

**CONSTITUTION**  
**SHALOM MENNONITE CONGREGATION**  
**Revisions approved 5-21-2017**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Shalom Mennonite Congregation meets at Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia and identifies itself within the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition of Christian faith.

**II. VISION**

Shalom Mennonite Congregation is an expression of the body of Christ that seeks to demonstrate God's reign in its midst as it relates to the Harrisonburg community and beyond.

The congregation participates in God's work of healing and reconciliation in the world and lives faithfully as a people of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

**III. MISSION STATEMENT**

Shalom Mennonite Congregation is committed to following Christ in life as expressed in its congregational covenant. It desires to be a Christian community that honors God through its worship and the lives of its members. It seeks to be a community where God's love transcends all human barriers that oppress and exclude people. Among such barriers are those of race, culture, gender, social and economic status, sexual identity, as well as misunderstanding and prejudice. Central to its purpose is the evangelical call to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all people. It is intentional about its ecumenical relations and its solidarity with the mission of the global church. An integral part of its vocation is to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the world.

**IV. AFFILIATION**

Shalom Mennonite Congregation is affiliated with Mennonite Church USA through Central District Conference for the purposes of wider Christian fellowship, mission efforts, ethical discernment, and theological accountability. This relationship is primarily maintained by sending delegates to annual Central District Conference assemblies and by the financial support of Central District Conference. Shalom Mennonite Congregation also relates to the Harrisonburg District of Virginia Mennonite Conference for local Mennonite fellowship.

**V. COVENANT STATEMENT**

Shalom Mennonite Congregation has adopted a covenant statement of belief and practice which members are asked to affirm during an annual covenant renewal service (see appendix).

Members of the congregation commit themselves to uphold this common vision so they grow in faith and service with others in the church.

**VI. MEMBERSHIP**

People can become members of Shalom Mennonite Congregation in various ways: through baptism, through a letter of transfer from another Christian congregation, through a personal confession of faith, or through participating in our annual covenant renewal and signing our

covenant statement. People who become members through any of these means participate fully in all membership responsibilities and privileges and will be included in the annual membership count of Shalom Mennonite Congregation to Central District Conference and Mennonite Church USA. People who have not participated in the life of our congregation for two years will be placed on an inactive membership list unless they inform our congregation that they still consider Shalom to be their home congregation.

The covenant renewal service of Shalom Mennonite Congregation will be held in the fall of the year. During this service, active participants in the congregation will be invited to sign the covenant statement. A person's signature on the covenant statement will serve as an affirmation of her or his involvement and covenanted participation in Shalom Mennonite Congregation. Membership through participating in our annual covenant renewal and signing our covenant statement is especially designed for people who may live in the community for a limited period of time. After several years, such people are encouraged to become members through one of the other ways listed above.

## **VII. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

This organizational structure and related job descriptions serve as a guideline to assist members in the work they do together as a congregation. The membership of Shalom Mennonite Congregation exercises authority for its assets, liabilities, and decision-making processes.

All people selected for positions of responsibility within the organizational structure of Shalom Mennonite Congregation should be covenanted members in good standing. They will demonstrate spiritual maturity and a commitment to living in harmony with God, the people of God and all creation.

The organizational handbook provides detailed job descriptions and other details of our organizational structure.

### **1. Congregational Meetings**

The overall responsibility for the ministry and work of Shalom Mennonite Congregation belongs to the membership of the congregation. The congregation, at regularly scheduled meetings called specifically for that purpose, makes major decisions.

Covenanted members will make these decisions by seeking the guidance and direction of God's Spirit, and by listening to each other. Each process will begin with an Appreciative Inquiry approach (where appropriate) in order to acknowledge what is going well, how it can be built upon and what changes are needed to enhance congregational life and actions. Every effort will be made to hear from members regardless of opinion. The processes for making major decisions will be varied and include voting with open and respectful discussion. These decisions will carry by a two-thirds majority of members present.

All people who regularly participate in the life of Shalom Mennonite Congregation are welcome

to attend congregational meetings. Such meetings should be announced in the church bulletin two weeks before the meeting is scheduled. Covenanted members will make the decisions and will assign and be assigned to leadership responsibilities.

The fiscal year for Shalom Mennonite Congregation is January 1 through December 31. The annual budget will be approved at a congregational meeting held for that purpose in December or early January.

## **2. Servants' Council**

The Servants' council will provide overall administrative leadership and vision for the congregation. It will also be the body that evaluates whether the mission of the church is being fulfilled. The Servants' Council is made up of a representative from each committee except the Safe Congregation Committee and Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee, plus the administrative assistant and ministry staff. (The pastor(s) and administrative assistant are ex-officio members of the Servants' Council). Each committee appoints their representative to the Servants' Council. It also includes a Congregational Chair person who is completely separate from any paid position and not on any committee. This person is voted on by the congregation. The Servants' Council meets every other month or more frequently as needed.

