

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

As proposed by the Constitution and By-Laws Committee for approval by the West Shore Church of the Brethren Congregation

Article I - Corporate Name: West Shore Church of the Brethren.

Article II - Mission Statement: Our mission is to reach people for Christ, and welcome them into a loving community of disciples.

1. Various means will be used to reach people for Christ: friendship evangelism, need-meeting ministries, and church sponsored community events. It is our desire to achieve a loving, non-judgmental community of believers.
2. All persons are welcome, including the needy, the hurting, and those who have lost their way.
3. Our desire is to be a community of disciples who follow the teaching of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Article III – Affirmation of Faith and Purpose

This congregation:

1. Was founded upon the belief that there is but one God who in holy love creates and sustains all things.
2. Proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
3. Has faith that God, the Holy Spirit, is at work in the hearts and minds of believers, sustaining the church, giving guidance and comfort, and uniting believers with their Lord and with one another.
4. Maintains the New Testament as its creed and rule of faith. Through the Holy Scriptures, God still speaks and continues to accomplish His redemptive purpose.
5. Believes the Good News that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and through the gospel, God's sovereign will and Christ's redeeming grace are revealed.
6. Holds that the church is the body of Christ and is under the Lord's mandate to be faithful in accepting and sharing the gospel by word and deed.
7. Considers all members responsible for the total ministry of the church.
8. Accepts the ministry of the church to be the proclamation and fulfillment of the gospel for all people, and the nurture of individual believers.
9. Firmly accepts and teaches these basic doctrines: the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the sin-pardoning value of the atonement, Christ's resurrection from the tomb, His ascension and personal and visible return, and the resurrection of all persons, both the just and the unjust.
10. Encourages daily devotions, personal Bible study and family worship, stewardship of time, talents and money, and assisting persons who are in need.

Article IV – Core Values for the West Shore Church of the Brethren

1. Active Discipleship – Abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines and obedience to the teachings of Jesus.
2. Group Bible study – Learning to love one another through sharing as Christ loves us.
3. Worship – Hearing God’s Word and praising Him in a spirit of true adoration.
4. Evangelism – Actively reaching out to others with the love of Christ and the good news of salvation.
5. Prayer – Individual and group prayer earnestly offered, tapping the direction and power to do God’s work.
6. Ministry – Equipping every person according to his or her gifts and abilities to actively participate in God’s ministry.
7. Mission – supporting the mission of the church worldwide, striving to satisfy the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the suffering, the hungry and the thirsty.
8. Acceptance – Creating a loving atmosphere where everyone can feel accepted without judgment.
9. Diversity – Accepting our individual differences in true Christ-like love within the basic biblical framework.

Article V – Relationship to the Whole Church

1. The West Shore Church of the Brethren is part of a larger whole, which comprises the body of Christ.
2. The congregation shall support the program of the Church of the Brethren, following its advisory guidance as determined at the Annual Conference. The West Shore Church of the Brethren shall send elected delegates to the official conferences of the Church of the Brethren in which it is entitled to have representation.
3. In any case of strife or division, if any part of the congregation refuses to abide by its obligations as a member of the Church of the Brethren, that part of the congregation, whether a majority or minority of its membership, which continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren, shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all the property of the congregation.
4. Upon dissolution of the corporate status, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all assets of the corporation exclusively for the purpose of the corporation in such a manner where such organization organized exclusively for similar analogous purposes and operated exclusively for charitable, educational or religious purposes as at the time shall qualify as an exempt organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code with corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law, as the Board of Directors shall determine. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed by the Court of Common Pleas of the County in which the

registered office is located exclusively for such purposes. If the congregation (a) disbands, (b) departs from membership in the Church of the Brethren, or (c) so decreases in numbers and financial strength as to render the congregation unable to fulfill its purpose, the district of the Church of the Brethren in which it is located, or the successor, shall have the right to take charge and control of all property, and thereafter to hold, manage and convey the same at the discretion of the district. In the event of the disbanding of the church, no assets shall be distributed to any of its members.

Article VI – Membership

1. **Meaning of Membership** – Membership in a local fellowship of believers, the congregation, is the way we affirm and live out our membership in Christ’s larger body. In our relationship with other Christians in the local church, we experience the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit, we discover ways to be faithful to our covenant with God and each other, and we are able to support one another in carrying out our common calling as the people of God. Membership in our church shall be open to all persons regardless of race, national origin, or status of life.
2. **Entering into Membership** – Membership is open to all persons who by their own acts of faith say yes to God’s offer of a new life in Christ. The Board shall approve individuals seeking membership, a majority vote being needed. Preparation for membership, as determined by the Church Board, could include, but is not limited to, a Brethren Heritage Membership Class, if the proposed member is of a non-Brethren Heritage or has not been instructed in the same.
3. **Members** – Members of the congregation shall consist of those persons who have been received into the church by trine immersion baptism as practiced by the Church of the Brethren, letter of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith.
4. **Associate Members** - The West Shore Church of the Brethren may also grant associate membership to three categories of persons:
 - a. Temporary residents, such as students and seasonal residents who participate in the life of the church and who continue to hold membership in another congregation in the community of their permanent residence.
 - b. Former residents, persons who have moved to a new location and wish to continue a relationship with the Brethren at the same time they become members of another Christian community.
 - c. Individuals who regularly attend and support the church with their time, talents and resources, yet chose not to become members.

Associate members have the right to vote in the congregation’s decision making opportunities, and have a responsibility to contribute resources to support the ministries of the West Shore Church of the Brethren. Associate members are not eligible to serve on the church board or to represent the congregation as delegates to district or annual conferences.

5. Membership Termination – Membership in the West Shore Church of the Brethren may be terminated in one of the following ways:
 - b. Death.
 - c. Transfer of membership by letter. A letter of transfer is the property of the congregation and shall go from the granting to the receiving congregation.
 - d. Withdrawal. This action shall be taken by the congregation at the written request of the individual.
 - e. Removal. The congregation may act to remove a person’s name from the list of members when:
 - i. A member has joined another church, but failed to request a letter of transfer.
 - ii. The congregation will approve or disapprove the removal of a member from the membership roll after a period of non-participation of two years or more.

Article VII – Congregational Business Meeting

1. Congregational Business - The congregation in a business meeting serves as the final authority and governing body within the West Shore Church of the Brethren. The congregation in their business sessions shall hear reports and evaluate past accomplishments, study present conditions and plan the future program of the church, record the voice of the congregation on current issues where Christian witness is urgent, and provide opportunity for sharing and coordinating differing points of view. The business meeting shall also elect officers, adopt budgets, rule on policy and organizational matters, and authorize church officials to act on behalf of the congregation. All members and associate members shall be eligible to vote in the congregational business meeting.
2. Dates for the Congregational Business Meeting – Congregational Business Meetings shall be held on the third Sunday of the months of May and November each year. Additional Congregational Business Meetings may be scheduled by the vote of the Church Board. The Church Board must also schedule a special Congregational Business Meeting if requested to do so in writing by a petition of the majority of the church members.
3. Notice of Congregational Business Meetings – Notice of a Congregational Business Meeting shall be given two weeks and one week prior to the meeting in writing and by public announcement during the worship service on each of the two Sundays preceding the meeting.
4. Quorum for Congregational Business Meetings – A quorum shall consist of 25% of the present West Shore Church of the Brethren membership. Each member has one vote and there shall be no proxies.
5. Officers for Congregational Business Meetings – The officers presiding at Congregational Business Meetings shall be the Moderator, Church Clerk and the Church Treasurer.
6. Rules of Conduct for Congregational Business Meetings – The Moderator shall lead these meeting following Robert’s Rules of Order. The church clerk

shall act as secretary. Decisions shall be made by majority vote except as specified otherwise.

A vote of 60% of the church membership age 18 and older is required to mortgage, encumber, or sell church property. Proxies for deciding these matters shall be submitted as printed, signed and dated ballots for members who are not able to attend.

Article VIII – Church Officers Duties

1. All officers shall be members in good standing of the congregation. The moderator shall be chosen from outside the congregation by a majority vote of the elected Church Board.
2. The moderator shall be the official leader of the congregational business meeting.
3. In the event of the Moderator's inability to serve, the vacancy shall be filled on an interim basis by a Church Board appointment as approved by a majority vote.
4. The Church Clerk shall keep accurate minutes of the congregational business meeting as well as the Church Board meetings. Minutes shall be kept in a volume provided for that purpose and they shall be and remain the property of the congregation. The Church Clerk shall also keep the official membership roll.
5. The Church Treasurer shall be a member of the Church Board and shall keep a permanent record of the financial accounts of the congregation. At least two unrelated persons must count and verify in writing all public offerings. The Church Treasurer shall make bank deposits for all contributions and disperse funds as required for operating expenses and any additional expenses that are approved by the Church Board. Also, the Church Treasurer shall keep permanent records of all non-monetary contributions from church members and from any other public and private sources and all other receipts.

The Church Treasurer shall report the general state of finances to the Church Board at their meetings and shall submit all accounts for an audit at the direction of the Church Board. Also, the Church Treasurer shall provide a written financial report for the regularly held congregational business meetings.

6. The Church members agree to indemnify all officers, board members, teachers and volunteer workers, except for cases of willful misconduct or gross negligence.

Article IX – The Church Board

1. There shall be a Church Board consisting of 6-12 members elected at the congregational business meeting by the voting members. The Board shall organize itself annually by naming a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from among the Church Board members. All licensed and ordained ministers shall be ex-officio non-voting members of the Board. Anyone is invited to attend the Church Board meetings. A time limit of five minutes will be

permitted to express a church related issue or proposal for Church Board discussion.

The Board has administrative powers to plan, coordinate, integrate, and supervise the ongoing program of the congregation.

2. Board meetings shall be held regularly, at least once a quarter. Special meetings may be called by the Board Chairperson or the Pastor, and must be called if requested by a majority of the Board members. Notice for all Board meetings shall be given two weeks in advance and shall be noted in the Church bulletin.

Emergency meetings may be called with 24 hours notice written or oral to every Board member by the Chairperson or the Pastor. Decisions shall be made by the majority vote of the Board members present at the emergency meeting.

3. Nominating Committee – There shall be a nominating committee consisting of from 3-6 members present at the congregational business meeting from a ballot approved by the Church Board. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting. The Nominating Committee may also recruit and nominate persons in the congregation for other positions as requested by the Church Board.
4. Ministry Teams – There shall be four ministry teams serving under the authority of the Church Board.
 - A. The Pastoral Relations Committee.
 - B. The Nurture Team comprised of Christian Education and Worship.
 - C. The Outreach Team comprised of Evangelism and Missions and other ministries to the community.
 - D. The Stewards Team comprised of Property and Finance. The Church Treasurer is a member of this team.
 - E. Other Committees – Other committees may be established subject to the approval and authority of the Church Board.

Article X- Church Board Functions

The Church Board shall:

- A. Fulfill the directives of the Congregational Business Meeting.
- B. Review the activity reports of the teams and approve or advise accordingly.
- C. Project long-range planning, set goals, and initiate new programs.
- D. Make all appointments for which the Board is responsible.
- E. Approve the ballot for use by the Congregational Business Meeting attendees for all elected positions.
- F. Fill all vacancies in elective offices occurring between congregational business meetings and fill such other vacancies not otherwise provided for.
- G. Present recommendations on personnel and terms of employment to the Congregational Business Meeting for staff personnel approval.
- H. Determine the annual budget for presentation to the Congregational Business Meeting for review and approval.

- I. Approve and supervise within the limits approved at the Congregational Business Meeting, the expenditure of all funds so approved.
- J. Provide for a financial audit as deemed necessary.
- K. Allocate and define authority with respect to the establishment of bank accounts and the signing of checks and other legal documents.
- L. Report the Board activities and actions at the Congregational Business Meeting.
- M. Bring recommendations to the Congregational Business Meeting when church policy needs revision.
- N. Advise and counsel with the pastor.
- O. Enlist and accept the help and the counsel of the District Executive and /or other District personnel in program planning and handling of special concerns.
- P. Approve all non-financial donations to the church.

Article XI – Other Provisions

1. Personnel Selection and Tenure

A. The nominating and personnel committee shall maintain a personnel file indicating the interest, aptitude, and record of service of all members. The committee shall also prepare a ballot for the use of the congregational business meeting in the election of: (a) Officials of the Church (except those appointed by the Church Board), (b) Board members, (c) Delegates to District Conference and Annual Conference, and (d) Other officers as are required by the congregational business meeting.

B. The term of office for all officers of the congregational business meeting shall be three years. Officers shall not be eligible to serve more than two terms in succession.

C. The term of office for elected members of the Church Board and continuing committees shall be three years. They shall not be eligible to serve more than two terms in succession. If any Church Board or committee member is absent from meetings without cause for three months, that office shall be declared vacant.

D. Approximately one-third of the membership of the Church Board or continuing committees shall be elected in any one year.

2. Employed Staff

A. Pastor

The congregation shall employ a pastor or pastors as needed. The pastor shall be properly licensed or ordained and approved by the District Board. In special interim situations, a licentiate or a minister from another denomination may serve upon the approval of the District Board.

The pastor shall accept and adhere to the faith and the practices of the Church of the Brethren and shall be the executive director of the church program.

The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Church Board.

B. Additional Professional Staff

When the congregation has grown to sufficient size, the employment of

additional staff shall be considered so as to assure the continued growth of the congregation and to provide adequate leadership for the parish.

3. Staff Employment Procedures

A. The election and call of a pastor and other professional staff persons, as well as the termination of their services to the congregation, shall be done in keeping with approved Church of the Brethren procedures, seeking the counsel and guidance of the authorized officials of the Church of the Brethren. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting in a duly called congregational business meeting shall be regarded as sufficient plurality to express the will of the congregation in extending a call or in voting to continue or discontinue the leadership of a pastor.

B. The office secretary is employed by the Church Board and shall be responsible to the pastor.

C. The custodian shall be employed by the Church Board and shall be responsible to the stewards team.

D. The terms of employment for all employed staff shall be reviewed annually. When the terms have been mutually accepted, such terms shall be set forth in writing on approved forms and shall be considered an agreement between the contracting parties.

E. When there is a multiple staff, all personnel are responsible to the congregation for the conduct of their offices.

X11. Polity And Property Issues

If the congregation (a) disbands, (b) departs from membership in the Church of the Brethren, or (c) so decreases in numbers and financial strength as to render the congregation unable to fulfill its purpose, the Southern District of the Church of the Brethren shall have the right to take charge and control of all property, and thereafter to hold, manage and convey the same at their discretion.

X111. Amendments To This Constitution

Amendments may only be made by a two-thirds vote of those members present at a duly noticed congregational business meeting.