

CONSTITUTION

Revised by the membership, February 2025



Preamble

Since the Lord admonishes the believers and the church to let all things be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40), and since it is necessary that every organized corporate body have certain rules and regulation according to which its affairs are regulated and administered, therefore this church has adopted the following constitution.

Article I – Name and Affiliation

The name of this congregation shall be 'Altona Mennonite Church'. The Altona Mennonite Church now holds membership in Mennonite Church Manitoba, Mennonite Church Canada, and through Mennonite Church Canada in the Mennonite World Conference. Altona Mennonite Church is a Religious Society in the Town of Altona.

Article II – Vision and Purpose

Altona Mennonite Church is part of the ongoing work of God through the people God has reconciled. We articulate this calling at AMC with the following Vision and Purpose statements.

Vision

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Purpose

We seek to know God through Jesus, the center of our faith.
We seek to follow God in community, through worship, fellowship, and interpreting the Scripture from a Christ-centered point of view, in the Anabaptist tradition.
We seek to obey God by working toward peace and reconciliation, in the spirit of Jesus, reconciling all people to God, to each other, and to the world around them.

Article III – Confession of Faith

Voices Together #925 – Share Convictions of Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite World Conference, 2006

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice.

1. God is known to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service, and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples redeemed the world and offers eternal life.
3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God’s Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
4. As a faith community, we accept the bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit Guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God’s will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life, so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.
6. We gather regularly to worship to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and to hear the Word of God in spirit of mutual accountability.
7. As a worldwide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender, and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God’s grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the sixteenth century, who modeled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ.

We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ’s return and the final fulfillment of God’s kingdom.

As a basis for our faith, we say with the Apostle Paul, “Other Foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 3:11).

As a further elaboration of our confession we accept the entire Bible and the Apostolic Creed as follows:

- [1.] We believe in one God, eternally existing and manifest as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; John 16:13-15; II Corinthians 13:14).
- [2.] We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, 'the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth', born of the Virgin Mary, in His perfect humanity, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection from the dead, and His personal triumphant return (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Matthew 3:17; Matthew 24:27; John 11:47; Hebrews 10:10; Galatians 3:13; I Corinthians 15:4).
- [3.] We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state determined by divine judgement (I Corinthians 15:54; I Thessalonians 4:13-14; Revelation 20:12).
- [4.] We believe in the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God and the only trustworthy guide in faith and life (II Timothy 3:15-16; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:20-21; Romans 1:16-17).
- [5.] We believe that a Christian is one saved by grace whose life is transformed into the likeness of Christ by His atoning death and the power of His resurrection (Ephesians 2:8; II Corinthians 5:17; I John 1:6-7; Romans 12:1-2).
- [6.] We believe that Christ lived and taught the way of life as recorded in the Scriptures, which is God's plan for individuals and the race, and that it becomes disciples of Christ to live in this way, thus manifesting in their personal and social life and relationships the love and holiness of God. And we believe that this way of life also implies non-resistance to evil by carnal means, the fullest exercise of love, the resolute abandonment of the use of violence, including warfare. We believe further that the Christian life will, of necessity, express itself (see Membership Commitment) in nonconformity to the non-Christian world in life and conduct (Matthew 5:38-48; Matthew 26:47-56; Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:17).
- [7.] We believe in prayer as fellowship with God, a desire to be in His will, and in its divine power (Matthew 7:7-8; Matthew 6:9-13; Matthew 15:22-28; I John 5:14).
- [8.] We believe that the Christian church consists of believers, who have repented from their sins, have accepted Christ by faith and are born again, and sincerely endeavor by the grace of God to live the Christian life (Matthew 5:34-37; Matthew 22:37-40; John 3:36; John 20:31; Galatians 6:15; I John 3:9; I Peter 1:15).
- [9.] We believe in the fellowship of the Church under the loving authority of God in Christ (Galatians 3:26; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Article IV – Membership

1. Membership Acknowledgement: We recognize that formal membership in church institutions is changing and that many people associate with church bodies without becoming members or associate members as set out in this Constitution. We value the contributions of these people and welcome their active participation in the life of the congregation, including active participation in membership meetings and committees. To the greatest extent possible, we strive to make decisions by consensus and seek to include in that process the wisdom of all those who willingly contribute. Yet we also acknowledge that, as a Religious Society, members hold the property in common through the trustees appointed from time to time and, as a result, maintaining a formal list of memberships is required.

