

31

ARTICLE IV

32

Organization

33 Conference is an association of congregations whose purpose is to serve its members.

34 Congregations act officially in Conference through delegates.

35 Program development and implementation is carried out by five commissions.

36 Chairpersons of the five commissions, the Moderator, and the Moderator Elect serve as

37 the Coordinating Council, and for legal purposes, as the Board of Directors. The fiscal

38 year begins on July 1, and all elected positions commence immediately after the annual

39 summer delegate session.

40 Section A. Representation

41 1. Delegates

42 The following persons from member congregations are delegates to Conference:

43 a. Licensed or ordained persons who are actively serving as bishops, overseers,
44 ministers, or deacons.

45 b. Persons elected to Conference positions by delegates.

46 c. Each congregation may select up to six delegates. They are encouraged to select
47 persons who represent congregational functions, such as: Christian education,
48 finance, mission and service, congregational chairpersons, elders, youth,
49 ordained or lay leaders who are retired.

50 2. Functions of Delegates

51 a. Represent and report the views of the congregations.

52 b. Keep informed of congregational and Conference matters.

53 c. Assist in defining the Conference goals and objectives.

54 d. Elect persons to serve on the commissions, the commission chairpersons, the
55 Moderator Elect, the Nominating Committee, and other persons as need arises.

56 e. Relate to matters and commissions in their respective interest areas.

57 f. Adopt a Conference budget.

58 g. ALL DELEGATES ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND ANNUAL MEETINGS.

59 3. Non-delegates and guests are also welcome to participate in discussions.

60 4. Allegheny Conference shall send Conference delegates to the Mennonite Church
61 USA Delegate Assembly according to the by-laws of the Mennonite Church USA.

62 a. Conference representatives serving on the Constituency Leaders Council shall
63 be delegates by virtue of their office. The following shall serve on the
64 Constituency Leaders Council:

65 (1) The Conference Minister,

66 (2) The Moderator, and

67 (3) A third person will be elected (or affirmed) from a nominee (or nominees)
68 presented by the Nominating Committee and will serve for two years (they
69 may serve two consecutive terms). This term will start on alternating years
70 from the Moderator Elect's term. This person shall be selected from current
71 members who served Allegheny Mennonite Conference as an overseer or in

- 72 an elected position anytime within the previous five years. Consideration
73 should be given to selecting someone who will provide diverse and
74 balanced representation to Constituency Leaders Council.
- 75 b. The Moderator Elect shall serve as a delegate (assuming membership in
76 Allegheny Mennonite Conference is high enough, otherwise they will serve as
77 an alternate delegate). If additional delegates or alternate delegates are needed
78 they shall be elected from a slate of candidates drawn up by the Nominating
79 Committee and will serve for two years (they may serve two consecutive terms).

80 **Section B. Commissions**

81 1. Leadership Commission

82 a. Membership

83 The commission will consist of a chairperson and three additional members.
84 The three additional members shall be chosen, one from the overseer body, one
85 from the pastors, deacons or elders, and one from the laity in the congregations.
86 The chair of Leadership Commission may be chosen from any of these three
87 groups. All members of the commission are to be elected at the Spring delegate
88 meeting.

89 The commission may appoint additional persons or committees for specific
90 functions or assignments; but, the overall responsibility for administration shall
91 lie with the elected members. Any commission or committee member who is
92 directly involved in a conflict situation brought before this commission shall be
93 disqualified from serving while this matter is considered.

94 b. Functions

- 95 (1) Guide and assist the congregations in the selection, development, and
96 maintenance of sound pastoral leadership.
- 97 (2) Supervise ministerial changes, licensing, and ordinations on behalf of
98 Conference.
- 99 (3) Provide a forum for consultation, encouragement, and general sharing
100 among pastors and other congregational leaders.
- 101 (4) Provide guidance and counsel for congregational leaders by such means as
102 visitation, seminars, and other opportunities for continuing education and
103 growth.
- 104 (5) Provide for the resourcing and evaluation of congregational overseers. In
105 consultation with congregations, appoint overseers to congregational
106 assignments.
- 107 (a) Congregational Overseers
- 108 i) Qualifications and Appointments
- 109 a) An overseer shall be an ordained person with satisfactory
110 pastoral experience and meet the qualifications of I Timothy
111 and Titus 1.
- 112 b) An overseer shall be a neutral person whom the pastor and/or
113 congregational leaders can approach in matters of
114 congregational life, program, and leadership.

