

**CONSTITUTION OF THE OHIO CONFERENCE
OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA**

**Adopted by the Delegates
at Annual Conference Assembly
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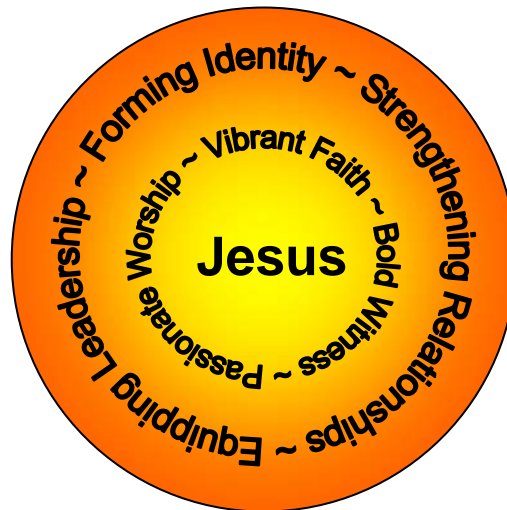
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CONSTITUTION OF THE OHIO CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

ARTICLE 1: IDENTIFICATION

The Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church was incorporated as an organization of congregations in 1969 under the laws of the State of Ohio. This conference is a merger of two conferences. The Ohio Mennonite Conference was founded in 1834. The Eastern Amish Mennonite Conference began in 1893, following Amish ministers' meetings. The two conferences merged in 1927 to become the Ohio Mennonite and Eastern Amish Mennonite Joint Conference. That name was changed to Ohio and Eastern Mennonite Conference in 1954. The Ohio Mennonite Christian Workers' Conference and the Ohio Mennonite Mission Board merged with the Conference at its incorporation in 1969. After the eastern congregations of the Conference organized as the Atlantic Coast Conference in 1978, the remainder was renamed the Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church in 1979. In 2002 the Ohio Conference chose to become part of the newly integrated Mennonite Church USA, and is now identified as the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE



A. Mission of the Church

We believe that Jesus Christ is at the center of who we are and all we do as the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

The mission of Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
is to be a people and congregations
dedicated to
worship of, faith in and witness for

Jesus Christ.

As God calls us to walk in the Way of Christ,¹ the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the good news of Jesus.² Embracing an Anabaptist perspective, our prayer is that:

- Our passionate worship flows from our confession of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.³
- We have a vibrant faith in God as Lord of all, who is at work reconciling the world.⁴
- Through our bold witness others will accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord⁵ and will build peace with all humankind.

In order to fulfill our mission, the focus of Ohio Conference is to support, connect and lead in ways that equip and empower our congregations to enlarge the faith community in obedience to Jesus Christ.

B. Role of the Congregation

The congregation is a local assembly of God's people uniting in worship, faith, witness, fellowship, proclamation, service, discernment, mutual care, and discipline. In association with other congregations in this conference and/or the larger church, the congregation is the primary unit through which the mission of the church is carried out. Mennonite Church USA provides resources to the congregations primarily through Ohio Conference. Congregations are accountable to each other in their faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

C. Purpose of Conference

The primary purpose of the Conference is to cultivate healthy congregations through the equipping of leaders in the areas of worship, faith and witness. The leaders to equip are not only pastors, but worship leaders, teachers, church committee members, etc.

The Conference builds on the Anabaptist Mennonite perspective to form Conference identity. The Conference will help congregations clarify their own identities to meet the needs of their communities.

The Conference will strengthen relationships between churches within the Conference, providing networking and resourcing possibilities between churches with similar circumstances and needs. The Conference will also strengthen relationships with church-wide agencies and institutions as well as with community agencies that share Conference beliefs and mission.

