

# Raleigh Mennonite Church

## Organizational Structure and Church Procedures

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# **Organizational Structure**

## **Church Life Meeting (CLM)**

Raleigh Mennonite Church makes decisions within the model of the priesthood of all believers. CLMs are the central location for corporate decision-making through modified consensus. All covenant members and attendees are encouraged to participate in bimonthly CLMs, and meetings are open to all. Decision-making is to be undertaken only by those who have covenanted to the church and are present at the meeting. Decision-making is altered through in-person discernment thereby excluding participation in absentia.

Each CLM will include a time to review reports submitted from each commission, committee, Servant Leaders, treasurer, and the pastor/staff. Questions and calls for communal decision-making on these reports will happen during the CLM.

## **Officers**

The RMC bylaws state: “Officers are appointed for two-year terms that can be served consecutively. At certain times the congregation may choose to retain an officer in a paid role.”

### **1. Moderator**

The RMC bylaws state:

“THE MODERATOR of the Congregation ensures the preparation of an agenda for CLMs, moderates these meetings, delegates such duties as are needed and appropriate to the administrative workings of the CLM, and discerns when the Congregation has reached consensus on a decision. The Moderator also assists in the discernment of officer and Servant Leader roles.”

All covenant members are invited to submit agenda items to the Moderator. The Moderator discerns whether to bring items for communal discernment or if that item is better addressed by a commission, committee, or among the Servant Leaders. While all suggested items will be addressed, it is the discernment of the Moderator in consultation with the pastor, the timing and format for addressing these items. The Moderator will provide an advanced call for agenda items and reports, a compiled set of reports, and an agenda prior to the CLM.

### **2. Secretary**

The RMC bylaws state:

“THE SECRETARY of the Congregation will keep an accurate record of group proceedings (CLMs and other special meetings of the group), to include resolutions adopted and actions taken, and will publish the minutes of these meetings in a timely fashion.”

Minutes of the prior meeting will be edited and accepted by the congregation at each CLM.

### **3. Treasurer**

The RMC bylaws state:

“THE TREASURER shall have custody of all offerings, funds, and accounts of the organization. The treasurer receives, deposits, invests and disburses all group monies, in accordance with the direction of the Congregation. The treasurer will be a member of the Stewardship Commission. In conjunction with the commission, the treasurer will shape an annual budget to present at a CLM prior to the September start of the fiscal year and will furnish periodic accounting of funds to the congregation.”

### **Servant Leaders (SLs)**

The RMC bylaws state:

“SERVANT LEADERS - The Congregation is governed by modified consensus decision-making, under the leadership of four Servant Leaders and the pastor who serves ex officio as a Servant Leader. During times of transition or special need, the Congregation may approve the appointment for an additional Servant Leader for a specified period of time not to exceed three years.

TERMS: Servant Leaders serve three-year staggered terms beginning each September, nominated in May of the same year. Upon completion of a full term, a Servant Leader must step away from the role for a minimum of one year. Unfinished terms will be completed by a new Servant Leader who is able to serve an additional consecutive term. Decision-making is made by consensus among Servant Leaders. Only members are eligible to serve as Servant Leaders.

EARLY DISSOLUTION OF TERM: Should a Servant Leader resign prior to when their term is ended, the Moderator will convene a Church Life Meeting (CLM) for a new nomination.”

SLs serve the congregation in three ways:

1. Attend to the long-range health of the church
  - a. Provide oversight in hiring processes and committees and commissions.
  - b. Provide for long-term visioning and planning
  - c. Liaise with commissions and committees to provide a full sense of the work of the church, needs, and supports
2. Oversight of the pastor
  - a. Conduct reviews of the pastor
  - b. Set expectations and goals
  - c. Provide encouragement, support, and nurture
3. Congregational care
  - a. Assess the pastoral care needs of the congregation and connect individuals to the forms of care they need

## **Selection of Servant Leaders and Officers**

New SLs will be selected at the July CLM in order to begin their term in September. In May the Moderator will request nominations from the congregation for open SL and officers. In June the Moderator will meet with all nominated persons to discuss the roles and to assist in discerning between those nominations. If the nominees need further assistance, their nominations will be brought before the congregation at a CLM to help further assess who is needed in the available roles at this time. Covenant members are encouraged to meet individually with nominees prior to the July CLM if they have concerns or questions. SLs and officers will be affirmed through modified consensus at the July CLM.