- 115 c) A pastor shall not serve as his/her own overseer.
116 d) Overseers shall be selected and commissioned for three year
117 terms by the Leadership Commission in consultation with the
118 leadership of the congregation(s).
119 e) In the event of a vacancy, the Leadership Commission shall
120 serve as acting overseer.
121 ii) Functions of Overseers
122 a) Provide counsel to the pastor(s) in matters of personal concern.
123 b) Assist the pastor and delegates to: 1) convey to the
124 congregation the theological consensus of the Conference and
125 Delegate Assembly, and 2) convey to the Conference issues
126 and concerns from the congregation(s).
127 c) Participate with the congregation in the process of securing
128 pastoral leadership for the congregation(s).
129 d) Encourage fair and adequate funding for ministerial support.
130 e) Counsel with each other in quarterly meetings convened by the
131 overseer serving on the Leadership Commission.

132 2. Finance and Stewardship Commission

133 a. Membership

134 The commission will consist of a chairperson who also serves as
135 Conference Treasurer and two additional members elected by the delegates at
136 the Spring delegate meeting. The commission may appoint additional persons or
137 committees for specific functions or assignments; but, the overall responsibility
138 for administration shall lie with the elected members.

139 b. Functions

- 140 (1) Receive and disburse all Conference funds as directed by the delegates.
141 (2) Forward all funds entrusted to it by congregations and/or individuals
142 according to the wishes of the contributor.
143 (3) Coordinate all specific fund solicitations from Conference congregations or
144 churchwide boards.
145 (4) Raise capital funds as needed for Conference institutions.
146 (5) Manage all Conference property and capital investments in cooperation
147 with other Conference commissions involved.
148 (6) Promote and provide guidance for giving in the congregations.
149 (7) Counsel the congregations in the use of funds for capital expenditures and
150 other financial matters.
151 (8) Prepare a budget annually for Conference approval after consultation with
152 all commissions and congregations of the Conference.
153 (9) Provide financial counseling in matters of wills, trusts, estate planning, and
154 other matters pertaining to proper stewardship of material wealth.
155 (10) Submit an audited report to the delegates on an Annual basis.
156 (11) Serve as liaison for connecting Conference and congregations to related
157 churchwide agencies and offices.

- 158 3. Nurture and Education Commission
159 a. Membership
160 The commission will consist of a chairperson and two additional members
161 elected by the delegates at the Spring delegate meeting. The commission may
162 appoint additional persons or committees for specific functions or assignments;
163 but, the overall responsibility for administration shall lie with the elected
164 members.
165 b. Functions
166 (1) Serve as a resource to congregations in the area of education and nurture.
167 (2) Promote and evaluate education programs within congregations, including
168 peace and related concerns.
169 (3) Serve as liaison for connecting Conference and congregations to related
170 churchwide agencies and offices.
171 (4) Develop leadership skills and resources for congregational education and
172 nurture programs.
173 (5) Promote and encourage involvement in special interest groups, e.g., clubs,
174 MYF, senior citizens, single adults, couples, and families.
175 (6) Serve as liaison between our church-sponsored schools and the
176 congregations.
177 (7) Assist congregations in identifying and meeting the needs of their youth.
- 178 4. Missions and Service Commission
179 a. Membership
180 The commission will consist of a chairperson and two additional members
181 elected by the delegates at the Spring delegate meeting. The commission may
182 appoint additional persons or committees for specific functions or assignments;
183 but, the overall responsibility for administration shall lie with the elected
184 members.
185 b. Functions
186 (1) Assist congregations and area councils in their outreach activities.
187 (2) Seek new outreach possibilities and initiate new programs and
188 congregations in consultation with the Coordinating Council and delegate
189 body.
190 (3) Administer all outreach activities of the Conference.
191 (4) Serve as liaison for connecting Conference and congregations to related
192 churchwide agencies and offices.
- 193 5. Faith, Life and Procedures Commission
194 a. Membership
195 The commission will consist of a chairperson and two additional members
196 elected by the delegates at the Spring delegate meeting. The commission may
197 appoint additional persons or committees for specific functions or assignments;
198 but, the overall responsibility shall lie with the elected members. Any
199 commission or committee member directly involved in a conflict situation
200 brought before the commission shall be disqualified from serving while this

- 201 matter is considered. Members of this commission may not serve on the
202 Nominating Committee.
- 203 b. Functions
- 204 (1) Assist congregational leaders in promoting Anabaptist faith and doctrine
205 according to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.
- 206 (2) Identify and initiate proper consideration and discussion of faith and life
207 issues and grievances facing congregations or Conference.
- 208 (3) After research and study of the above, recommend to congregations or
209 Conference appropriate courses of action. This commission is encouraged
210 to appoint ad-hoc committees to look into issues and grievances brought
211 before it.
- 212 (4) Supervise the procedures of Conference pertaining to nominations,
213 elections, the conduct of business meetings, and other procedural matters.
- 214 (5) Receive requests from congregations who desire Conference membership
215 and make recommendations to the delegate body.
- 216 (6) Present at each Spring delegate meeting a slate of no less than four
217 nominees who are willing to serve on the Nominating Committee.
- 218 (7) Maintain historical records for Conference and assist congregations in
219 historical record keeping.
- 220 (8) Recommend amendments to the Constitution.