¹ Mark 1:17; Luke 9:23-25; Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 5:3-16

² Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; John 1:12

³ John 1:1-5; Genesis 1; Psalm 104; John 14:16-17

⁴ John 3:16; Romans 8:18-23; Colossians 1:20

⁵ Philippians 2:11; II Corinthians 5:18-20; Romans 10:9; Titus 3:4-7

ARTICLE III: RELATIONSHIPS

A. Geographic cluster groups facilitate mutual communication between the Conference and congregations and among congregations in the geographic areas. The regional pastors normally arrange for and moderate cluster group meetings.

B. Conference to Congregations

As the entity established and maintained by affiliated congregations to enhance worship, faith and witness, the Conference is to:

1. Be an administrative resource to enable joint efforts for and on behalf of member congregations.
2. Assist congregations in securing good pastoral leadership, maintaining leadership guidelines, and validating, recording, and transferring ministerial credentials.
3. Provide liaison with and resources to congregations through regional pastors and conference minister.
4. Provide guidance and resources to congregations through Conference Ministries and Teams via staff and volunteer personnel.
5. Give help in special needs, as requested by the congregation or at the initiative of the Leadership Team.
6. Work at mutual responsibility between the Conference and congregations.

C. Congregations to Conference

As the sponsoring base in the relationship, congregations are each to:

1. Participate by way of delegates in the decisions, work, and mission of the Conference.
2. Be willing to share personnel to serve in the various positions of the Conference organization.
3. Support spiritually and financially the work of the Conference.
4. Give counsel to and receive counsel from the Conference through its designated representatives.
5. Be open to work at all facets of mutual responsibility between congregations and the Conference.
6. Share their needs so that Resource Teams can be formed to meet those needs.

D. Congregation to Congregation

Affiliation with the Conference brings member congregations into significant relationship with each other. This relationship of interdependence is enabled and enhanced through:

1. Regional pastors and cluster groups which facilitate collaborative activities and broaden fellowship.
2. Consulting with Conference congregations on matters of congregational actions and programs that may affect them.
3. Sharing of resources (personnel, material, and financial) with other congregations.
4. Creating an association of two or more congregations as Mission Cells to implement various ministries, such as church planting or providing aid and assistance to individuals and groups in need.

E. Conference to Denomination

For maintaining its affiliation with Mennonite Church USA, the Conference is to:

1. Appoint and assist Conference delegates to Mennonite Church USA General Assembly to participate in effective church-wide decision making.
2. Establish and maintain channels for communication and consultation between Mennonite Church USA agencies and the Conference and its constituent congregations.

F. Congregation to Denomination

For participating in its affiliation with Mennonite Church USA the congregations are to appoint and assist delegates to Mennonite Church USA General Assembly to participate in effective church-wide decision making.

G. Regional, National and Mennonite Church USA-Related Ministries

The Conference recognizes various sister conferences, Mennonite Church USA agencies and Inter-Mennonite organizations that work with other Mennonite denominations and other constituencies. Where these involve Conference representation and participation, the Leadership Team shall be responsible for defining and facilitating the relationship. Where congregations are represented directly, the Leadership Team shall usually be the channel for information and counsel on programs, solicitations, and other matters of relevance to the Conference.

H. Organizations with Specific Reference to Ohio or Ohio Conference

The Conference recognizes various organizations created to serve the Ohio Conference constituency and beyond. Organizations serve an outreach or service function that may benefit from a working relationship with Ohio Conference. Organizations facilitate functional and cooperative work with other Mennonite Church USA area conferences. Determination of eligibility and the nature of the relationship rests with the Leadership Team of the Conference. The Leadership Team may confer with the Ministry Development Team and the delegate body for input and advice.

1. Conference Partner Organizations

- a. Have a distinct Mennonite identity.
- b. Have the organization's constitution or objectives affirmed by the Conference.
- c. Participate in a process of mutual dialogue.
- d. Report to Conference Leadership Team and Conference Assembly when deemed appropriate by either party. The method of reporting is mutually determined and may change from time to time.
- e. Allow the Conference to review and approve the individuals or the process of selection of the representatives on its governing body.
- f. Have the dissolution provision of the organization affirmed by Leadership Team.
- g. Develop a memorandum of understanding explaining the relationship and expectations of Conference and the organization, including any financial responsibility of either party.
- h. One representative from each Partner Organization will constitute the *Ohio Conference Partner Organization* that will self-organize with a chair and recording secretary. The *Ohio Conference Partner Organization* will meet periodically with selected staff members of Ohio Conference to plan cooperative efforts, coordinate schedules and discuss issues of mutual concern.

