge of administering the ordinances.
- c. Assistant Pastor(s): Upon approval of the congregation to select an assistant pastor, he shall be chosen by the voice of the congregation. The presiding bishop shall receive approval from the Conservative Mennonite Conference for his ordination or licensing.
 - 1. His responsibilities shall be to assist the senior pastor in all pastoral work.
 - 2. He shall give leadership to the congregation upon the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor.
 - 3. He may administer the ordinances upon the approval of the senior pastor or bishop.

2. BOARD OF ELDERS:

A. Selection and Term of Office

The role and position of an elder is to be seen as a pastor elder rather than a board elder.

All elders and elder nominees need to be open to receive mentoring and counsel from the larger leadership team. A strength of plural leadership is found in balancing one's weaknesses with the strengths of those around them.

Process; elders are appointed through aspiration and qualification. This takes place through three possible avenues; congregational suggestion, the sense of a personal call, or through the leadership team's initiative.

a. The process of installation Through congregational suggestion; (three steps)

- 1. Every year prior to the annual business meeting we will briefly visit the idea of biblical elders and the accompanying qualifications.

2. The congregation will have an opportunity to suggest nominees at the annual business meeting, and the nominees will be prayerfully considered and reviewed for their qualifications by the current leadership team.
3. The approved nominees will be presented to the congregation for their approval through a ballot vote.

Through personal aspiration; (two steps)

1. Individuals will have opportunity to note their personal aspirations in the slate at the annual business meeting and will be prayerfully considered and reviewed for their qualifications by the current leadership team.
2. The approved nominee will be presented to the congregation for their approval through a ballot vote.

Through the leadership team's initiative; (two steps)

1. The leadership team can suggest a nominee to the congregation.
2. The nominee will then be presented to the congregation for their approval through a ballot vote.

b. Number of Shepherd Elders

In order to have a broader representation of gifts, love, and care, and to enhance plural ministry as seen in Ephesians 4, the pastor elders will consist of the ordained pastors and qualified brethren from the congregation.

c. Term Length

There will be **no term lengths**, the elders can resign from their position, or they can be removed when they fail to meet the biblical qualifications.

B. Organizational Structure:

1. The Board will elect a chairman and secretary yearly.
2. The outgoing chairman will be responsible for reorganizing the Board of Elders for the following fiscal year.
3. The chairman will arrange and chair the meetings of the Board of Elders. He is to prepare the agenda for the annual Townline Church business meeting and chair that meeting.

4. The secretary will record the minutes of each meeting by the Board of Elders and provide a copy for each of its members. He will record the minutes of the annual business meeting of the Townline Church and provide a copy for each member of the congregation.

C. Responsibilities of Board of Elders:

1. Review applications for membership and requests for transfer.
2. Review and apply Biblical discipline to erring members with restoration as the goal.
3. Guide the congregation in decisions concerning policies.
4. Give positive leadership to help promote harmony and unity for our homes and the congregation.
5. Give leadership to the Mission board in developing ways to strengthen our vision for evangelism.
6. Promote the building and strengthening of relationships by visitation and service ministries in the congregation.
7. Schedule special meetings such as revival services, Bible conferences and other types of nurture programs.
8. Give attention to special needs within the congregation and discover the avenue to satisfy these needs.
9. Prepare the slate of nominees for the annual Townline Church reorganization and business meeting in August.
10. Select appointees for representation to para-church organizations, (M.C.C., M.D.S., M.D.C., R.M.M. and etc.) Presenting their names at the annual business meeting for approval.

D. Responsibilities of Elected Members:

1. As a part of the leadership team, help test congregational direction in either confirming or modifying its vision.
2. Alert the ministry to any strained relationships within the congregation and other special needs and help sense ways to resolve them.
3. Can be called upon by the ministry to help with the Sunday services, such as devotional worship, bring the morning message and assist in the communion service.
4. Be committed to attend all monthly meetings and special called meetings.
5. Give direction in financial matters for the ordained members on the Board of Elders.

3. FINANCE COMMITTEE:

1. The Finance Committee shall consist of three (3) members, and the treasurer. Each of the three members of the finance committee will serve a three (3) year term.
2. Two (2) nominees shall be selected by the Board of Elders, and voted on by the congregation at the annual reorganizational meeting.
3. The finance committee and ministers will elect a chairman and secretary yearly.
4. The chairman will arrange and chair the meetings of the finance committee. The chairman shall have served at least one year.
5. The secretary will record the minutes of each meeting of the finance committee.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Be free to relate their activities to the Board of Elders, and provide a brief bi-annual report.
2. Research and recommend programs for consideration of financial support.
3. Provide educational resources to use in developing conviction for giving and sharing.