## **Commission and Committees**

RMC commissions and committees are the place where the primary work of the church occurs in worship, community, and outreach. These groups are formed through a process of gifts discernment on a yearly basis. Commissions/committees are accountable to the body of the church by submitting Church Life Meeting reports. The organizational chart below provides a list of committees and commissions.

## **Pastor**

The Pastor is accountable to the congregation through the Servant Leaders and works towards the flourishing of gifts in the gathered body of believers. The Pastor is also accountable to Central District Conference as a licensed or ordained minister of Mennonite Church USA, and works with the conference minister to uphold credentialing standards.

The Pastor is charged with the supervision of church staff. The Pastor works directly with four committees: Children's Nurture, Adult Nurture, Worship, and Hospitality. The Pastor serves ex officio as a Servant Leader, and is held accountable for decisions by this church body.

## **Congregational Accountability**

In rare cases where the congregation has lost confidence in Servant Leaders, the congregation may, by a simple majority of covenant members (e.g., through a petition or other means), dissolve Servant Leaders and appoint a committee to recommend a new group of Servant Leaders to the congregation for confirmation. In this case, confirmation is defined as two-thirds of covenant members. This would not include the pastor, who is a member of Servant Leaders ex officio.

## Organization Chart

Congregation

Servant Leaders

Pastor

Children's Nurture Commission

Adult Nurture Commission

Worship Commission

Hospitality Commission

Stewardship Commission

Treasurer

Gift Discernment Committee

Community Development Board

Community Development Minister

Community House Support Committee

Education Scholarship Committee

Mini Ministries

Ad Hoc Committees (e.g., Support Circle)

## Reporting Relationships

In a rare case of ethical misconduct or poor performance, reporting relationships are important to avoid confusion about who has primary responsibility for determining the facts and recommending appropriate action to the congregation.

The Pastor reports to Servant Leaders. To facilitate communication and coordination, each year SLs appoint a SL to function as a Pastoral Liaison. The Pastoral Liaison will have both an accountability relationship as well as an advocacy relationship with the pastor. The liaison is responsible for providing feedback, evaluation, helping monitor time allocation, and staying in touch with personal life issues, etc. The Pastoral Liaison also serves as an advocate for the Pastor, ensuring good partnership and clear communication with SLs and the congregation about pastoral work, as well as providing input to the Treasurer as salary/benefits are set for the new fiscal year.

Similarly, the Pastor applies a similar model for his/her direct reports. The Pastor will be empowered to deal with cases of staff discipline for his/her direct reports, following the guidelines established below under Corrective Action.

## **Corrective Action**

There are special circumstances which call for a review of a staff member's continuing ability to fulfill the ministerial role. Where concerns of serious breaches of ethics or impaired judgment are raised, Servant Leaders may place the staff member on administrative leave, until such concerns can be either confirmed or judged to be without merit. Where possible sexual misconduct is concerned, Servant Leaders will be guided by procedures established by the Mennonite Church USA (as defined in the MCUSA publication "Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure"). Where appropriate, Servant Leaders may recommend immediate dismissal to the congregation.

In cases where a staff member is not meeting the expectations of the role, Servant Leaders must ensure that those expectations are clearly defined and that the staff member has adequate time to meet them, typically three to six months. Consideration should be given to the appointment of a Leadership Discernment Committee, a group of three persons trusted by the staff member and appointed by Servant Leaders to meet with the staff member on a regular basis to review expectations and provide support. The Leadership Discernment Committee keeps Servant Leaders informed and, in turn, Servant Leaders keeps the congregation informed as appropriate.