2. Conference-Related Organizations

- a. Have expressed objectives to enrich the life and witness of the Conference.
- b. Have the relationship validated by Conference Leadership Team
- c. Participate in a process of mutual dialogue.
- d. Report to Conference Leadership Team and Conference Assembly when deemed appropriate by either party. The method of reporting is mutually determined and may change from time to time.
- e. Develop a memorandum of understanding explaining the relationship and expectations of Conference and the organization.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

A. Eligibility for Membership

Congregations are eligible for membership when they:

1. Have a membership of baptized persons who have covenanted to be a congregation.
2. Have adequate provision for Conference-approved pastoral leadership.
3. Have sufficient organization to carry on congregational life.
4. Have made the following Conference commitments:
 - a. Accept the biblical faith as expressed in the Anabaptist Mennonite Confessions of Faith adopted by Mennonite Church USA and affirmed by Ohio Conference.
 - b. Show a willingness to give counsel and receive counsel from the Conference and its constituent congregations.
 - c. Show a readiness to share responsibility in the program of the Conference with interests, prayers, personnel, and financial support toward the budget.

B. Procedures for Securing Membership

1. A congregation may apply for membership to the Leadership Team either directly or through a regional pastor, a sponsoring group, or the conference minister.
2. A congregation, through its leadership, shall certify to the Leadership Team its eligibility for membership.
3. The Leadership Team will recommend that the delegates to Conference Assembly receive the congregation as a member of the Conference. The congregation will be received upon a 75 percent delegate vote of affirmation.
4. Emerging congregations are expected to make use of Conference resources.
5. New congregations should emerge from existing congregations only when a congregation decides to divide for practical or mission reasons. If a new congregation emerges out of congregational disunity, it may apply for Conference membership only after one year.

C. Procedures for Maintaining Membership

1. Member congregations share in Conference programs, as they are able, with interest, prayers, personnel, and financial support of the annual spending plan.
2. Congregations select and send delegates to scheduled sessions of Conference Assembly.
3. Each congregation is expected to be accountable to other Conference congregations in faithfulness to Jesus Christ in such matters as theology, practices, stewardship, nurture, and mission.
4. The Conference provides suitable structures for congregations to fulfill their

accountability to each other and to the Conference.

D. Procedures for Terminating Membership

1. When a congregation's continuing membership is in question, conflict transformation resources shall be used if at all possible.
2. A congregation considering the termination of its membership shall engage in discussion with the regional pastor and conference minister before congregational action is taken.
3. A congregation may, through its leadership, request the Leadership Team to terminate its Conference membership by giving supporting reasons.
4. A congregation's membership in the Conference may be terminated upon recommendation by the Leadership Team and action by the delegates to Conference Assembly.
5. After membership is terminated, disposition of property used by the congregation that is in the name of the Conference shall be determined by the Conference, taking into account the wishes of the congregation and the amount of money invested by the Conference.

ARTICLE V: CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY

A. Purpose of Conference Assembly

The Conference Assembly serves as a celebration of our life together and God's work among us. It is an annual time for drawing all our congregations into shared experiences of worship, faith, and witness. With everything we do at Conference Assembly, from prayer meetings or workshops to discernment among the entire body, we build Christ-centered relationships through our worship, faith, and witness.

More specifically, Conference Assembly participants are:

1. Drawn deeper into passionate worship, filled with God's Spirit, and sent out to infuse their congregations with the transforming grace of God's presence.
2. Strengthened in vibrant faith; stretched, challenged, and dedicated to live an authentic life of following Jesus Christ within their home congregations.
3. Encouraged and instructed in bold witness so that they might return to their congregations with the spiritual insight and power to lead the world around them into the transformational love of Christ's Kingdom.