2. Qualifications for Membership: Anyone may become a member of the Altona Mennonite Church who professes that ~~s/he has~~ they are committed to loving God, loving their neighbour, and actively participating in the life of the congregation. ~~accepted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, who recognizes Him as the Lord of his/her life, who is committed "to seek first the Kingdom of God", who is willing to live unselfishly and sacrificially for the Lord, the church, and humanity, and who on other matters, agrees to the constitution of the church.~~

3.[2.] Admission to Membership shall be through the following ways:

- a. Through baptism upon confession of faith
- b. By the letter of transfer showing membership in good standing in another church
- c. By re-affirmation of faith where baptism has taken place but where no letter of transfer can be produced.

4.[3.] Procedure of Admission: A prospective member shall apply for membership on application forms available from the church. The written application includes:

- a. Confession of faith
- b. Reason for seeking membership
- c. Signature indicating agreement with the Constitution and Membership Commitment.

[4.] Legal Rights of Membership: Any member withdrawing from, or in any other way losing membership in, the congregation thereby forfeits all rights and privileges to any and all properties belonging to the congregation. All properties of all the congregation shall be held in common by all members and shall not be divided. In the event the church is dissolved and the property sold, any remaining net sale proceeds shall be directed to such other charitable institution undertaking a religious purpose as determined by the membership at the meeting approving the dissolution.-

5. Privileges of Members: Each member of the Altona Mennonite Church is entitled to participate in all the activities of the church and is eligible to vote on all questions brought before the church, and to hold any office in the church to which he or she may be elected or appointed.

6. Duties of Members: It shall be the duty and responsibility of each member to live a holy life, separated from the evils of the non-Christian world, and consecrated to God. They shall

attend the services of the church as regularly as possible, support the work of the church by their time, talents, and means, and share in witnessing for Christ to the unsaved about Him. They shall be ready to serve in any way in which they are able and qualified, to which the Lord, through the church, may call them.

[7.] Discipline within the Membership: Should a member fall away from the faith through loss of devotion or interest, such a person shall be prayerfully counselled by members or leaders of the church with love and understanding. If full fellowship is not restored, the congregation shall unitedly seek with love for a solution.— Only after all redemptive efforts seem to have failed shall suspension of membership be considered and acted upon (Matthew 18:15-35; I Corinthians 5:9-13; I Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Acts 20:28, 31; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15; Romans 16:17; II Corinthians 6:15; Philemon 4, 5; II Corinthians 2:2-11).

Even though that member's relations with the congregation is severed, the relationship of the congregation to the person shall continue to be one of love and redemption. Only after genuine penitence and renewed agreement to the membership commitment has been made, can a former member be readmitted.

7.[8.] Transfer of Membership: Upon written request to the church, and upon approval by church council, letters of transfer shall be granted to members in good standing.

[9.] Associate Membership shall be available upon approval by Church Council, to Christians who wish to retain membership in another church. Admission to associate membership shall be on the same qualifications, conditions, and procedures as regular members. The associate members shall be entitled to all the privileges and responsibilities of full membership (except as limited under Article VI, Section B, Paragraph 2, Letter g). Upon termination of an associate membership, the pastor shall notify the home church.