If improvement is insufficient, the question of continuation or termination may need to be addressed. In this case the Leadership Discernment Committee and the staff member move into a more intentional discernment process. With appropriate sensitivity and recognizing the serious impact of such a decision on the staff member and congregation, the Leadership Discernment Committee helps the staff member test whether he/she should stay or leave. Areas to consider in coming to discernment include:

1. Impact of the staff member's leadership in the congregation.
2. The staff member's sense of mission.
3. Openness and communication between staff member and people.
4. Family considerations.
5. Vocational considerations.
6. Broader discernment of God's will.

After a period of discussion, the Leadership Discernment Committee brings a report and recommendation to the Servant Leaders. If the Servant Leaders discern that termination is the appropriate cause of action, they will submit a recommendation to the congregation, provide a forum for the congregation's reaction to be processed, and develop plans for meaningful closure. Salary and benefits will continue for 90 days following termination.

In matters of staff discipline, the majority of the Servant Leaders must support bringing a recommendation of termination to congregation, which in turn must be approved by two-thirds of the congregation.

## **Mennonite Church USA Structure**

Raleigh Mennonite Church is part of the Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA) as members of Central District Conference.

This structure provides ministerial credentialing, pastoral and congregational resources and a district minister for our Pastor and congregation.

Our identity as part of the Mennonite Church USA means we are part of large, global Christian ministries that RMC alone could not develop or sustain, in categories like missions (Mennonite Mission Network), relief/development (Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Disaster Service—MDS), peacemaking (Christian Peacemaker Teams and Mennonite Central Committee) and higher education (Mennonite Education Agency). In addition to praying for and contributing financially to organizations like these, we sometimes give of our time (as in cleaning up after a flood or hurricane through MDS) and regularly benefit from teaching and preaching skills honed at our institutions of higher education.

## **Method of Decision Making**

The congregation follows a model of modified consensus decision-making. The congregation discerns the movement of the Holy Spirit among us through a process of engaged listening, questioning, study, and prayer. Sometimes this is done in one congregational meeting, at other times this requires a longer process. The Moderator is charged with discerning when the congregation has reached consensus.

Up to two people can decide against the decision of the majority without blocking consensus. If three or more people decide against a decision, that decision is blocked.

As specified above, decisions involving staff discipline and contract termination, and for cases when the congregation has lost confidence in Servant Leaders, require a vote by covenant members.

## **Purpose of Consensus**

Our purpose in consensus decision-making is to seek the will of God in a particular matter and to build up the faith of the church. The goal is not to sway all members to one decision or to compromise among differing factions, but to discern together the Holy Spirit's leading of the congregation. Church Life Meetings are a continuation of our worship and require a prayerful waiting upon the mind of Christ. This prayerful listening is a listening to God, listening to our brothers and sisters in the church, and listening to our neighbors around us. In the end our desire is to be able to say, "It seems good to us and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 15:28).

## **Participants**

All covenant members and regular participants of Raleigh Mennonite Church are encouraged to attend and share in the discernment process as we seek to know the mind of Christ. Final decisions are limited to covenant members.

## **Guidelines**

1. Take time to understand each person's interests and viewpoints.
2. Respect others and their perspectives when you present your views.
3. View disagreement as a chance to explore alternatives.
4. Hold out if you have serious concerns, but be prepared to suggest a workable solution.
5. Do your best to make it work once a decision is reached.
6. While unanimous decisions are valued, it is acceptable to reach a decision which is not unanimous, provided that no more than two individuals dissent.
7. The goal in consensus is that each person can say:
  - a. I've been heard.
  - b. The others understand my concerns.
  - c. I can live with the decision.
  - d. I am willing to try to make it work

## **Tools for Consensus Decisions**

At various times it may not be clear to the Moderator if consensus has been reached. At this time a "five finger" tool can be utilized. Participants in the CLM can indicate their sense of the community's decision by raising between one and five fingers:

- 5 - I sense strong agreement as to God's leading us into this decision
- 4 - I sense agreement for God's leading us into this decision
- 3 - I sense agreement, but I am not fully certain within myself
- 2 - I affirm others sense of God's leading us into this decision, even though I am unsure about this decision for myself
- 1 - I contribute to blocking consensus on this decision

## **Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care happens in the context of the congregation and in the care of the pastor or pastoral staff. In these engagements, confidentiality is maintained unless the person receiving care discloses that they are causing harm to themselves or others, or suspects child abuse.