B. Participation at Conference Assembly

All member congregations of Ohio Conference are expected to send delegates to Conference Assembly. Congregations are encouraged to send as many other members as possible. While attending the Assembly, all participants are given opportunities to discuss and discern how they will together carry home the visions of worship, faith, and witness they have experienced.

C. Annual Conference Assembly Sessions and Schedule

These sessions are planned and implemented by the Annual Conference Assembly Program Committee in consultation with the Leadership Team and Ministry Development Team. All general sessions, workshops, and other breakout sessions are planned to fulfill the purpose of ACA stated above. Accordingly, passionate worship, vibrant faith, and bold witness will be our top priorities. A balance of these three priorities is the intent.

The regular Annual Conference Assembly will be held within 60 days prior to the close of the fiscal year of Ohio Conference at a time and place determined by the Leadership Team in consultation with the Ministry Development Team.

Special Assembly meetings may be called by the Leadership Team in consultation with the Ministry Development Team after they provide 90 days notice to Conference churches. The notice shall specify the agenda and any action needed in this Special Assembly.

The participants at any regular or special Conference Assembly shall constitute a quorum for discernment and decision making.

D. Discernment at Conference Assembly

Time is given at each Conference Assembly for discernment among the participants. This time is structured in a way so that all participants have a voice in the discernment process. All voices will be heard and considered by Conference leadership as a part of the year-long, ongoing process of decision-making by Leadership Team, staff, Ministry Development Team, and cluster meetings.

There may be matters arising from the discernment process that require a decision by the participant body while present at Conference Assembly. When this is the case, Conference leadership will take time in general session for processing these decisions. These discernment times will include all participants as observers with optional open mike time. In preparation for these sessions, each congregation will have selected their allotted number of delegates to represent them. The group of delegates will then actively discuss and make the decision. If a vote is needed, each delegate will have one vote.

It is intended that discernment times will flow from and within the overall context of worship, faith, and witness. These discernment times will include a variety of items of interest for all congregations. Examples (not exhaustive) of these types of items are:

- Giving counsel and encouragement to decisions made by the Leadership Team during the previous year, or pending decisions coming in the year ahead.
- Hearing the stories of worship, faith, and witness from the Ministry Development Team and from the Resource Teams. Giving counsel and encouragement to these teams.
- Sharing and receiving concerns and joys from congregations and individuals at the discretion of the Leadership Team.

- Providing counsel and encouragement to Credentialing, Stewardship, and Gifts Discernment Ministries. This will include counsel on nominees and the spending plan.
 - Providing open mike time for spiritual counsel on any of the above items.
 - Celebrating the ongoing work of God's Spirit among us, we affirm nominees, receive new congregations and ministers, and deal with ministries and congregational life in praise to God as an acknowledgement of our united walk with Jesus Christ.
- (*Note: Reports by Teams and Ministries will be contained within the written Report Book. Items from these reports may be brought up for further counsel in these discernment times.)

ARTICLE VI: CONFERENCE DELEGATES

A. The following are delegates and have voting privileges:

1. Ordained and licensed ministers with active service assignments recognized by the Conference and who hold and maintain ministerial credentials through the Credentialing Ministry.
2. Members of Leadership Team, Ministry Development Team, Credentialing Ministry, Gifts Discernment Ministry, Stewardship Ministry, and paid staff.
3. Representatives selected by Conference congregations, with two delegates from each congregation with membership of 50 members or less, and one additional delegate for each additional 100 members, or fraction thereof. Two-year terms are recommended in order to provide continuity. Congregations are encouraged to have a wide variety of members as delegates in order to expose Conference to, and receive the benefit of, an ever-wider group of congregational leaders.
4. A representative from each Partner Organization of Ohio Conference as defined in Article III (H.) 1.
5. An optional additional delegate in addition to the number already allowed (as described in Article VI:A.3.) is allotted to every congregation to be filled by a young adult between the ages of 18-30. One of the other delegates from the young adult's congregation should act as a mentor to the young adult delegate.