4. Be in charge of the alms fund and its distribution.
5. Be available to assist members with unexpected financial hardship and management difficulty in finances.
6. Review and/or give suggested revision of the disbursements.
7. Present the disbursement schedule before the annual business meeting for congregational approval.
8. Evaluate the financial support for the ministers annually.
9. Remuneration to guest speakers for travel and living expenses.

(A) Treasurer:

1. The Treasurer shall be selected by the Board of Elders, and approval received from the congregation, and be appointed for a three (3) year term.
2. The new treasurer's term begins Jan. 1st following reorganization. The outgoing treasurer is responsible for all transitional work.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Count the offerings and make deposits of all funds.
2. Disperse the funds as directed by the Finance Committee.
3. Attend Finance Committee meetings as requested by the Chairman.
4. Prepare a Quarterly and Annual Financial Report for each household.
5. Fill out the Annual Financial Report for Conference.

4. BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of three (3) members, each serving a three (3) year term.
2. One (1) new member is to be voted in at the annual reorganization meeting.
3. The Board Chairman shall be elected annually by the trustees with assistance from the ministry.
4. The chairman shall have served at least one year.

a. Responsibilities:

1. The physical administration of the church building and grounds, involving upkeep and improvements.
 - a. Snow removal
 - b. Mowing & trimming
 - c. Heating & cooling (maintenance & fuel)
2. Consult the finance committee for needs involving more than \$500.00.
3. Be alert to ushering needs and assisting when needed.
4. Appoint parking people for expected major gatherings and meetings.
2. Appoint persons to manage sound system.
3. Chairman shall call for business meetings when needed.
4. Appoint the custodian and negotiate remuneration for his/her services. Wages are subject to the approval of the congregation.

5. Janitor:

a. Responsibilities:

1. Clean the interior of the building weekly.

2. Plan the bi-annual cleaning of the church building.
3. Be present at all funerals and weddings, including viewing and rehearsals.
4. Schedule rentals of the building, when such requests are made.

5. Ushers:

1. Four (4) nominees shall be named on the slate and voted on by the congregation (of which two (2) shall be elected) at the annual business meeting.
 2. The usher shall serve a two (2) year term, using four (4) ushers.
 3. The head usher is to be selected by the ministers and ushers, by ballot.
- a. Responsibilities:
1. The head usher will be responsible at all public meetings to:
 - a. Open the building.
 - b. Have sufficient ushers.
 - c. Control heating/cooling/lights.
 2. Be responsible during overflows (special meetings) and especially alert in assisting visitors (Sunday mornings) by making them feel welcome and ushering them into the sanctuary and/or class rooms.
 3. Seek to maintain order during services and encourage filing into the sanctuary between Sunday School and the worship hour.
 4. Be prepared to lift an offering at all of our public meetings.
 5. Prepare locations and basins with water for foot washing during communion services.

6. Music Directors:

1. The Music Directors shall consist of three (3) members, each serving a three-year term.
2. One (1) new member is to be voted in at the annual reorganization meeting.
 - a. Responsibilities:
 1. The total music program of the church.
 - a. Including the pre-service music.
 2. Promote good congregational singing.
 3. Be aware of singing talent and incorporate the use of such in our congregational service.
 4. Be responsible for any Choral or singing group.
 5. To provide the leading of singing, either personally or appointing someone, at all congregational meetings.

7. SISTER'S COMMITTEES:

A. Food:

1. The Food Committee shall consist of four (4) sisters each serving a two (2) year term. A new member to be voted in semi-annually.
2. The one longest on the committee is to be chairperson
 - a. Responsibilities:
 1. Serving food at various meetings and functions as designated by the congregation; such as sales, meetings of the congregation (fellowship dinners), conference when in the area, funerals when requested to do so, and at such other times the congregation may decide.

2. Make sure food items, utensils, and kitchen equipment, are properly cared for following meetings at which food is served.
3. If food has been donated, supervise the return of containers to owners.
4. Make sure the kitchen is stocked with necessary items.

B. Sewing:

1. The committee shall consist of three (3) sisters, with the following designation: President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer.
2. The President's term is for six (6) months, following a six month term as Vice President. The Secretary/Treasurer's term is for three (3) years.
3. The sewing committee is to assist with meal preparation for special occasions and Church functions.

a. Responsibilities: (President)

1. Chair all sewing meetings.
2. Assign someone for devotional time. (scripture reading and song leader).
3. Assign someone to bring a hot dish for noon meal on sewing day.
4. Organize Mother/Daughter Banquet and field trips on alternating years.
5. Give Church Secretary any announcements concerning sewing.
6. Be in charge of voting at June and December meetings.
7. Help in adopting a mission family.

b. Responsibilities: (Vice President)

1. Deliver gifts to persons who are hospitalized.
2. Chair meetings if President is absent.
3. Assist the President in planning and organizing field trips and the Mother/Daughter banquet.
4. Take minutes and read finance report if Secretary/Treasurer is absent.

c. Responsibilities: (Secretary/Treasurer)

1. Pay for items / supplies bought by the women's committee chairperson. If any questions contact President.
2. Keep an itemized record of income, expenses and deposits.
3. Read treasurer's report at sewing meetings.
4. Take minutes of each sewing meeting.
5. Keep record of which group is in charge of Mother/Daughter Banquet.