## **Local Ministries Discernment Process**

RMC uses the following process for exploration and discernment of possible local ministries in the church. We believe Jesus wants us to be his hands and feet in our community and so we want to find ways we can serve in Christ's name. As you hear of needs in the community and listen for God's leading we suggest you test these with Servant Leaders. Here is the process:

1. Individual(s) bring idea or vision for ministry to Servant Leaders for discernment.
2. Individual(s) commit themselves to prayer for two weeks before issuing a call to the congregation.



3. Issue a call to the congregation and set up a meeting time for anyone interested to come and brainstorm together.
4. If no interest is shown let the idea die. Continue in prayer with disciple group and if concern does not diminish repeat process.
5. If several people show interest and some defined goals are written up for the ministry, then the congregation will discern whether to commission them for service.

## **Membership in Covenant**

As persons who have experienced the grace of God in Jesus Christ we joyfully welcome others to join with us in the privileges and responsibilities of this faith community. In order to become a member of Raleigh Mennonite Church one works with pastoral leadership and other members for a time of preparation and discernment to:

1. Discuss Christian faith
2. Identify gifts and resources
3. Learn about our history and practices
4. Determine one's readiness for covenant commitment

Our covenant is a confessional statement of who we are and want to become in Christ. Covenant membership means that an individual agrees to fellowship with, serve in, and be accountable to this local congregation as stated in the covenant. New members are asked to participate in the covenant class and will be received into the community following the discernment process by signing the covenant. This covenant is renewed annually.

As persons seek covenant membership or even if they decide they are not ready for that commitment, every effort will be made to include them in the life of the church. Involvement in any role or function in the church, for both covenant and non-covenant members, is based on a discernment process to determine gifts, interests, availability, group dynamics, and support of the church's vision. Those in teaching roles (Sunday School teachers, Children's church leaders, youth mentors and MYF leaders) are required to commit to upholding the covenant statement, even if they are not covenant members. Decision-making at Church Life Meetings and Servant Leader roles are limited to covenant members.

## **Expectations of Covenant Members**

1. **Participation:** To participate actively and regularly in Sunday morning worship services, church life meetings, and some form of a small group in which personal interaction and nurture can take place.
2. **Stewardship:** To exercise faithful and compassionate stewardship in the use of our resources, which includes finances, time, and spiritual gifts.
  - a. Of our money – We believe we are to give sacrificially and proportionately, according to our income, as an act of worship to God who is the owner of all our resources entrusted to us.

- b. ***Of our time*** – We believe we need to avoid over-extension of ourselves in the daily activities of life. We will set aside regular time to nurture our faith journeys through spiritual disciplines and we will give time to extending the reign of God through the church.
- c. ***Of our spiritual gifts*** – We believe it is important to consider a call to service from the church as a call from God. We will volunteer our gifts in the building up of the church on commissions, ministries, and in service projects as they are discerned and we are able (2-4 hours a week in addition to Sunday morning).
3. **Hospitality:** To initiate relationships with newcomers by greeting visitors to RMC and inviting them into our homes and to join in church activities.

### **Special Circumstances**

1. Covenant members on short-term or long-term church assignments or college/graduate students out of town may retain membership at Raleigh Mennonite Church until they arrange for membership elsewhere.
2. Because membership is renewed annually, RMC does not transfer membership to other congregations. Covenant members who take up permanent residence elsewhere are encouraged to establish membership in a church of that area, as soon as possible.

### **Other Congregational Policies**

The Congregation also has policies which address:

1. Church Discipline – accepted by the Congregation in CLM of January 22, 2006
2. Child Protection – accepted by the Congregation November 27, 2006
3. College Scholarships

Copies of these policies are available on the RMC website or via request from a Servant Leader.

*This document was reviewed and approved by the RMC congregation at the Church Life Meeting on January 13, 2019. It will be reviewed and edited, as necessary, every three years.*