Constitution
of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference

Our Mission

Lancaster Mennonite Conference
is committed to the continuing
work of Jesus Christ.

We gather in congregations
to worship in Christ's name,
to minister the grace
of our Lord Jesus Christ
to one another, and
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
to go forth as workers
in God's kingdom.

We partner with a
network of organizations
to equip people for ministry,
to exercise mutual care,
and to extend God's salvation,
healing, and hope to the world.

Adopted by
Lancaster Mennonite Conference
Board of Bishops
September 2000
**PREAMBLE**

Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) formally emerged from the association of Mennonite congregations and ministry which began in Eastern Pennsylvania in the early 18th century.

Our Anabaptist ancestors in Europe adopted the “*Schleitheim Confession of Faith*” in 1527 and the “*Dordrecht Confession*” in 1632. In 1725, the “*Dordrecht Confession*” was adopted at a conference of Pennsylvania Mennonite Ministers.

As a Conference we accept the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995* which defines our basic understandings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. Congregations may also choose instead to adopt either the 1921 “*Fundamentals of Christian Faith*” (Articles of Faith), or the 1963 “*Mennonite Confession of Faith*” as their guiding documents.

Believing that a statement outlining the offices and organizations, with their proper responsibilities and relationships, can be helpful in advancing the cause of Christ and his church, we do hereby adopt this Constitution on September 17, 1977.

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Revised September 18, 1986
Reprinted 1989
Revised, September 20, 1990
Revised, September 1993
Reprinted 1995
Revised 1997
Revised 2005
Revised 2017

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Article I. **NAME**
This organization of congregations and districts shall be known as the Lancaster Mennonite Conference with the office and place of business at 2160 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, or at such other place as determined by the Conference Executive Council.

Article II. **PURPOSE**
The purpose of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word of God, shall be:

1. To assist the Conference congregations and their members in carrying out God’s purpose for his church and to provide the necessary structures and administration; 

2. To foster a full understanding of Christ-centered living in its membership, to the end that the unity of the church be preserved and fellowship between believers and between congregations be maintained; 

3. To promote purity of doctrine and life among the membership; 

4. To provide leadership and direction in the mission of the church, promoting church extension, and coordinating evangelistic activities; 

5. To formulate guidelines for the exercise of brotherhood, peace, stewardship, and discipleship; 

6. To provide opportunities for the leadership of our congregations and districts to fellowship and share together in times of worship, inspiration, and discussion of Biblical doctrines and issues relating to the work of the church.

Article III. **CONGREGATIONS**

**Section 1: Purpose.** The congregation is a body of believers in Jesus Christ meeting for worship, fellowship, reconciliation, nurture, service and witness, admonition, and discipline. All that God intends the church to be and do must certainly be experienced in the local congregation.

**Section 2: Membership.** Persons who have a testimony of Christian conversion and who give evidence that they are in harmony with the faith and practice of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference may, with the approval of the congregation, become members of a congregation upon believer’s baptism, upon confession of faith, or by church letter.

**Section 3: Relation to Conference.** A congregation is eligible to become a member of Lancaster Mennonite Conference and to be represented in the Conference Leadership Assembly when it makes the following commitments:


2. Willingness to participate in mutual fellowship and counsel with the Conference; and

3. Willingness to share responsibly with the Conference in its interest, prayers, personnel, and funds.

**Section 4: Relationship to the Extended Mennonite Church.** The primary external relationship of the congregation is to the conference. Secondary external relationships may be formed to other parts of the extended Mennonite church. All congregations are invited to network with other Mennonite churches and organizations in ways that complement the mission and vision of Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

**Section 5: Goals and Covenants.** Congregations are encouraged to develop goals and covenants to
assist the members in a life of obedience to the Lordship of Christ and implementation of our Conference guidelines.

Section 6: Leadership. The ministry of the congregation will normally consist of minister(s), deacon(s), and the district bishop(s). [Some districts use the title “overseer” or “supervisor”. The title “bishop” as used in this document shall be understood to include those who function as bishop with the title of overseer or supervisor.]

In addition to normal preaching and pastoral duties, the ministry shall represent the congregation to the district and to the Conference Leadership Assembly. The congregation will organize to meet its goals and utilize the gifts of the congregation in worship, mutual sharing, and witness and service. The congregation is requested to send representatives to the Annual Meeting and district or Conference organizations.

