

The Constitution of the Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church

Amended summer of 2014

ARTICLE I: *THE NAME*: The name of this organization shall be the Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church

ARTICLE II: *THE PURPOSE*: The purpose of this organization shall be to provide opportunity for acceptable worship of God (John 4:20-24); to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the unsaved and lead them to faith in Christ (Matt. 28:19-20, II Corinthians 5:19); to establish and strengthen the believers in their loyalty to the Christian faith by providing opportunity for instruction and nurture, fellowship and Christian service; to perpetuate the church of Jesus Christ as taught by the Word of God (Eph. 4:11-13).

ARTICLE III: *AFFILIATIONS*: This organization (congregation) was founded on the [Confession of Faith](#) drawn up at Dordrecht, Holland in 1632 and revised in 1963 during the Mennonite General Conference at Kalona, Iowa. Two of the basic Anabaptist beliefs we continue to hold as crucial to our faith walk are the supremacy of scripture and believer's baptism.

ARTICLE IV: *MEMBERSHIP*:

Section 1. Candidacy: The members of this congregation shall consist of those persons who have confessed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and have experienced the new birth. They may be received into fellowship of this congregation by baptism, by confession of faith, or by transfer of church letter. A desire to support this congregation is important to the life and ministry of this organization.

Section 2. Privileges: Only those holding membership in the congregation are entitled to participate in the executive offices of the Church: Elders, Church Board, Trustees, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendents, Mission Communicator and the Nominating Committee. New members should be limited to one position for the first several years.

Section 3. Conduct: It shall be the duty and responsibility of each member to live a holy life separated from the sins and evils of the world and consecrated unto God. Members shall seek by prayer and study of the Word of God to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus glorify God in their manner of life and preserve the good name of the church. They shall demonstrate by their deeds and conduct a sincere Christian love for the brethren, shall attend the services of the church as regularly as possible, support the work of the church with time, talents and money, and share in witnessing to the unsaved about Christ. Each member shall be ready to serve in any capacity to which the church may call them and for which they are qualified.

Section 4. Discipline: Members who fall in sin and thereby incur personal guilt as well as injure the cause of Christ, shall be dealt with in love, and in keeping with the nature of the transgression, and shall confess their sin in genuine repentance. The transgressors who are impenitent do thereby forfeit their membership in the congregation and shall be notified of the same. Discipline is the responsibility of the Pastor and Elders. Upon repentance and confession, they may be reinstated to full membership.

Section 5. Termination: Membership may be removed at the request of the individual or by transfer of church letter. Any member or members withdrawing from the congregation, or in any way losing their membership, thereby forfeits all rights and privileges to any and all properties belonging to the congregation.

ARTICLE V: *OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH*: Persons eligible to hold office must possess a genuine Christian experience, desiring the fullness and leading of the Holy Spirit. They must be in "honest report" and manifesting the holiness of God in their manner of good works and exemplary life. They

must be eager to be about their Lord's business, each a faithful steward, ready to serve, "always abounding in the work of the Lord." They shall bear in mind that:

1. In virtue of the gift that God has given them, they are not to have a conceited opinion of their capabilities, but shall accept only such assignments which they can effectively perform as "unto the Lord" (Romans 2:3, Col. 3:17).
2. They are first of all servants of God, and then as members, servants of the congregation.

ARTICLE VI: *MARRIAGE*:

Section 1. Marriage: Marriage is a biblical institution established by God as clearly described in the scriptures. This Church recognizes that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Accordingly, this Church, its pastors, staff and members will not participate in same sex unions or same sex marriages, nor shall its property or resources be used for such purposes.

Section 2. Human Sexuality: The Bible teaches that legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, this Church opposes all forms of sexual immorality, including but not limited to: adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.

Link to our Confession of Faith - [The Mennonite Confession of Faith 1963](#)

The By-Laws of the Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church

Amended summer of 2014

The following by-laws of Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church, seek to describe how the structure, offices, and committees of this organization function as well as qualifications for those holding such positions. Qualifications for those holding offices as stated in Article I are also stated in Article V of the Constitution.

ARTICLE I: *OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH*:

Persons eligible to hold office must possess a genuine Christian experience, desiring the fullness and leading of the Holy Spirit. They must be in "honest report" and manifesting the holiness of God in their manner of good works and exemplary life. They must be eager to be about their Lord's business, each a faithful steward, ready to serve, "always abounding in the work of the Lord." They shall bear in mind that:

1. In virtue of the gift that God has given them, they are not to have a conceited opinion of their capabilities, but shall accept only such assignments which they can effectively perform as "unto the Lord" (Romans 2:3, Col. 3:17).
2. They are first of all servants of God, and then as members, servants of the congregation.