221 **Section C. Nominating Committee**

222 1. Membership

223 The Nominating Committee shall consist of six persons elected by the delegates
224 at the Spring delegate meeting, from a list of nominees submitted by the Faith, Life
225 and Procedures Commission.

226 Two shall be elected each year for three-year terms and may not be re-elected
227 for two years. The Coordinating Council will appoint the chairperson from among
228 the elected members.

229 The Nominating Committee shall be responsible to Faith, Life and Procedures
230 and shall submit its slate of nominees to this Commission for review prior to
231 elections.

232 2. Functions

233 a. Search out persons exercising the gifts needed for the Conference
234 responsibilities.

235 b. Give careful consideration to questions of commission continuity, Conference
236 representation and balance of gifts, offering to the delegates a multiple-
237 candidate slate, or when deemed appropriate a single-candidate slate, for
238 delegate election.

239 c. Prepare a candidate slate for all elected offices and for delegate positions to the
240 Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly.

- 241 3. Guidelines for Election
- 242 a. Elected members of commissions shall have terms of three years each which
- 243 shall be spaced so that one or more is elected each year. Members may not serve
- 244 more than two successive terms.
- 245 b. Moderator-Elect shall be elected every two years. This person will serve an
- 246 additional two years subsequently as Moderator.
- 247 c. Any qualified member of any congregation within Conference is eligible for any
- 248 position unless otherwise specified.
- 249 d. Except for delegates to the Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly and
- 250 Constituency Leaders Council, persons may serve in only one elected office at a
- 251 time.
- 252 e. Elections shall take place at the Spring delegate meeting.
- 253 f. Persons having served the full tenure of their office as outlined in points a.-e.
- 254 above are not eligible for any elected office within Conference for two years.
- 255 This two year ineligibility shall not apply:
- 256 (1) to commission members being elected chairperson of the commission on
- 257 which they serve,
- 258 (2) to candidates for Moderator-Elect,
- 259 (3) to commission members who were appointed to that commission for the
- 260 purpose of filling out an unexpired term.

261 **Section D. The Coordinating Council**

- 262 1. Membership
- 263 The Coordinating Council shall consist of a Moderator Elect, Moderator, and
- 264 the chairperson of each of the five commissions. The Moderator-Elect is expected to
- 265 attend one or more meetings of each commission annually.
- 266 2. Functions
- 267 a. Coordinate, give guidance, and support the work of the commissions in keeping
- 268 with the policies and decisions of Conference.
- 269 b. Appoint committees or persons that may be required for inter-commission or
- 270 extra-commission functions.
- 271 c. Appoint persons to fill vacancies of elected offices. These appointments will be
- 272 brought to the next scheduled meeting of Conference delegates for ratification,
- 273 and will continue to the end of the original term.
- 274 d. Develop and coordinate job description(s) of staff person(s) and designate to
- 275 whom the staff person(s) will be responsible.
- 276 e. Establish and review annually the salaries and wages of Conference personnel.
- 277 f. Keep an accurate record of proceedings of all its meetings through an appointed
- 278 recording secretary.
- 279 g. Schedule, plan, and conduct Annual Meetings of Conference.

- 280 h. Call special meetings of Conference by notifying the delegates no less than
281 thirty days in advance.
282 i. Serve as the Board of Directors on behalf of Conference for legal purposes. The
283 Moderator shall serve as president of the corporation, Moderator-Elect as
284 secretary, and Treasurer as treasurer.

285 **Section E. Decision Making**

- 286 1. A quorum shall consist of the delegates present at any regular or properly called
287 session of Conference.
288 2. All elected persons shall be elected from a slate presented by the Nominating
289 Committee. Any member may submit names for consideration to the Nominating
290 Committee.
291 3. All decisions of Conference shall require a simple majority of the votes cast unless
292 otherwise specified.

293 **Section F. Staff Personnel**

294 A Conference staff team may be employed upon recommendation of the Coordinating
295 Council and confirmed by the delegates. Accountability, specific terms, and job
296 descriptions shall be developed by the Coordinating Council. An employment review
297 shall be held every three years for all staff persons.

298 **ARTICLE V**

299 **Related Organizations**

300 Conference recognizes various auxiliary organizations having their own constitutions,
301 whose memberships consist of Conference congregational members and which function
302 within the framework of this Conference's policies and programs.