## **3. Committees**

Committees coordinate and carry out different areas of Shalom's vision and mission. Each committee sets its own schedule for meeting and has a layperson who serves as chair. The chair or another member may serve as a representative to the Servants' Council. Members of committees commit to a 2-year term, with the option to renew for one additional term. In the fall, each committee, with the assistance of the pastor(s), will nominate individuals to replace members who have completed their terms. At the fall congregational meeting the new committee members and chair person will be approved.

### **a. Pastoral Team**

The Pastoral Team holds the primary responsibility for pastoral leadership, preaching, pastoral care and counseling, and other pastoral functions. Together with the ministry staff, a lay chairperson will give leadership to the pastoral team which will include at least two (2) lay members appointed by the congregation. The pastoral team will include any ministry staff and at least two (2) lay members appointed by the congregation, serving two (2) year terms. Members may include anyone who are or have been licensed or ordained ministers or are seeking licensure or ordination, any pastoral counselors, any ministry interns, or anyone who feels called to explore or share their pastoral gifts with Shalom. There shall be a minimum of four (4) members on the pastoral team.

The pastor(s), with the pastoral team, will also be responsible to form and support small groups. Small groups provide opportunities for fellowship, mutual care, learning and outreach in the congregation. Regular attendees at Shalom are encouraged to be part of small group.

### **b. Safe Congregations Committee**

The Safe Congregations Committee is established and guided by the Shalom Safe Congregation Policy. The committee will be made up of the ministry staff, chair of Servants' Council, and two other members of the congregation, with a strong preference for individuals with experience in counseling. An effort will be made to ensure that there is a gender balance on the Committee. Anyone who has concerns about inappropriate sexual conduct, violence, intimidation, or physical abuse by child-care workers, teachers, or others in the congregation will be able to receive guidance from the Safe Congregations Committee.

### **c. Worship Committee**

The Worship Committee creates a sense of worship for congregational gatherings and marks events in the church calendar and special events in the life of the church. It is made up of the pastor, the Music Coordinator and at least three at large members. The Committee meets monthly throughout the year and fulfills the following responsibilities:

- a) Plans the worship calendar including themes, structure, worship resources, and provides for occasional special music and drama.
- b) Schedules Sunday speakers, worship leaders, music leaders, children's time, visuals for our worship time.
- c) Gathers feedback, reviewing and reflecting on past worship experiences.
- d) Arranges for special services during holidays such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, Easter Sunday. Coordinates rituals and rites of passage in the church calendar such as Communion, Covenant Signing, Back to School, Baby Dedications, Baptisms, etc..

### **d. Mission and Service Committee**

The Mission and Service Committee plans and implements the sharing of our resources with the local and global community. Our resources include our time, talents, skills and money which we offer to others in need—within Shalom and in our community, as well as across the globe. This committee should have at least three (3) members.

### **e. Hospitality and Community Building Committee**

The Hospitality and Community Building Committee cares for and nurtures community through a variety of programs and activities on Sundays and at other times in the life of individuals and families at Shalom. At least five (5) people should be on this committee.

### **f. Stewardship and Administrative Committee**

The Stewardship and Administrative Committee is responsible for developing and managing the budget as well as developing, maintaining and administering Shalom's administrative policies and procedures. The committee manages the facilities rented or owned by the congregation. This committee should have at least three (3) members.

#### **g. Formation Committee**

The Formation Committee is responsible for the overall educational and faith formation needs of all ages and life stages at Shalom. The committee will use Shalom's *Faith Formation Vision, Mission and Goals* to coordinate and discern. Membership of the committee should represent a diversity of life stages in order to cover the range of ages and life experiences at Shalom, intentionally seeking to include the perspective of youth. The committee should have at least 5 members, with one being the Coordinator for Youth Ministries.

#### **4. Positions**

##### **a. Congregational Chairperson**

The chairperson of Servants' Council will call for congregational meetings, prepare the agenda in consultation with Servants' Council and preside over the congregational meeting. When the chairperson is absent, another member of Servants' Council shall fulfill the chair's responsibilities. The chairperson will serve a term of two (2) years.

##### **b. Committee Chairpersons**

Each committee appoints a lay chairperson who is responsible for organizing and convening the committee, setting agendas, and ensuring the committee reports to and is represented at both the Servants' Council and Congregational Meetings.