[10.] Inactive Membership: ~~Where a member ceases to actively participate in the congregation, the Spiritual Advisory Committee shall contact the member for the purpose of gaining understanding about their on-going relationship and commitment to the congregation and inviting them to restore their active participation in the congregation in a manner appropriate for their circumstances. Membership in the Altona Mennonite Church shall be kept sacred and meaningful. The failure of a member to maintain an active meaningful involvement in the congregation (i.e. in keeping with the membership commitment) shall be taken up by the Spiritual Advisory Committee in consultation with the church council and treated in a way consistent with giving biblical help (cf. Article IV, No. 7). The Spiritual Advisory Committee shall annually review inactive membership. The final action shall be taken by the congregation as a whole.~~

Article V – Ordinances

1. Baptism shall be on confession of faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:4-5; I Peter 3:21; I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27).
2. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least four (4) times a year, and at special occasions as considered appropriate. All are welcome to the Lord's table (Matthew 26:29; I Corinthians 10:16-17; Acts 2:41-42) and we invite all those who participate to consider the sacrifice of Christ (I Corinthians 11:26-28).
3. Marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God. The marriage ceremony shall conform to Christian principles of simplicity and modesty, and shall be performed by a minister of the Gospel in conformity with the laws of the state (Ephesians 5:22-23; II Corinthians 6:14; Genesis 2:18-24).
4. Ordination of ministers shall be carried out in accordance with the rules and practices of the conferences to which the congregation belongs.
5. Child Dedication: At least one service for the dedication of children and the dedication of parents to their task shall be held annually, as required. These services shall be held on any Sunday agreed upon by the pastor and the church council.

Article VI – Organization

Section A – Officers and Committees

1. The Pastor(s) or Leading Minister(s): The duties of the pastor(s) shall be to preach the Word of God, visit the members of the congregation, perform the Christian ceremonies of the church and give spiritual leadership to the entire congregation. The pastor(s) serves as ex-officio member of all committees.

As to the qualifications, the pastor(s) shall preferably be an ordained minister and shall have the qualifications as given in I Timothy 3:1-7; II Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 1:5-9.

The pastor(s) shall be elected by the congregation. In order to hire a pastoral candidate we need a quorum of 60% of the resident members with 80% of those present voting in favor. The pastor or the congregation may terminate the relationship in accordance with the terms of the pastor's contract with the congregation.

2. Other Ministers. Believing in the priesthood of all believers and the values of lay and multiple ministry, the congregation may commission and/or ordain from its membership qualified individuals to assist in the ministry of the Word.
3. Deacons. Deacons shall assist the pastor in the following areas: performing ordinances, and visiting the sick, the distressed, and the indifferent. There shall be as many Deacons

appointed as are determined by council in consultation with the Pastor to be necessary to meet the needs of the congregation. Deacons shall be mature Christians with qualifications as given in 1Timothy 3:8-13.

4. The Spiritual Advisory Committee. Composed of the pastor(s), deacons, and the congregational moderator, this committee shall meet periodically to consider the common life of the congregation with a view to dealing with special problems and needs that may occur. The committee may draw in other members.
5. The Moderator or a person appointed by the council shall chair all church business meetings and meetings of the church council. They shall, with the assistance of the pastor(s), prepare the agenda for council meetings and call these meetings. A term of office shall be two (2) year. They shall be responsible to see that all organizations and committees report to the congregation, and that special committees function according to the directions of the congregation.
6. The Assistant Moderator shall assist the moderator as agreed upon by the two (2) individuals and shall act as moderator when the other is unable to attend. The term of office will be two (2) year. Under usual circumstances, after one term, the assistant moderator would become moderator.
7. The Secretary shall keep a written record of all business meetings of the congregation and church council, and shall file all reports and church correspondence. A term of office shall be three (3) years. They shall maintain safe-keeping of church financial records and legal documents as approved by council.
8. The Treasurer shall receive, record, and deposit all money received by the treasury of the congregation. All cheques must be co-signed by the treasurer and the chairperson of the trustees. They shall present a properly audited written report of all receipts and expenditures at the annual business meeting. Records other than individual giving shall be open to the members of the congregation. The treasurer shall serve on the trustee committee as an ex-officio member. In the absence of the treasurer, the moderator of the trustee committee shall act in their place. A term of office shall be three years.
9. The Church Council shall be composed of the pastor(s), moderator, assistant moderator, immediate past moderator, deacons, secretary, treasurer, and a representative of each committee established by council. It is the executive body of the church. The church council seeks its authority from, and is responsible to, the congregation. Together with the pastor(s) and the Spiritual Advisory Committee, the council shall seek to guide the congregation in matters of Christian faith and life. It shall hear reports from and coordinate the work of the committees. It shall call the business meetings of the congregation and prepare the agendas for them. It shall designate responsibility for any function of the church not specified by this constitution. Any member may, upon invitation from the moderator, participate in the discussion, but may not vote.