Section 1. Pastor: The pastor shall be chosen or approved by the congregation under the leadership of the Elders. The pastor's appointment for service to the congregation shall be for a mutually agreed upon period. The pastor and the Elders shall review their agreement each year.

The duties of the pastor are:

1. To serve as spiritual leader of the congregation
 2. To be responsible for the arranging of the preaching program of the congregation.
 3. Administer the ordinances of the church and receive new members into the congregation.
 4. Keep an active program of pastoral visitation and administer communion to shut-ins upon request due to unusual circumstances.
 5. Give general administrative help and counsel in teaching, extension activities, and fellowship organizations of the congregation.
 6. Endeavor to develop new spiritual leadership in the congregation for the work of the Lord through the church.
 7. Maintain a disciplined church, accepting counsel and help from the Elders and congregation, always moving in the spirit of the Word.
 8. He shall give a report to the congregation at the annual business meeting.
 9. He shall avoid dissipating his energies in the mechanics of the various organizations and committees, but shall be privileged to attend any of their meetings.
10. He shall maintain a vital relationship between the congregation and those away in service, keeping in mind their going away and return.

Section 2. Elders: The Board of Elders shall consist of the pastor and no less than two but no more than four members, to be elected at the annual business meeting. The congregation will submit names to the Elders who will approve and present the top name/names to the congregation for affirmation requiring a two-thirds approval vote. In the event there is not a clear majority from the names submitted by the congregation, the Elders will present the top two names for a majority vote at the business meeting. One Elder will be voted into office serving a four year term. Persons nominated must have been a member of the church for three years before serving. A member of the Elders may succeed themselves once. The Elders will choose their own chairman each year.

The duties of the Elders are:

1. They are to assist the pastor in the spiritual leadership of the church.
2. They are the lay leaders of the church. They may assist in visitation, counseling, and shepherding of the congregation.
3. In the event the church is without a pastor, the Elders are responsible for seeing the pulpit is filled each Sunday.
4. They are responsible to appoint a Pastoral Search Committee as needed.
5. They are to conduct a yearly evaluation with the pastor and involve the congregation as they deem necessary.
6. They are to distribute monies from the Brotherhood Fund to those within the church family as needed.

Section 3. Church Board: The Church Board shall consist of the pastor and four members to be elected at the annual business meeting. One member will be elected each year to serve a four year term. Persons elected must have been a member of the church two years before serving on the Church Board. If the congregation is without a pastor, an Elder will sit in on meetings of the Church Board for non-voting communication.

The duties of the Church Board are:

1. Act as an advisory committee of all activities of the congregation. They shall see that all committees function as intended and shall inform newly elected persons of their positions and responsibilities.
2. They shall appoint two members to the Nominating Committee, the chairman of the Nominating Committee, and the chairman of the Board of Trustees.
3. They shall consider all appeals that come to the congregation.
4. They shall appoint persons to fill office vacancies until the next regular election.

5. They shall accept for consideration any written proposals made by any members of the congregation relative to the work of the congregation, not less than 30 days before the annual business meeting.
 6. They shall be responsible for the finances of the congregation and for the financial arrangements of pastoring of the same, subject to approval by the congregation. They shall be authorized agents of the congregation in all real estate matters.
 7. They shall be responsible for the contracting of the custodian for church property.
 8. They shall be responsible for the chairman of all congregational business meetings.
 9. They shall meet monthly unless determined otherwise.
10. The chairman shall give an annual report to the congregation.

Section 4. Church Treasurer: The treasurer shall be elected for a period of five years, the first year serving as treasurer-elect, after which becoming treasurer.

1. The treasurer-elect shall be elected by the congregation at the annual business meeting one year prior to the termination of the current treasurer's term of office. This year shall be used to become acquainted with the duties and obligations as treasurer, and occasionally meeting with the current treasurer to learn responsibilities.
2. The treasurer shall have charge of all the funds of the congregation as designated by the Church Board and shall deposit the same for safe keeping in a reliable banking institution, being responsible for paying all bills by check.
3. Two ushers shall assist the treasurer in counting Church Offerings.
4. A Quarterly report shall be posted or placed in the Church Bulletins, and a complete written report shall be given at the Annual Meeting.

Section 5. Board of Trustees: This board shall consist of three members, one to be elected each year to serve for a period of three years. The chairman shall be selected by the Church Board from the committee. Their duties are the following:

1. They shall be responsible for the maintenance and improvement of all church property. Any expenditure in excess of \$500.00 shall be referred to the Church Board.
2. They shall oversee an annual general cleaning of the church buildings and obtain volunteer help for this and other projects as necessary.
3. The chairman shall make an annual report to the congregation.
4. They shall communicate regularly with the Church Board.