303 **ARTICLE VI**

304 **Congregations**

305 **Section A. Congregational Leadership**

- 306 1. Congregations are encouraged to form leadership groups to give oversight to the
307 congregation according to guidelines furnished by the Leadership Commission.
308 2. Congregational leadership teams are encouraged to participate with other
309 Conference congregations for mutual programming, counsel, and fellowship.
310 3. Congregations shall cooperate with the Leadership Commission in choosing an
311 overseer for the congregation.
312 4. Procedures for ordination, licensing, or ministerial changes shall be conducted in
313 cooperation with the overseer(s) and the Leadership Commission.

314 5. Removal from Service

315 When a minister is unsound in theology, or morally disqualified, it becomes the
316 duty of the congregation, in cooperation with the overseer, to deal with the matter. If
317 they need further assistance, they request it from the Leadership Commission.

318 6. Retirement

319 Ordained persons are advised to lighten their load at age 65 and retire at 70. If
320 congregations retain their minister after age 70, they are advised to do so by yearly
321 appointment.

322 **Section B. Qualification for Member Congregations**

323 A worshipping group may make application to become a congregation in Conference
324 through the Faith, Life and Procedures Commission. Guidelines for congregational
325 membership are as follows:

- 326 1. Members have covenanted together in a common life of obedience to Jesus Christ.
- 327 2. The congregation confesses a faith common with the *Confession of Faith in a*
328 *Mennonite Perspective* and accepts the constitution of the Allegheny Mennonite
329 Conference.
- 330 3. There is adequate provision for leadership and a willingness to give and receive
331 counsel from member congregations through Conference delegates.
- 332 4. There is a willingness to support Conference decisions.
- 333 5. New groups from existing congregations may apply to the Faith, Life and
334 Procedures Commission for congregational membership. There will be a waiting
335 period of one year before full membership is granted.

336 **Section C. Resolving Congregational Difficulty**

- 337 1. Congregations, in cooperation with their overseer, are encouraged to settle their own
338 difficulties. If necessary the congregational leadership group or any five lay persons
339 may call the Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission to assist.
- 340 2. If the congregation fails to resolve or deal with the difficulty, the Leadership
341 Commission may ask the Faith, Life and Procedures Commission to make an
342 investigation and report to the congregation. If the congregation refuses to act on the
343 finding, the findings shall be reported to the delegates.
- 344 3. The Faith, Life and Procedures Commission shall always be open to give counsel to
345 those desiring help or advice.

346 **Section D. Dissolution of a Congregation**

- 347 1. It is expected that events leading toward the dissolution of a congregation will be a
348 matter of discernment between the congregation, the overseer, and Conference
349 representation. Disposal of assets and care for paid staff persons should be
350 discussed and resolved with Conference oversight.
- 351 2. Upon request, letters of transfer will be issued by Faith, Life and Procedures
352 Commission for a period of up to two years following dissolution. Upon dissolution
353 of a congregation the final membership list will be held by Faith, Life and
354 Procedures Commission for two years.

355 **Section E. Withdrawal of a Congregation**

- 356 1. When a congregation's continuing membership in the Conference is in question, the
357 resources of the overseer, Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission, Conference
358 minister, and/or mediation services should be enlisted toward resolution of the
359 conflict. Upon recommendation by Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission, action
360 may be needed by the delegate body.
- 361 2. A congregation considering termination of its membership in the Conference shall
362 engage in discussion with Conference entities such as the overseer, Conference
363 minister, or Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission before taking any
364 congregational action. A two thirds majority vote of the congregation will be
365 required for termination of Conference membership.
- 366 3. Disposal of assets and care for paid staff persons should be resolved satisfactorily
367 with Conference oversight.
- 368 4. Faith, Life and Procedures Commission, upon withdrawal of a congregation from
369 Conference, is authorized, upon member's request, to issue a certificate of
370 membership for transfer for a period of up to two years from the date of withdrawal.

371 **ARTICLE VII**

372 **Dissolution Provisions**

373 If for any reason the Allegheny Mennonite Conference is dissolved, any remaining
374 funds after all bills are paid shall be turned over to its successor or to any tax exempt
375 organization(s) within the church with similar ideals and purposes. Such dissolution shall
376 be completed under the laws for corporations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

377 **ARTICLE VIII**

378 **Amendments**

379 This Constitution may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority of all votes cast
380 by the delegates of Conference, providing a notice of the proposed change is given at
381 least thirty (30) days in advance of the vote, or without notice, providing 90 percent of
382 delegates present vote in favor at any regularly called meeting.