10. Trustees: The Church shall appoint up to three (3) Trustees from time to time to hold the property on behalf of the congregation. This committee shall also be responsible for directing the business administration of the congregation, the maintenance of its properties, and any investments. It shall be responsible for the preparation of an annual budget that is mindful of the faithful stewardship of the congregation's resources, to be approved by the members at the annual meeting. All expenditures above the budget shall be approved by church council from time to time, provided that church council may call a membership meeting to approve a major expense beyond the budget. The Moderator and Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of this committee.
11. Committees: Church council may establish such committees as it deemed necessary to meet the Service, Formation, and Worship needs of the congregation. Such committees shall be considered to be the arms of the church council and they shall be directly responsible to it.

Each committee organizes itself and conducts its own regular meetings for the purposes of planning its area of work. Three (3) to five (5) members are recommended for each committee. Each committee shall appoint a chairperson. The appointment of special committees or the organization of auxiliaries shall be made whenever desirable and necessary to involve more members.

All major decisions of any of the committees, including the appointment of special committees, must be ratified by the church council.

As a general framework, committees may be established to perform the following functions.

- a. Service: This committee shall be responsible for:
 - i. promoting in the congregation, the ministry of outreach at home and beyond, as it relates to the conferences and agencies with which the congregation is affiliated;
 - ii. the promotion of peace, justice, and service;
 - iii. evangelism;
 - iv. visitation of the sick and the shut-ins;
- v. the organization of hosting requirements as they apply to the church.
- b. Formation: This committee shall be responsible for:
 - i. the educational interests of the congregation, including Sunday School, activities for children, activities for youth, the library, audio visual aids, and church periodicals;
 - ii. Deepening relationships and building community, including encouraging and facilitating the creation of small groups and coordinating church picnics, retreats, and potlucks at such frequency as determined by the committee.
- c. Worship: This committee shall, together with the pastor(s), give guidance and direction to the worship life of the congregation (Sunday mornings and also other

times). This may include planning themes and services, inviting and coordinating guest speakers and lay speakers, arranging for feedback, and other such things as build our common worship life.

Section B – Meetings and Elections

1. Business Meetings: The annual meeting of the congregation shall take place in January or February on the date set by church council. The church fiscal year shall be the same as the calendar year. The meeting agenda and the reports shall be published in advance.

Other congregational meetings may be called by the church council.

Special congregational meetings shall be called by the church council upon the request, in writing, of 10% of the membership.

All business meetings shall be announced at least seven (7) days prior to the date of the meeting.

The quorum for all congregational meetings required to do business or take any congregational action shall be one-third (1/3) of the active members and decisions shall be made by a majority of the votes cast, unless otherwise specified in the constitution.

2. Elections

a. A nominating committee may be appointed by church council to facilitate the nomination of people to various committees or council roles. Individuals may also nominate themselves. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting. All nominees must agree to the appointment. The roles of Moderator, Treasurer, and Trustees must be active members of the congregation.

b. A simple majority shall be required for all elections, unless otherwise specified in the constitution. Each member shall be allowed to vote by proxy, provided that prior to the meeting, the member has in writing, to the chairperson of that meeting, designated another member to carry the proxy. No member shall carry more than one proxy vote at any meeting.

c. When a vacancy occurs in any elected office, except that of pastor, council shall appoint a replacement to fill the unexpired term of office.

d. No persons shall hold more than one elected position at any one time.

e. Delegates to conferences and outside organizations shall be appointed by council.

f. Associate members shall be eligible for all positions except those of the pastor, deacon, moderator, assistant moderator, or conference delegate.

Article VII – Amendments

This constitution and its by-laws may be altered, amended, or repealed by the members at any regular or special congregational meeting by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. A quorum of 1/3 of the resident membership is required. Resident membership is deemed to be those members living within 30 miles of Altona. The announcement of any proposed changes to the constitution shall be given in writing, at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting.