

“THE CHURCH HANDBOOK”

“The Constitution of the Church”

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that the Lord calls upon His church to conduct itself in a manner that is honorable and orderly (1 Corinthians 14:40), and understanding the necessity for a corporate body to establish rules and regulations that govern its mission, theology, operations, and business, this constitution serves as a divine guide. It is our fervent desire that these operational principles faithfully reflect the teachings of the Bible, serving as a beacon for the ministry of the church. With utmost reverence and humility, both the members and elected elders of the church wholeheartedly embrace the responsibility of conducting the work, ministries, services, and programs in accordance with these sacred guidelines and directives. May all glory and honor be bestowed upon God as we faithfully navigate this path together.

ARTICLE 1 IDENTITY

1.1 The name of the church is “Living Gospel Mennonite Church” (LGMC). From here on the constitution will be referred to as the church.

1.2 The Church, located at 8277 Plank Line in Straffordville, Ontario, Canada, is an inclusive Christian community affiliated with the Mennonite Church. Committed to following Jesus' teachings, we actively promote peace, justice, and service while embracing the Anabaptist tradition. Join us for worship, fellowship, and spiritual growth as we welcome everyone to be a part of our vibrant community.

THE RATIONALE STATEMENT

The Church is a Christian denomination that emphasizes the importance of living in accordance with biblical teachings.

"Our faith in Jesus Christ compels us, as members of the Church, to live in obedience to God's Word. We believe that the Bible, comprising the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired and authoritative guide for our beliefs and practices. Scripture instructs us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39).

We are committed to following Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, acknowledging His sacrificial death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins (John 3:16). Through His grace, we seek to live transformed lives, marked by humility, love, compassion, and righteousness (Romans 12:2, Galatians 5:22-23).

As a community of believers, we strive to nurture and edify one another, bearing each other's burdens and supporting one another in times of joy and sorrow (Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:15). We believe in the importance of spiritual growth, seeking to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, studying the Scriptures, and participating in the sacraments (Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 2:15).

In our interactions with the world around us, we endeavor to be salt and light, shining the love and truth of Christ (Matthew 5:13-16). We recognize the importance of engaging in acts of mercy, justice, and compassion, reaching out to those in need and advocating for the marginalized and oppressed (Micah 6:8, James 1:27).

Ultimately, we look forward to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom, where we will dwell with Him forever (Revelation 21:3-4). Until then, we are called to faithfully live out our calling as the body of Christ, striving to bring glory to God in all that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31)."

THE CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

Spiritual Growth and Nurturing: The mission of the Church is to provide a nurturing environment where individuals can deepen their relationship with God, grow in their faith, and experience spiritual transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Loving Community and Fellowship: We strive to create a loving and inclusive community where all individuals feel welcomed, accepted, and valued. We encourage mutual support, fellowship, and the sharing of life's joys and challenges.

Biblical Teaching and Discipleship: Our mission is to faithfully proclaim the truth of God's Word, providing relevant and engaging biblical teaching that equips believers to live out their faith in practical ways. We are committed to discipleship, helping individuals develop a Christ-centered worldview and grow as committed followers of Jesus Christ.

Outreach and Evangelism: The Church seeks to fulfill the Great Commission by actively reaching out to our local community and beyond with the love and message of Jesus Christ. We aim to demonstrate God's love through compassionate service and share the hope of the Gospel with those who have not yet experienced the saving grace of Jesus.

Worship and Celebration: We are dedicated to vibrant and heartfelt worship that honors God and invites His presence. Our mission is to create a space where individuals can encounter God, express their love and gratitude, and experience the transformative power of worship.

Stewardship and Service: The Church recognizes that everything we have belongs to God, and we are called to be faithful stewards of His resources. Our mission is to cultivate a culture of generosity, sacrificial giving, and selfless service both within our congregation and in our wider community.

Unity and Reconciliation: We are committed to fostering unity and reconciliation within the body of Christ and in our relationships with others. Our mission is to promote understanding, forgiveness, and the pursuit of justice, working towards the realization of God's kingdom of love and peace.

Equipping and Empowering: The Church aims to equip and empower individuals to discover and utilize their God-given gifts and talents for the service of God and others. We provide opportunities for training, mentoring, and personal growth, enabling individuals to fulfill their unique calling and make a meaningful impact in the world.

Family and Intergenerational Ministry: We value the importance of family and intergenerational ministry, recognizing that each generation has a vital role to play in the life of the church. Our mission is to create an environment where families can grow together in their faith and pass on a legacy of spiritual vitality to the next generation.

Global Missions and Partnership: We embrace our responsibility to be actively engaged in global missions, partnering with organizations and individuals around the world to bring hope, healing, and the message of salvation to unreached people groups. Our mission is to make a lasting impact in communities both near and far, spreading the love of Christ to the ends of the earth.

Church Strategy Statement:

The Church Strategy Statement – The mission of the church will be accomplished by the various services, persons, ministries and programs. Each of these should contribute effectively to the mission statement and goals set by the church. And each service, minister, program, and person is accountable to the church at reasonable and appropriate times, and specifically will give an annual report at the meeting to be held in May or June of each year.

In accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and guided by the divine purpose bestowed upon us, our church endeavors to fulfill its sacred mission. We recognize that this mission can be accomplished through a harmonious blend of diverse services, dedicated individuals, vibrant ministries, and purposeful programs. Each facet of our church community, be it a service, ministry, program, or person, is held accountable to the church and shall render an annual report during our solemn gathering.

As stated in Ephesians 4:11-12, we understand that God has graciously bestowed upon His church various gifts and ministries to equip and edify the body of Christ. With this understanding, we strive to align all our endeavors with the mission statement and goals set forth by our church, for it is through this unified effort that we can effectively carry out God's work on earth.

Just as the body is composed of many members, each with its own unique function, our church functions as an interconnected body where every individual and entity plays a significant role. Inspired by 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, we embrace the diversity within our church community, recognizing that it is this very diversity that empowers us to fulfill our divine mandate.

As we approach the annual meeting, we are reminded of the importance of accountability and stewardship. Inspired by 1 Peter 4:10, we acknowledge that all our services, ministries, programs, and individuals are entrusted with specific gifts and responsibilities. Therefore, we shall diligently prepare and present our annual reports, sharing the fruit of our labor, challenges faced, and areas for growth. Through this transparent process, we ensure that our church remains accountable to God, to each other, and to our congregation.

In conclusion, let us unite as a body of believers, guided by the wisdom of Scripture, to fulfill the mission entrusted to us. Together, with hearts aflame, we shall fervently serve, steadfastly minister, and faithfully execute programs that align with our mission statement. May our actions reflect the love and grace of

our Lord, bringing glory to His name and impacting the lives of those within and beyond our church walls. Amen.

Key Articles of Faith:

1. Our faith is rooted in the promotion of Christianity through the teaching of fundamental biblical Christian principles, doctrines, and practices as upheld by the general Church Mennonite churches.
2. We aim to advance Christianity by proclaiming and spreading the essential biblical Christian principles, doctrines, and practices associated with the general Church Mennonite churches.
3. We are committed to the growth of Christianity by establishing and maintaining a dedicated place of worship and instruction, where services are conducted in alignment with the biblical Christian teachings, principles, doctrines, and practices embraced by the general Church Mennonite churches.
4. We strive to manage and allocate funds responsibly, accepting and preserving financial resources, and utilizing them, either in full or in part, for the benefit of qualified donees as defined in subsection 248(1) of the Income Tax Act (Canada).

Church Mission Statement:

At our church, we are guided by the timeless teachings of the Bible, which reveal the heart and will of God for all humanity. Our mission is to diligently and passionately teach people to personally know and worship God the Father, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In doing so, we seek to lead individuals into a vibrant and transformative relationship with God, where they experience His love, grace, and truth.

Central to our mission is the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Savior. We are committed to presenting the gospel to all people, sharing the good news of salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ. We strive to do this with humility, respect, and understanding, recognizing the freedom of choice that each person possesses. We seek to engage in open dialogue, answering questions, and addressing doubts, while always extending God's love and acceptance to every seeker.

Furthermore, we are dedicated to the discipleship of believers, recognizing that accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior is only the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith. We aim to equip and empower believers to understand and practice the teachings of Jesus Christ, nurturing them in their spiritual growth and helping them live out the Christian life. Through Bible study, small groups, mentoring, and practical application, we endeavor to guide believers to mature in their relationship with God, embodying His love and character in every aspect of their lives.

Service and fellowship are integral to our mission, as we seek to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. We strive to be a compassionate and caring community, extending a helping hand, support, and encouragement to those in need. Recognizing that we are the hands and feet

of Christ in the world, we actively engage in acts of service, reaching out to the marginalized, the oppressed, and the hurting, both locally and globally. We also foster a spirit of genuine fellowship, where we come together as a family of believers, sharing life's joys and challenges, building meaningful relationships, and spurring one another on in faith.

In summary, our church mission is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Bible. We aim to teach people to believe in and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, to worship God with reverence and authenticity. We seek to present the gospel, respecting individual freedom while extending God's love to all. We are committed to discipling believers, helping them grow in their faith and embodying the Christian life. And finally, we aspire to serve and fellowship together in the name of Christ, offering help, support, and encouragement to those in need. It is our prayer that through our collective efforts, many will come to know and experience the transformative power of God's love and grace, and that His kingdom will be extended here on earth as it is in heaven.

Priority Statement:

Our mission is centered on the following priorities:

1. Conducting worship services that are relevant, refreshing, and centered on pastoral care and Bible preaching.
2. Evangelizing through friendship evangelism, active involvement in the community, engaging in social initiatives, and organizing church programs and events.
3. Assimilating new individuals through effective discipleship, facilitating membership, promoting baptism, and providing ongoing support programs.
4. Equipping individuals to utilize their gifts for effective and thriving ministry, in alignment with our understanding of the Bible and its doctrines.

Statement of Faith:

Christianity has long been a source of solace, guidance, and spiritual growth for millions of people around the world. Among the various Christian denominations, the Church stands as a testament to the devotion and commitment of its followers. Established with the purpose of advancing Christianity, these churches offer a place of worship and instruction rooted in the biblical Christian teachings, tenets, doctrines, and observances. In this article, we explore the who, what, when, where, and why behind the mission of the Church.

The Churches are comprised of a community of believers who are dedicated to upholding the teachings and principles of biblical Christianity. Founded by early Anabaptist leaders in the late 19th century, the Kleine Gemeinde (which means "small church" in German) has grown to encompass various congregations across different regions. Individuals from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and cultures come together under the shared faith of the Church, fostering a sense of unity and fellowship.

The core purpose of the Church is to advance Christianity. This is achieved by establishing and maintaining places of worship and instruction, where believers can gather to express their faith, deepen their understanding of biblical teachings, and engage in acts of service to their communities. Worship services conducted in accordance with the biblical Christian teachings, tenets, doctrines, and observances form the heart of these churches. They provide a platform for prayer, praise, preaching, and communal fellowship, reinforcing the believers' commitment to live out their faith in their daily lives.

The establishment of the Church dates back to the late 1800s when a group of Anabaptists seeking religious freedom migrated to North America. Over time, the movement grew, and new congregations were formed, both locally and internationally. Today, the churches continue to hold regular worship services, often on Sundays, to gather the community and offer spiritual guidance and nourishment. Additionally, the churches organize various events, including Bible studies, youth programs, mission trips, and community outreach initiatives, throughout the year, fostering continuous growth and engagement.

The Church Mennonite churches can be found in various locations worldwide, with significant concentrations in North America, specifically Canada and the United States, as well as in other countries such as Mexico, Belize, and Paraguay. These churches often establish their places of worship in rural areas or small towns, reflecting their historical roots and emphasizing a close-knit community where members can support and uplift one another.

The Church firmly believes in advancing Christianity to fulfill their calling as followers of Christ. They seek to create spaces where individuals can experience the transformative power of the Gospel, embrace the teachings of Jesus, and live out their faith in practical ways. By adhering to the biblical Christian teachings, tenets, doctrines, and observances, the churches aim to provide a solid foundation for believers to grow spiritually, develop strong moral values, and impact their surrounding communities positively. Through worship, instruction, and service, the Church strives to be a living example of God's love and grace, fostering unity and inspiring others to embrace the Christian faith.

Conclusion:

The Church stands as steadfast beacons of Christianity, dedicated to advancing the faith through worship, instruction, and service. By establishing and maintaining places of worship rooted in biblical teachings and observances, these churches create a nurturing environment where individuals can grow spiritually and engage in meaningful fellowship. Through their unwavering commitment to their calling, the Church continues to impact lives, strengthen communities, and inspire others to embrace the transformative power of the Christian faith.

Statement of Membership Conditions for the Church:

The Church welcomes all individuals, without distinction of education, financial status, gender, background, race, or previous sinful history, who have sincerely repented of their sins, experienced the new birth, and seek to live a transformed life in prayer and faith, while desiring to identify with a visible church body. The church maintains the following legal membership classes, and all membership applications are to be considered by the board of directors:

1. Voting Class A Membership
2. Non-Voting Class B Membership

As a church, we believe that the principles of these membership classes are rooted in biblical teachings and reflect the God-given roles and responsibilities of men and women within the church community. We uphold the biblical principles of equality, mutual respect, and shared responsibility, recognizing the unique strengths and contributions of both men and women in fulfilling God's purposes.

Regarding voting within the Church, the principle of biblical governance involves the active participation of members in decision-making processes, consistent with the New Testament concept of the body of Christ. All voting members, regardless of class, are encouraged to exercise their spiritual gifts and discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeking unity and godly wisdom in all matters pertaining to the Church's mission and service.

Furthermore, in alignment with the biblical principle of generosity and grace, there shall be no membership dues payable by any member of the Church. We rely on the voluntary contributions and offerings of our members, given from a willing and cheerful heart, to support the various ministries and activities that further the work of God's Kingdom.

In conclusion, the Church seeks to foster an inclusive and loving environment where all members can grow in their relationship with God, support one another in faith, and actively participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. May we, as a unified body, continue to strive for spiritual growth, biblical truth, and genuine fellowship, guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Church Activities:

1. **Sunday School:** Our church offers a comprehensive Sunday School program catering to children, youth, and adults. It encompasses engaging lessons rooted in biblical teachings, group singing, creative craft projects, and workbook activities.
2. **Worship Service:** Every Sunday morning, we conduct a vibrant and spiritually enriching worship service. This service comprises uplifting Christian hymns and songs, dedicated prayer time, and a sermon that imparts valuable insights and encourages individuals in their Christian journey and relationships.
3. **Prayer Meetings:** Alternating Sundays, we gather for prayer meetings open to all age groups. During these meetings, participants form small prayer groups to engage in collective prayer, seeking divine guidance, and sharing personal concerns.
4. **Men's Prayer Meeting:** On a monthly basis, our male congregation members come together on Saturdays for a dedicated prayer meeting. This gathering provides an opportunity for men to

support one another, engage in discussions, and share burdens, fostering a sense of unity and mutual edification.

5. **Women's Fellowship Night:** Women in our church enjoy a monthly fellowship night filled with meaningful devotionals, communal prayer, shared snacks, and valuable time spent together in fellowship.
6. **Youth Activities:** Our youth ministry organizes regular events every other Friday and Sunday, led by elected youth leaders. These activities incorporate devotional sessions, singing, prayer, and interactive games designed to captivate and engage the youth, while also fostering positive influences and providing an alternative to negative influences.
7. **Evangelizing:** At various intervals, dedicated groups within our church embark on evangelizing endeavors, distributing tracts and sharing the gospel with individuals who express a desire for inner peace and a willingness to explore the message of the gospel. We respect individual autonomy and never impose our beliefs on anyone.
8. **Special Events:** Throughout the year, we arrange several special events where guest speakers from different churches are invited to conduct revival meetings. These open gatherings extend a warm welcome to the surrounding community, offering an opportunity for spiritual renewal and growth.

In summary, our church offers a diverse range of activities and events to cater to the spiritual needs of our congregation. Through meaningful worship, prayer, fellowship, and outreach, we seek to strengthen faith, build relationships, and foster a sense of community both within and beyond our church walls.

By participating in these activities, we aim to foster a strong sense of community, spiritual growth, and service to others in accordance with our faith.

Church Congregation

The purpose of being a congregant is to demonstrate and exercise the bond of fellowship and services in Christ by a) a mutual commitment to worship Christ together publicly; b) a common understanding of the Bible, its teaching and its worldview; c) a common expression of Christian life and lifestyles' d) a common commitment to discipleship and leadership; and e) a common commitment to service and ministry in the name of Christ. Congregants will actively promote the development, health, and growth of the church according to its mission statement, goals and strategy in the context of its statement of faith.

Avenues of Entrance:

New congregants will be received into the church a) at the time of their baptism, b) as a new congregants or by transferring from a previous church, or c) by association with another church.

Through Baptism:

- a) A person identifies with the church by believer's water baptism, and therefore also becomes a congregant. A believer is a member of Christ's body, the church. We consider it inconsistent for a person to desire believer's water baptism and not as a congregant in the local body of Christ (Acts 2:38-47; 1 Cor 12:13, 27; 2 Cor 6:14-18).
- b) The procedures of an application and qualifications listed below.

New congregant or transfer:

- a) An adult believer-baptised Christian may become a new congregant of the church by the procedure of application and qualifications.
- b) Adult believer-baptised Christians may transfer from a previous church to this church by the below procedure of application and qualifications.

Application and Procedure to join the Congregation:

A person needs to:

- a) Request information from one of the church leaders, or respond to an invitation to preparation classes.
- b) Attend preparation classes. These should be held at least annually, and as appropriate.
- c) Complete an application form and return it to the pastor or one of the ministerial staff of the church.

Qualifications of to join the Congregation:

A person needs to:

- a) Have a personal faith in Jesus Christ, as the only Lord and Saviour.
- b) Have a satisfactory testimony and confidence of being born of God.
- c) Recognise or have been baptised as a personal confession of faith.
- d) Receive discipleship training concerning the Christian life and the church.
- e) Share a testimony of personal faith and growth in Christ at a designated meeting.
- f) Answer the Membership Application questions publicly, and be received into the congregation of the church at a special congregant welcome service.

Privileges, work and responsibilities of congregants:

The objective of all Christians is to worship, honor and serve God. The following charges encourage our ability to joyfully and effectively accomplish God's grace, each church congregant should sincerely and wholeheartedly endeavour to:

- a) Live a godly life in truth and grace, in fellowship with Christ and the people of the church.
- b) Participate in regular Sunday school, worship, and communion services of the church.
- c) Serve joyfully and wholeheartedly with their 'motivated gifts' talents and resources.
- d) Faithfully manage personal finances and contribute to the financial budget and needs of the church and its mission.

- e) Nurture strong, wholesome and biblical relationships and attitudes in all areas of life (e.g home, marriage, family, church work, business, shopping, neighbours, etc.).
- f) Participate in the elections of elders, deacons, the decision and policy making meetings of the church, and support those that carry them out.
- g) Solve and resolve problems wherever and whenever they develop.

The church's care of congregants:

The congregants of the church have the responsibility of encouraging and helping each other to live a healthy, growing, victorious and fruitful Christian life. Congregants will do this by:

- a) Affirming the 'Faith Covenant' publicly at every congregant welcome service, and encouraging its faithful application.
- b) Giving support, encouragement and help to each other in all situations and especially in times of crises, loss, stress and suffering.
- c) Building and maintaining a strong friendship and discipleship ministry in the church that endeavours to assimilate all members and adherents.
- d) Listening, hearing and responding to cries for help, informing church leaders and addressing the concerns involved.
- e) Praying for each other and the leaders.
- f) Finding creative ways of encouraging and helping each other, so that love and acceptance will be experienced as the gift of disciples one to another.
- g) Addressing concerns and issues by clear and precise Biblical teaching, dialog and preaching – in the worship service, Sunday school, membership meetings, seminars, leadership training, and the like.
- h) The leaders are expected to be supportive and redemptive toward all people and situations.

Release of congregants:

For various reasons, some good and bad, congregants will leave the church. If it is just a matter of moving away it should be encouraged that the congregant transfer to a local church as soon as it is feasible. If it is rooted in a problem, all attempts to redeem the person and solve the problem should be made. If a person leaves for good or bad reasons and does not keep in contact with the church and does not respond to our approaches, then at some point the church may decide to simply expel the congregant from the church. At no time should the church use expulsion as a tool for manipulating or control, or burdening congregants with expectations that are not intended for all believers. At all costs the church must build and maintain a spiritually and biblically healthy and active membership. Therefore:

- a) A congregant may be released by personal request, or a request for transfer to another church. If a transfer is requested to a church that is of a totally unacceptable doctrine and practice, the congregant will be informed of this concern. If there is no change of heart in the congregant, they will be released, and not transferred for conscience's sake.
- b) Since we believe that being a congregant in the church without active commitment to Christ essentially means nothing, and could actually be a stumbling block and a false security, we will

(with patience and good discernment) consider expulsion for those who have moved away from an active Christian life.

- c) To prevent people from leaving because of frustration and problems, the church will do everything in its power to be preventative in ministry, to restoratively address problems at their earliest possible stage, in the smallest denominator, and with greatest care and sensitivity. In this work the elders will take an active leadership and redemptive role.
- d) A congregant may be released after all attempts to 'care' (see 1.6 above) are exhausted. This must include (1) personal and private attempts to help, then (2) two or three trying to help, and finally (3) bringing the matter to the elders for a solution. If the efforts to help and restore a congregant are refused at each stage, then the church will remove the congregant involved from the congregation. Such a person may re-apply for if there is reconciliation with Christ, any person involved and the church.

Church Leadership & Government

Christ is the chief and sole head of the church. The church operates under a monarchy, not a democracy, with Christ as its Head. Through the discernment of God's will in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit, Christ actively leads the church. The elected elders, alongside Christ, are responsible for courageously living and serving under His headship.

Under the authority of Christ, the members have the responsibility to provide leadership for the church through the act of electing or appointing pastors (elders). In the church, deacons are also considered elders. The elders are elected from among the membership. Once elected, elders remain in their position, while the lead pastor is subject to a vote every three years by the members. If the lead pastor is replaced, they will continue as an elder and continue preaching. The church should provide leadership training as needed.

Qualifications for elders include the following:

- a) He must be a member in good standing, spiritually fit, as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.
- b) Elders must be men (1 Timothy 3:2,4; Titus 1:5-9; Ephesians 5:23-24).
- c) They should be willing and able to work freely and joyfully within the framework of the church's constitution.
- d) Elders must work in full cooperation with other elders and the members of the church.
- e) They should be willing and able to receive appropriate training.

The work of elders includes:

- a) Providing godly vision, spiritual leadership, and Christian ministry in the church (Acts 15:2, 6; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- b) Establishing the biblical foundation and teaching of doctrine, beliefs, and practices in the church (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:14-18; Titus 1:9-14; 3:9-11).

- c) Offering training and support for the effective ministry of the church body, including staff training, placement and support, baptism and membership training, maintenance and processes, discipleship and leadership training, and spiritual gifts training (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- d) Providing pastoral care and ministry during times of crisis to the church body.
- e) Participating in ministerial enrichment seminars held jointly with sister churches a few times a year.
- f) Assisting the church in problem-solving, mediating disputes, and addressing abusive relationships and situations.
- g) Enabling and assisting church members to serve and function within the priesthood of believers (Ephesians 4, Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians 12).
- h) Assisting the members in the election or appointment of leaders and elders.
- i) Administering the church in accordance with the guidance provided by this constitution.
- j) Acting as the pastor search committee when the need arises.
- k) The elders and trustees are the official directors of the organization, with legal signing authority on behalf of the members.

The Pastor

The lead pastor is authorised by the ministerial and members to facilitate and coach the ministry of the church.

Church Leadership – The Pastor

Pastor qualifications.

- a) He needs to qualify as an elder as described above.
- b) The leading or senior pastor must have the spiritual experiential background that enables him to serve as an effective elder.
- c) He is required to be a man (1Tim 3; Titus 1:5-9; Ephesians 5:23-24).
- d) He must be willing to work within the framework of this constitution.

Pastor job and role description:

It is the delegated responsibility of the senior pastor to lead the church effectively toward its stated mission and goals. He needs to work in the following areas as needs and priorities require.

- a) Maintain personal spiritual, relational and emotional health.
- b) Teach thorough biblical doctrine in leadership meetings, member's meetings, Bible Studies, discipleship, Sunday school classes, membership and baptism classes, seminars and personal encounters.
- c) Preach and communicate the Word of God effectively.
- d) Provide pastoral care and counselling to those in need with the support of other pastoral staff and deacons or other professional counsellors.
- e) Encourage people as it is possible and appropriate, including visitation.
- f) maintain communication and co-operation.
- g) Keep a community visibly and encouraged.

- h) Keep a healthy home life with his wife and children, participate in active recreation, leisure and refreshment.
- i) Continue in active reading and education plan that includes seminars, courses and conferences.
- j) Participate in some ministry opportunities outside the church.
- k) He is the ex-officio member of all church committees, teams and boards.

Pastor accountability

The senior pastor is directly accountable 1) to Christ, the Chief Shepherd, 2) to the church elders, and 3) to the church congregants. The church elders may conduct regular evaluation of the ministry and health of the church, its committees, the elder's work and the pastor's work, relationships and roles in light of the church's mission and goals. The pastor should make a report of his work to the church elders about every three months and include a report in the church's annual report at the annual meeting.

Counselling and discipline:

If a pastor departs from the doctrinal, moral, relational and lifestyle commitment of this church, it should be brought to the attention of the church elders by two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:17-21, etc.)

Church Leadership – The Pastor

Pastor qualifications:

- a) The pastor needs to qualify as an elder as described above.
- b) The leading or senior pastor must have the spiritual and experiential background that enables him to serve as an effective elder.
- c) The pastor is required to be a man, as stated in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-9, and Ephesians 5:23-24.
- d) The pastor must be willing to work within the framework of this constitution.

Pastor job and role description:

It is the delegated responsibility of the senior pastor to effectively lead the church toward its stated mission and goals. The pastor needs to work in the following areas as needs and priorities require:

- a) Maintain personal spiritual, relational, and emotional health.
- b) Teach thorough biblical doctrine in leadership meetings, member's meetings, Bible Studies, discipleship, Sunday school classes, membership and baptism classes, seminars, and personal encounters.
- c) Preach and communicate the Word of God effectively.
- d) Provide pastoral care and counseling to those in need, with the support of other pastoral staff, deacons, or other professional counselors.
- e) Encourage people as it is possible and appropriate, including visitation.
- f) Maintain communication and cooperation.
- g) Keep the community visibly united and encouraged.
- h) Maintain a healthy home life with his wife and children, and participate in active recreation, leisure, and refreshment.
- i) Continue in an active reading and education plan that includes seminars, courses, and conferences.

- j) Participate in ministry opportunities outside the church.
- k) Serve as an ex-officio member of all church committees, teams, and boards.

Pastor accountability:

The senior pastor is directly accountable to:

- a) Christ, the Chief Shepherd.
- b) The church elders (ministerial team).
- c) The church members.
- d) The church elders may conduct regular evaluations of the ministry and health of the church, its committees, the elder's work, and the pastor's work, relationships, and roles in light of the church's mission and goals. The pastor should provide a report of his work to the church elders about every three months and include a report in the church's annual report at the annual meeting.

Counseling and discipline:

Counseling and discipline are essential aspects of maintaining doctrinal, moral, relational, and lifestyle commitments within our church community. When a pastor deviates from these commitments, it is crucial to approach this matter with the utmost care and godly wisdom, following the principles outlined in 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

In order to address such deviations, the church elders should initiate a process that involves the presence of two or three witnesses who can testify to the pastor's departure from these commitments. This approach ensures fairness and accountability in evaluating the situation.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the elders invite church leaders from sister churches to participate in the "caring process" as mediators. These individuals should embody godly character, wisdom, and discernment. Their presence will help facilitate a loving and supportive environment throughout the entire process.

Just as we prioritize the involvement of the ministerial team, it is equally important to seek the full support and participation of the lead pastor and members of the sister church. Their perspectives and insights can contribute to a holistic understanding of the situation, promoting a spirit of unity and compassion.

Throughout the counseling and discipline process, it is essential to approach every step with godly care. We should exhibit patience, understanding, and empathy, recognizing that each individual involved is a valued member of our church community. By adhering to these principles, we can navigate difficult situations in a manner that upholds the integrity of our faith and demonstrates the love and grace of God.

Grievances and problems:

Step 1: Private Conversation - According to Matthew 18:15-17, the first step in addressing grievances within a church is to have a private conversation with the member of the ministerial team involved. The

church member should approach the individual in a spirit of love and humility, seeking to resolve the issue and restore the relationship. They should express their concern or grievance in a respectful manner, allowing the opportunity for open communication and understanding.

Step 2: Mediation - If the private conversation does not lead to a resolution, the next step is to involve additional parties. The church member should seek the help of a trusted mediator, such as another minister or an elder, to facilitate a discussion between both parties. The mediator should remain neutral and guide the conversation towards reconciliation, encouraging forgiveness, understanding, and compromise.

Step 3: Church Involvement and Counseling - If the previous steps fail to resolve the grievance, Matthew 18:17 suggests involving the church community. The matter should be brought before the larger congregation or church leadership for their guidance and decision-making. If a resolution still cannot be reached, counseling may be necessary to help both parties work through their differences and find a path towards reconciliation. The church should approach this process with love, grace, and a commitment to restoring unity within the body of believers.

Discipline - In cases where counseling and reconciliation efforts have been exhausted without success, the church may need to consider disciplinary actions as outlined in 1 Timothy 5:17-21. According to this passage, those who persist in sin or engage in misconduct among the ministerial team should be rebuked publicly, with the purpose of bringing about repentance and accountability. This discipline should be carried out in a fair and just manner, ensuring that it aligns with the principles of Scripture and the church's governing documents.

Church Accountability - Additionally, 1 Timothy 5:19-20 emphasizes the importance of holding leaders accountable. If there are credible accusations against a member of the ministerial team, they should be investigated thoroughly and with impartiality. If the allegations are substantiated, appropriate disciplinary measures should be taken, demonstrating the church's commitment to upholding its values and protecting its members.

While disciplinary actions should always be approached with a heart of love and a desire for restoration, they are a necessary part of maintaining the integrity of the church and ensuring that leaders are held to a high standard of conduct. The overarching goal is to promote a healthy and righteous environment within the church, where grievances are addressed, and relationships are restored in accordance with biblical principles.

Funding:

Funding Source: This Church sustains its operations through the voluntary and joyful contributions of its supporters. The Church reserves the right to decline any donations that contradict its understanding of the Christian life, are deemed manipulative, or attempt to exert influence over the decision-making process or projects of the church.

Budget:

Budget Preparation and Approval: The Church's budget is prepared by the elders, presented to the members, and subject to their approval by the end of November each year. In the event of a severe financial crisis, the treasurer has the authority to convene an emergency members' meeting. The treasurer is responsible for providing monthly budget reports to the church elders and quarterly budget reports to the members.

Accounts:

Financial Management: The treasurer and/or finance committee are entrusted with the accounting, receipt, and dispersal of all funds, while receiving support and oversight from the elders.

Fiscal Year:

Fiscal Year Duration: The fiscal year of this church commences on January 1st and concludes on December 31st of each calendar year.

Annual Financial Statements:

The Corporation will furnish its members with a copy of the annual financial statements and other documents mentioned Part VIII "Financial Disclosure" of the Ontario *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*. Alternatively, the Corporation may provide a summary of the information contained in these documents, accompanied by a notice outlining the process for obtaining the complete documents, free of charge. Members who decline to receive the documents in writing shall not be obligated to receive them.

Major Projects and Loans:

Banking Operations: The Church's banking activities shall be conducted with a bank, trust company, or other institution engaged in banking business in Canada or elsewhere, as designated, appointed, or authorized by the members through resolution. The execution of banking transactions, either in whole or in part, shall be carried out by an officer of the Corporation or any other person as authorized by resolution from the members.

Borrowing Powers:

Subject to prior authorization from the members, the Board may exercise the following borrowing powers:

- (a) Secure loans on behalf of the Corporation;
- (b) Issue, reissue, sell, pledge, or hypothecate debt obligations of the Corporation;
- (c) Provide guarantees on behalf of the Corporation to ensure the performance of obligations by any individual;
- (d) Mortgage, hypothecate, pledge, or otherwise create a security interest in any property owned or subsequently acquired by the Corporation, as collateral for any debt obligation of the Corporation.

Property

All such estate and properties acquired by the church will be officially registered in the name of Living Gospel Mennonite Church.

Amendments and Changes

As per the responsibilities assigned to the elders, it is their duty to provide guidance and leadership to the church in adhering to the instructions and principles outlined in this constitution. It is recommended that the constitution undergo a comprehensive review and update every three years. The purpose of this constitution is not to restrict or hinder the church, but rather to establish a foundation of stability and consistency, enabling effective ministry, fostering healthy relationships, and facilitating smooth operation.

Constitution changes

The process for initiating a proposed constitution change within the church is as follows:

1. **Submission of Written Request:** Any member of the church can initiate a proposed constitution change by submitting a written request at an official membership meeting. The request must include two member signatures endorsing the proposed change.
2. **Notice of Motion:** Once submitted, the proposed constitution change must be considered and recorded as a 'notice of motion' in the minutes of the meeting. This serves as an official acknowledgement of the proposal and its intention to be further discussed and voted upon.
3. **Motion Discussion and Voting:** At a subsequent official member's meeting, which must take place at least two weeks after the initial submission, the proposed change becomes a 'motion'. The motion is then subject to discussion and subsequent vote by the attending members.
4. **Quorum and Voting Requirement:** For the motion to be valid, a quorum of at least 51% of legal members must be present at the meeting. Only legal members are eligible to participate in the vote. To approve changes to the constitution, a vote in favour by at least two-thirds of the votes cast is required.

By following these steps, the church ensures that any proposed constitution changes are initiated through a structured and democratic process, allowing for member participation, discussion, and a fair vote to decide the outcome.