Section 6. Music Director: One member shall be elected at the annual business meeting to serve for a period of one year. That person shall be responsible to improve the overall quality of the congregational singing and appreciation of music and to give direction to the same. The music director shall be responsible to provide a song leader at every Sunday morning worship service and all special meetings of the congregation. This member shall be responsible for arrangement of special music.

Section 7. Mission Communicator: A member shall be elected to serve for a period of three years. This person shall be responsible for informing the congregation of mission and church planting activities by:

1. Receiving literature from the mission board.
2. Reporting to the congregation periodically through Sunday reports, bulletin board displays, and literature hand-outs.
3. Cooperating with the pastor to obtain speakers for annual mission emphasis
4. Promoting attendance at church-wide conferences
5. Forming and chairing committees as needed for special projects and occasions.

ARTICLE II: *CHURCH PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS:*

Section 1. Sunday School: The Sunday School shall be the basic organization for the Bible teaching program. It shall be organized by departments and/or classes as appropriate for all ages, and shall be conducted under the direction of the Sunday school superintendents.

1. Superintendents: An assistant adult and primary superintendent shall be elected each year, to serve the following year as the superintendent. They shall be responsible for the appointment of teachers and shall secure and supervise the course of study in the Sunday school. The adult superintendent shall be responsible to see that the secretary keeps accurate records and will give an annual report.
2. Secretary: A secretary shall be elected by the congregation to serve for one year. That person shall keep accurate records of attendance, offerings, etc.

Section 2. Education Commission: The Education Commission shall consist of the pastor and four members, two to be elected each year to serve a term of two years. The commission shall elect its own chairman and its duties shall be:

1. To plan and arrange Sunday evening programs
2. To determine the date for the annual summer Bible school and to appoint a superintendent, secretary and committees for the operation of same.
3. To provide assistance to Sunday School Superintendents and pastor on effective teaching programs of Christian Education.

Section 3. Mennonite Women: The MW shall be organized and controlled by its own constitution insofar as it does not conflict with the church constitution in which case it shall be subject. The president shall give an annual report to the congregation.

Section 4. Mennonite Youth Fellowship: The MYF shall be organized and controlled by its own constitution insofar as it does not conflict with the church constitution, in which case it shall be subject. The sponsors shall be chosen from a slate of nominees prepared by the MYF executive committee, and upon approval by the Church Board shall be presented to the MYF body for election. The president shall give an annual report to the congregation.

Section 5. Boy's Club: The sponsors for this program shall be approved by the Church Board. The activities of this group shall be under church control and subject to church coordination and approval.

Section 6. Mennonite Disaster Service: The MDS committee shall be composed of two persons-a chairman and his assistant. The assistant shall be chosen by the congregation to serve for a period of four years- the first two years as assistant, and the latter two as chairman. Their duties shall be to cooperate with region #3 in investigating disasters in our locality and supplying personnel from this congregation. The chairman shall give an annual report to the congregation.

Section 7. Brotherhood Fund: This fund is for use by church family and local needs at the discretion of the Elders.

ARTICLE III: *CHURCH SERVICES AND COMMITTEES:*

Section 1. Custodian: The duties of the custodian are:

1. They shall be responsible for the opening and locking of the church buildings used for regular worship services, and all other congregational meetings.
2. They shall be responsible to keep the church buildings clean on a weekly basis and presentable at all times.
3. They shall be responsible for proper ventilation and temperature control in church buildings.
4. They shall purchase necessary janitorial supplies and submit invoices to the church treasurer.
5. They shall be responsible to provide and care for the vessels and towels for the foot-washing service at communion services.

Section 2. Ushers: One head usher and two assistant ushers shall be elected to serve for a one year term. The head usher must have previous experience as an usher and shall cooperate with and be alert to the plans of the pastor. Their duties are to:

1. Help visitors feel welcome and at home.
2. Help members feel their presence is appreciated.
3. See that all worshipers are provided with hymnbook and bulletin.
4. They shall be responsible to usher at all public worship services.
5. They shall be responsible for the maintaining of decency and order throughout the worship service.
6. Appoint stewards for the Sunday morning offerings.

Section 3. Pianist: One person shall be elected each year for a one-year term, and will be responsible for the prelude and offertory music in cooperation with the music director and the audio operator. The pianist shall assist the song leader with congregational singing upon request.

Section 4. Flower Arranger: One person shall be elected at the annual business meeting for a one year term, to be responsible for the supply and arrangement of flowers for the regular worship services.

Section 5. Historian: One person shall be elected to serve as church historian of the congregation. The historian shall be elected at the annual business meeting to serve for a period of five years and shall be responsible for collecting all material of historic value such as church bulletins, summer Bible school records, printed programs, etc. An annual report shall be given to the congregation.

Section 6. Audio Operator: One person shall be elected to serve a two year term, first as assistant. They shall be responsible to control the sound system at all worship services, and shall see that it is kept in proper working condition. They shall secure adequate audio material for regular worship services, to be purchased with money provided in the budget.

Section 7. Librarian: The librarian shall be elected by the congregation at the annual business meeting to serve for a period of three years. This person shall be chosen from those having previously served on the library committee and shall serve as chairman of the committee. An annual report shall be given at the business meeting.

Section 8. Library Committee: The library committee shall consist of the librarian and two members to be elected to serve for a two year term, one member to be elected each year. The duties of the committee are:

1. To purchase, process, and classify all books, periodicals and pamphlets added to the library.
2. To keep an accurate record of all library books and materials.
3. To make the library attractive and useful.
4. To inform the congregation of new books in the library and to improve the general reading habits of the congregation.
5. To formulate and enact all library rules and regulations.

Section 9. Communion Committee: This committee shall be responsible for the physical preparation of the Lord's Supper. One couple shall be elected each year to serve a two year term.

Section 10. Nominating Committee: A nominating committee shall consist of the pastor and four members, two to be appointed by the Church Board, and two to be elected at the annual meeting. Their duties shall be to thoroughly acquaint themselves with the demands of each office and the constitutional restrictions on who can serve before preparing a slate of nominees for the church and Sunday school regular elections. The nominating committee shall be responsible for providing and presenting of the ballot and the tabulation of the same. The chairman shall be appointed by the Church Board.

Section 11. Auditing Committee: This committee shall consist of two qualified members to be elected at the annual business meeting to serve for two years, one to be elected each year. They shall audit the church treasurer's books and make a written report due August first.

ARTICLE IV: *BUSINESS MEETINGS:*

Section 1. Annual Meeting: The annual business meeting shall be held in August of each year for the purpose of considering reports, electing officers and other personnel and planning the work of the congregation. The day and time of this meeting are to be set by the Board.

Section 2. Special Business Meetings: Special meetings of the congregation may be called at the request or discretion of the Church Board or Elders. The nature of the meeting shall be submitted to the congregation no less than ten days in advance of any meeting.

Section 3. Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of this congregation shall be September 1 through August 31 of the following year. The financial year shall be July 1 through June 30 for the purpose of providing the treasurer ample time to close the books for the annual business meeting.

Section 4. Quorum: A quorum for the business meeting shall consist of the members present. The Church Board may approve absentee voting from members of the congregation, providing such ballots are received prior to the time of the meeting.

Section 5. Elections: Elections shall be by ballot. A simple majority of votes is necessary for an election unless otherwise decided upon by the congregation. All members of the congregation shall be eligible to vote except at the discretion of the voting body. The ballot and proposed budget shall be published and/or announced one week in advance of the business meeting.

Section 6. Non-specific Offices: The Board may add to the ballot which is presented to the congregation, any congregational or Sunday School offices not specifically named in this constitution and by-laws, for the election by the congregation as need for such offices may arise. Offices may also be deleted from the ballot by the Board when the need for them no longer exists.

Section 7. New Business: In order to facilitate the order of a business meeting, all new business shall be referred to the Board in accordance with Item 5, Section 3, Article I.

Section 8. Records: The board secretary shall be responsible to keep accurate records of the proceedings of all business and business meetings.

Article V: *MARRIAGE POLICY*

Section 1. Marriage statement: Marriage is a union ordained by God. It was first instituted by God in the early chapters of Genesis, codified in the Levitical law, the Old Testament prophets compared it to a relationship between God and his people, examples of it are in the historical narrative, and, the wisdom literature discusses the unique unity of this relationship. Jesus explained the original intention and core elements of marriage, and several New Testament Epistles give explicit instructions on this union. Marriage is a typology of Christ and the Church. As such, the Church views marriage as a profound spiritual institution established by God. Due to the importance of marriage in the biblical witness, this church adopts the following policy:

Section 2. Clergy:

1. Only duly ordained clergy shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.
2. Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal and/or loss of ordination for officiating a same gender marriage ceremony.

Section 3. Applicants:

1. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of the clergy employed by the church, or to use the church facilities, shall affirm their agreement with the Articles of Faith and The Purpose of this church and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
2. Applicants shall receive premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by the church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church, have appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling.

Section 4. Premises:

1. Any marriage performed on church premises shall be officiated by a member of the clergy.
2. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the Articles of Faith and The Purpose of this church and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
3. The clergy assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his or her sole discretion, decline to make church facilities available for, and/or decline to officiate at, a ceremony when, in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

Article VI: *AMENDMENTS:*

The Constitution of Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church and this set of By-Laws of the same organization may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any official business meeting, provided the notice has been given to the Board 30 days previously.