##### **c. Congregational Delegate(s)**

The delegate(s) will attend the regular delegate sessions of Central District Conference. An alternate delegate will be chosen to serve in the event that the regular delegate(s) cannot attend a delegate session. The pastor(s) and/or another member of the congregation will be delegate(s) to MCUSA biannual assemblies.

##### **d. Pastor Congregation Relations Committee**

The purpose of the Pastor Congregation Relations Person (PCRC) is to care for the relationship between the pastor(s) and the congregation and when necessary, to mediate conversations between pastors and members of the congregation, pastors and the Servants' Council and between pastors and other members of the pastoral team.

##### **e. Administrative Assistant**

A paid administrative assistant will perform a variety of administrative tasks which include acting as congregational secretary and treasurer. S/he is hired by the Servants' Council in consultation with and supervised by the pastor(s).

##### **f. Pastor(s)**

The job description, length of term, processes of evaluation and remuneration for each pastor shall be negotiated by Servants Council, approved by the congregation, and documented in a Covenant of Understanding. Congregational Pastoral evaluations should be done every three

(3) year, with an annual review by the Chair with input from the Pastor Congregation Relations Person. The Pastor will also meet at least 2 times per year with the Pastor Congregation Relations Committee.

When changes in pastoral leadership occur, the Servants' Council shall confer with the congregation and the pastoral team to devise a process for congregational decision making for securing a new pastor. The congregation will also work with and seek council of the Conference Minister and the Ministerial Committee of Central District Conference during the time of pastoral transition.

### **1. Lead Pastor**

The Lead Pastor of Shalom gives leadership to the congregation based on its vision to participate in God's work of healing and reconciliation in the world and to live faithfully as a people of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This pastor supervises other pastors and staff, and co-leads the Pastoral Team with a lay chairperson.

### **2. Pastor of Youth and Children's Ministries**

The Pastor of Youth and Children's Ministries will encourage and equip the congregation in ministering with youth and children. This pastor works with the Formation Committee to provide programming and vision for Christian education. The guiding principles of the Faith Formation Vision, Mission and Goals will inform this position.

### **i. Other Congregational Positions**

Servants' Council may recruit congregational members for additional positions as appropriate. Positions may be discontinued and others may be created as needs arise. Each position will fall under the oversight of a committee. The church office will keep a current list of these positions.

## **VIII. REVISIONS**

Members of Shalom Mennonite Congregation may revise this constitution at any congregational meeting. Suggested changes to the constitution may be brought by the Servants' Council or a church member. The suggested changes shall be distributed to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The changes will be approved by a three-quarters majority vote of members present. It is anticipated that it will be regularly revised as the congregation changes and meets new situations.

## APPENDIX: Covenant Statements

Shalom Mennonite Congregation has adopted the following as its covenant statement of life and practice:

I commit myself to following the way of Jesus through personal disciplines such as:

- Regular Bible study, meditation, and fasting
- Praying for Shalom, the Mennonite Church, local and global concerns
- A simple lifestyle as a steward of God's creation
- Seeking peace and reconciliation with others
- Practicing sacrificial love and refraining from violence and retaliation
- Participating in the life of the poor and all who are oppressed
- Sharing God's liberating love and inviting others to follow the way of Jesus
- Extending friendship and hospitality to everyone

As a member of this congregation, I commit myself to our faith community through:

- Fostering community life by offering fellowship and encouragement
- Mutual accountability to other members of our church
- Involvement in a small group
- Participating regularly in worship services
- Taking an active part in congregational discernment and decision making
- Developing my spiritual gifts and helping others develop theirs
- Giving generously to support the church and its mission

Shalom Mennonite Congregation has adopted the following reading from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as its covenant statement of faith.

We believe in God the Creator of all,  
who has called forth a people of faith.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh,  
crucified and restored for us.  
He is our Savior from evil and sin,  
our peace and the exalted Lord of the church.  
And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the source of redemption and life.

We who respond to Christ in faith are his church,  
the community called to proclaim  
and to be a sign of the kingdom of God,  
the new people sustained by Scripture and Spirit.  
Thus we continue the mission of Christ,  
making disciples, forgiving, restoring,

baptizing believers, sharing the Lord's Supper,  
using our gifts in unity and love.

We commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ,  
in his path through suffering to life.  
By grace we are being changed into the image of God,  
in which God created women and men.  
As faithful disciples, we hear Christ's call  
to life in the Spirit in relation with God,  
to chastity, stewardship, love for the enemy,  
to the practice of justice and peace.

We joyfully worship the three-in-one God,  
as a holy nation, the people of God,  
giving allegiance to Christ as our Lord,  
living now as if in the age to come.  
We place our hope in God's everlasting reign,  
in victory over evil, the resurrection of the dead,  
in Christ's coming again in judgment and glory.  
To God be all glory! Amen!