C. Quilting:

1. The Quilting Committee shall consist of two (2) sisters each serving a two (2) year term. A new member to be voted in annually.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Have materials ready for the women to sew and quilt.
2. Have quilt tops and comforters ready for sewing.
3. Make sure sale items get to auction.
4. Keep record of what items were given to what auctions.
5. Keep a baby comforter on hand for a baby shower gift.

D. Shower Committee:

1. The Shower Committee shall consist of two (2) sisters each serving a two (2) year term. A new member to be voted in annually.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Organize Bridal and baby showers.

E. Hostess:

1. The Hostess shall consist of one (1) sister serving a one (1) year term. A new member to be voted in annually.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Organize meals for new mothers, and be aware of surgery or other needs.

8. NURTURE MINISTRIES:

A. Sunday School Superintendent & Assistant:

1. Two (2) nominees shall be named on the slate and voted on by the congregation (of which one (1) shall be elected) at the annual business meeting.
2. He shall serve two (2) years. The first year as assistant superintendent and the second year as superintendent.

a. Responsibilities:

1. General oversight of the operation of the Sunday School.

2. Select teachers for classes from Nursery through Junior and supervise the nominating of teachers for Junior High classes. These selections of nominees are to be presented to the Board of Elders for final approval.
3. Conduct the opening and closing of the Sunday School period.
4. Be responsible to provide substitute teachers, and materials should there be absences.
5. Compile the attendance each Sunday and assist the teachers in changes of enrollment.
6. Collect the Sunday School Offering.
7. Relate to the church secretary in ordering Sunday School materials.
8. Fill out the annual Sunday School report.

B. Summer Bible School or an equivalent Children's ministry

1. We look for volunteers who are passionate about children and ministering to them.
2. They will creatively organize children events, (in harmony with the leadership team,) that are directed at the spiritual development of the children in our church and community.

a. Responsibilities:

1. For the overall planning and supervision of the annual Children's ministry event.
2. Organizing teachers and order materials for these events.
3. Periodically review the materials used and revise as needed.
4. Supervise the collection and disbursements of the offerings raised through these ministry events.

C. Program Committee:

1. Two (2) nominees (couples) shall be named on the slate and voted on by the congregation (of which one (1) [couple] shall be elected) at the annual business meeting for a two (2) year term.
2. The Program Committee shall consist of three couples.
3. One of the Pastors and his wife will serve as the third couple. They shall serve one (1) year intervals.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Plan and supervise all Sunday Evening Programs and Wednesday Evening meetings, including children and youth classes.
2. Be responsible to supervise other events:
 - a. Harvest Sunday food distribution.
 - b. Christmas caroling.

D. Library Committee:

1. The Library Committee shall consist of three (3) members, each member serving a three year term.
2. Two (2) nominees shall be named on the slate and voted on by the congregation (of which one (1) shall be elected) at the annual business meeting.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Check carefully the quality and *content of all books, audio tapes and videos; whether purchased, donated or loaned to the library. *(Check for doctrinal soundness and the nurturing of the Christian faith. Be responsible to disqualify any of the resources in the library that have unacceptable language and/or immoral subject matter.)
2. Be in charge of purchasing and reviewing new books, tapes and videos; providing a list of the titles to the Board of Elders.
3. Encourage members to use the library resources, by displays, announcements and other promotional means.

E. Librarian:

1. The librarians shall consist of two (2) persons, each serving a two (2) year term, with a new librarian being elected each year, and is accountable to the Library Committee.
2. Two (2) nominees shall be named on the slate and voted on by the congregation (of which one (1) shall be elected) at the annual business meeting. The new librarian shall be the assistant.

a. Responsibilities:

1. Prepare new books, tapes and videos for the library.
2. Check-in returned books. Tapes and videos; keep tab of over-due and misplaced items.
3. Maintain library items in good repair and proper storage on the shelves.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION:

Revisions of, or additions to, the constitution that may be felt necessary for restudy and change, is to be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will evaluate and give consideration to the request. The Board of Elders will contact the origin of the request for further understanding. The final decision will be decided by the congregation with a required two-thirds (I) vote. Representation at the time vote is to be taken will determine the method of voting to be used.

A. Voting privileges and procedures:

1. Any decision for taking action regarding congregational direction would require a two-thirds (I) vote of approval to carry.
2. Voting on matters other than reorganization will be by members age 18 and older.
3. All members present at the annual business meeting have the privilege to vote on the reorganization slate.