Section 7: Securing or Terminating Affiliation. Any congregation desiring to become affiliated with the Lancaster Mennonite Conference shall submit such request to the Bishop Board. The Bishop Board shall consider for approval all such requests in consultation with the district involved and report to the Conference Leadership Assembly. Any request for disassociation with the Conference shall follow the same pattern, using the guidelines established by the Bishop Board.

Article IV: DISTRICTS

Section 1: Purpose.
1. To provide fellowship beyond the local congregation;
2. To broaden the base of Christian association and nurture for youth and other special interest groups;
3. To secure a stronger and more effective group for the operation of mutual aid and other service programs;
4. To provide broader resources for evangelism and outreach;
5. To gain efficiency in handling the financial responsibilities of the congregation, particularly to lend assistance to the smaller congregations;
6. To strengthen the opportunity of fellowship, training and counsel for leaders and provide strength and unity in teaching and discipleship.

Section 2: Membership. Districts shall be made up of congregations which for geographical or other reasons of affinity, such as language or culture, find it advantageous to share together in fellowship, administration, and outreach.

Any new district arrangement must have the approval of the Bishop Board and the mutual consent of any existing districts which may be involved and shall be reported to the Conference Leadership Assembly.

Section 3: Organization. As units of the Conference, districts are responsible to carry forward their own programs and to expedite the recommendation and resolutions of the Conference Leadership Assembly. The ministry of the district shall meet regularly under the guidance of the bishop(s). The district shall:
1. Give guidance to the congregations in formation, mission and discipleship;
2. Give counsel for ordinations, licensing, and transfers by the authorization of the Bishop Board and in providing pastoral oversight of all congregations within the district;
3. Encourage, coordinate, and finance outreach programs beyond the strength of single congregations;
4. Guide and administer the programs of the subsidiary organizations of the church on an inter-congregational basis;
5. Implement the recommendations and resolutions of the Conference Leadership Assembly and the Bishop Board.

Section 4: Relation to the Conference. Districts shall:
1. Work faithfully to promote the organization, mission and unity of the Conference within the congregations of the district; and
2. Assist in finding persons qualified to serve on the boards and subsidiary organizations of the Conference as indicated by the constitutions of the Conference and its subsidiary organizations.

Section 5. Relation to Bishop Board. Each district shall be represented to the Bishop Board by their bishop(s) for mutual sharing.

Article V. BISHOP BOARD

Section 1: Purpose. The Bishop Board shall meet for mutual fellowshipping, sharing, and for giving overall leadership to the spiritual life of the Conference, and to coordinate and give counsel to the districts of Conference. Individual bishops are responsible for the missional engagement and the spiritual health of leaders and congregations under their oversight.

Section 2. Membership. The Bishop Board consists of all the bishops from the districts in the Conference. Each active bishop has one vote in Bishop Board. Whether active or retired, bishops shall have voting privileges in groups in which they serve as Bishop Board or Conference appointees.

Section 3. Organization. The Bishop Board shall organize itself for the carrying out of its responsibilities by the election of the following officers: moderator, assistant moderator, secretary, and treasurer. Other standing or temporary committees may be appointed as necessary from time to time. The officers of the Bishop Board (ARTICLE VI, Section 6) shall have four-year staggered terms and may be reelected, with one elected each year by secret ballot, majority vote.

The active members of the Bishop Board present in a duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. When less than two-thirds (66 2/3%) of the active bishops present vote, the motion shall be lost. Four-fifths (80%) of the Bishop Board voting shall give an affirmative vote before items are brought to the Conference Leadership Assembly for ratification. Elections shall be by plurality vote. All other actions and decisions shall be by a two-thirds (66 2/3%) affirmative vote of those voting.

Section 4: Meetings. The bishops shall normally meet bi-monthly. Special meetings may be called by the Officers of Conference or by the request of one-third (33 1/3%) of the active membership of the Bishop Board.

Section 5: Conference Executive Council. The Conference shall have a Conference Executive Council consisting of the officers of the Bishop Board and six to eight credentialed members of Conference (including three bishops), all elected by the Bishop Board. Members other than the officers of the Bishop Board shall have three-year staggered terms and may be reelected. The Conference Executive Council shall act on behalf of the Conference Leadership Assembly and shall serve as the governing body of the Conference between sessions of the Conference Leadership Assembly. Their work shall be reported to and reviewed by the Bishop Board. The Conference Executive Council may employ a Conference Minister and other staff as required to carry out its work. Staff members, administrators and officers of conference agencies shall not be eligible to be members of the Conference Executive Council.

The Conference Minister shall, as requested, assist the bishops in personnel and credentialing matters, especially as related to working with other conferences or denominations, shall assist in resolving
Section 6: Other Commissions, Committees and Task Forces.

1. The Credentialing Commission is appointed by and responsible to the Bishop Board to issue credentials, provide training opportunities for emerging leaders, monitor continuing education of credentialed leaders, and monitor the requirements of government laws and regulations. Regular reports shall be provided to the Bishop Board of their activities.

2. The Finance Committee is appointed by and responsible to the Conference Executive Council to review departmental board budgets, to prepare a suggested offering schedule for the congregations, and to make recommendations to the Conference Executive Council in fiscal matters.

3. Other Committees and Task Forces may be appointed as deemed necessary.

Article VI. CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLY

Section 1: Purpose. The Conference Leadership Assembly shall:

1. Provide an opportunity for fellowship, inspiration, and spiritual challenge;
2. Promote unity in discipleship and administration;
3. Assist districts and congregations in defining faith and practice;
4. Serve as a forum to share concerns, suggestions, etc. for the life of the church;
5. Recognize: new church plants; the transition from church plant status to that of congregation; the transferring of congregations into or out of the conference; and, the transferring into or out of the conference of credentials of individuals from or to other conferences.
6. Adopt statements on current issues for distribution to the congregations;
7. Serve as channel of communication between conference congregations and church-wide boards and programs;
8. Serve as the governing body of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference for legal purposes.

Section 2: Membership. Each credentialed leader, such as bishop, minister, deacon, deaconess, and chaplain, ordained or licensed, whose ministry is recognized by Lancaster Mennonite Conference, shall be a member of the Conference Leadership Assembly. Conference Leadership Assembly members in continuing congregational or institutional staff assignments shall be considered as active members. Each active member shall have one vote in the Conference Leadership Assembly.

Section 3: Meetings. The Conference Leadership Assembly shall normally convene semi-annually, at a place designated by the Conference Executive Council. The program of the Conference Leadership Assembly shall be prepared under the oversight of the Conference Executive Council.

Section 4: Quorum. The active Conference Leadership Assembly members present in a duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum to transact Assembly business.

Section 5: Duties. Conference Leadership Assembly members shall:

1. Represent their congregations to Conference Leadership Assembly;
2. Interpret the Conference Leadership Assembly work, reports, and program to their congregations;
3. Participate in the fellowship, discussion, and decision-making at all Conference Leadership Assembly sessions; and
4. Give their attention and best judgment to all matters brought to the Conference Leadership Assembly and render their decisions according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in and through principles of Scripture and the convictions of the constituency which they represent, and not simply on the basis
of personal preference or inclination.

Section 6: Officers. The moderator, assistant moderator, secretary, and treasurer, elected by the Bishop Board, shall be the Officers of the Conference Leadership Assembly and shall preside at the Conference Leadership Assembly.

Section 7: Elections and Decisions. Recommendations brought to the Conference Leadership Assembly by the Bishop Board for official action shall be ratified by a two-third (66 2/3%) affirmative vote of those voting. Leadership Assembly elections to the Conference or agency committees or boards shall be by plurality vote. Other Leadership Assembly decisions shall be by two-third (66 2/3%) affirmative vote of those voting. Absentee ballots, with slates and proposed actions, shall be made available to all active credentialed members of Conference at least two weeks prior to the day of Conference Leadership Assembly. The Conference office shall receive signed absentee ballots by close of business the day prior to Conference Leadership Assembly for them to be counted as valid ballots. For any item introduced on the Assembly floor or with less than the requisite two week notice, three-fourth (75%) affirmative vote of those voting shall be required for passage.

Article VII. AGENCIES AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1: Purpose and Membership. The work and witness of the Conference shall be aided by the following conference agencies which are accountable to their own governing boards and accountable to LMC as provided in Section 2, below:

1. Eastern Mennonite Missions - EMM equips, sends, and supports workers in global witness and service in the way of Christ;

2. Friendship Community – Friendship Community is a Christian ministry supporting people with developmental disabilities in Lancaster County and surrounding counties. The vision of Friendship Community is to be a community which affirms the worth of all people, responds to families and individuals seeking a Christian program, supports personal growth and wholeness, advocates for community and church inclusion, and provides opportunities for spiritual growth and service.

3. Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society – The mission of LMHS is to provide an educational program focused on the collection, preservation, and interpretation of books, manuscripts, and artifacts related to the historical background, religious thought and expression, culture, and family history of Mennonite and Amish-related groups originating in Pennsylvania.

4. LMC Legacy Foundation - [Sharing Programs - Sharing Programs, while technically still a conference agency, is in the final stages of being closed. Upon formal closure this paragraph will be removed without further action required.]

Section 2: Organization. Each Conference agency shall have governing documents such as articles of incorporation and bylaws. Any changes to such governing documents shall become effective only after consideration by the Bishop Board and approval by the Conference Executive Council.

[The following Section is not part of the Constitution and is attached as Memoranda that will be updated periodically. It is current as of March 31, 2017]

Other LMC fraternal organizations include (Black Rock Retreat, Camp Deerpark, Camp Hebron, Choice Books, Garden Spot Village, Harmonies Workshop, Jubilee Ministries, Kairos, Lancaster Mennonite School, Landis Communities, Mennonite Home Communities, New Person Ministries, No Longer Alone Ministries, River of Hope, and The Potter’s House) and Conference-related organizations such as Mennonite Women, and Lancaster Area Council of Mennonite Schools, support
Article VIII. CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING

Section 1: Purpose. There shall be a meeting annually of representatives of each congregation of Lancaster Mennonite Conference to serve the following functions:

1. To celebrate missional activity in conference congregations.
2. To highlight the work of each of the conference agencies, fraternal organizations and other conference-related organizations;
3. To provide an occasion for the constituency to respond to and give counsel to the programs of the Conference;
4. To provide a channel for communication between congregations and agencies and the staff who carry out the programs;
5. To provide for teaching and discussion related to issues and priorities before the church;
6. To provide opportunity for fellowship.

Section 2: Conference Congregational Representatives. Each congregation that is a member of Lancaster Mennonite Conference is encouraged to send representatives to the Conference Annual Meeting. While the Annual Meeting is designed for credentialed and lay leaders and members of LMC congregations, it is open to the general public.

Section 3: Organization. The moderator and assistant moderator of the Bishop Board shall oversee the Annual Meeting sessions. The Annual Meeting program shall be planned under the joint oversight of the Bishop Board and the Conference Executive Council.

Section 4: Meeting. The Annual Meeting, known as “Celebration of Church Life”, shall be held each spring in connection with the spring sessions of the Conference Leadership Assembly. Special efforts shall be made to keep primary emphasis on witnessing, disciple-making and missions in these Conference Annual Meetings.

Article IX. RELATIONSHIPS

The Lancaster Mennonite Conference seeks to relate in responsible ways with other conferences and non-LMC organizations where such relationships can be mutually beneficial and serve to enhance the ministry and mission of Lancaster Mennonite Conference. Such relationships may be formalized by the execution of a Memo of Understanding or other similar document.

The Lancaster Mennonite Conference also welcomes continued relationships and exchange with overseas churches, giving and receiving counsel. Fraternal delegates are invited to attend Conference sessions and to visit congregations.

Article X. DISSOLUTION

Should the organization be dissolved, and after provision has been made for payment of all the liabilities of the organization, all of the assets of the organization shall be disposed of exclusively for the purposes of the organization in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable or religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended. The recipients
of such assets to be distributed shall be selected by those bishops, active and retired, who have served Lancaster Mennonite Conference for at least ten (10) years as bishop.

Article XI. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be altered or amended by a three-fourth (75%) affirmative vote of those members of the Conference Leadership Assembly casting votes. Signed absentee ballots shall be permissible (as above). Proposed amendments must be previously approved by the Bishop Board and the substance of the proposed change shall be distributed to each member of the Conference Leadership Assembly at least 30 days before a meeting of the Conference Leadership Assembly. Without such notice, however, a proposed amendment may be passed if there is a nine-tenth (90%) affirmative vote of the active members present at the Conference Leadership Assembly.