B. Qualifications of Congregational Representatives

Congregations shall choose as delegates members in good standing who manifest spiritual discernment and mature judgment, are actively involved in congregational life and organization, represent the diversity of the membership, and express a commitment to attend and become actively involved in meetings and other interactive communication that request delegate input and decision-making.

C. Role of Conference Delegates

Conference delegates shall:

1. Represent their congregation to the Conference.
2. Communicate Conference work and ministry to the congregation.
3. Invite the congregation to financially support the ministry of the Conference.
4. Read the newsletters and Web sites to keep informed of the latest Conference happenings.
5. Attend area cluster group meetings where much of the information sharing, discussion and discernment will take place.
6. Attend Annual Conference Assembly to be filled with the Spirit in the areas of Worship, Faith, and Witness and to help in the discernment process with

- other congregational delegates that are in attendance.
7. Find ways to apply worship, faith, and witness in one's own congregation and mission cells.
 8. One delegate from each congregation shall be designated as a communications liaison between the Conference and the congregation. That delegate will be asked to take the lead in reporting Conference activity to the congregation.

ARTICLE VII: LEADERSHIP TEAM

A. Membership

The Leadership Team consists of the Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Credentialing Ministry chair, Gifts Discernment Ministry chair, and Stewardship Ministry chair, all confirmed for two-year terms with a maximum of three consecutive terms. The Leadership Team also includes the administrative secretary, treasurer and conference minister. The administrative secretary and treasurer are non-voting members of the Leadership Team. If a Leadership Team vote should come to a three/three tie and consensus cannot be reached, the Leadership Team will request input from the Ministry Development Team.

B. Relationship to:

1. Conference Assembly

Members of the Leadership Team are confirmed by Conference Assembly delegates and are directly accountable to and act on behalf of Conference Assembly as authorized by the Constitution or as specifically authorized from time to time by action of Conference Assembly.

2. Ministry Development Team

The Leadership Team is a part of the Ministry Development Team, so as to integrate policies and appropriations to support ministries.

3. Staff

The Leadership Team ensures appropriate supervisory relationships and procedures for review of all staff persons.

C. Functions

1. Supervise the administrative work of the Conference.
2. Hold all deeds to Conference property and fulfill all legal requirements. The moderator and treasurer of the Conference are authorized to execute all documents pertaining to the purchase or sale of property or real estate.
3. Plan for meetings of the Ministry Development Team. Appoint a planning committee to prepare for the Annual Conference Assembly.

4. Bring recommendations to the Ministry Development Team for the appointment of conference minister and regional pastors. Appoint all other staff persons, after consultation with any ministry that will relate directly to that staff person.
5. Review expenses of the Leadership Team and Ministry Development Team, and submit spending plan requests to the Stewardship Ministry.
6. Appoint Conference representatives to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA from the staff, Leadership Team, and Ministry Development Team.
7. Receive financial or other appeals from denominational, partner and Conference-related organizations and give or direct assistance as needed.
8. The Leadership Team may meet in executive session as needed. In cases of conflict of interest, affected members would be excused from the conversation.
9. Non-staff members serve as an accountability group for the conference minister and may meet in executive session.
10. Relate to Mennonite Church USA as well as other area conferences.
11. Work to develop and maintain association with affiliated related ministries.
12. Authorize restricted funds expenditures in accordance with the Restricted Funds Policy of the Conference.
13. Authorize the sale of Conference-held property upon the recommendation and/or concurrence of the Stewardship Ministry.
14. Serve as interpreter of Conference concerns, actions, and policies to the congregations, and of congregations' counsel to the Conference.
15. Act for the Conference between delegate sessions. Confirm nominees recommended by the Gifts Discernment Ministry for unexpired terms.
16. Appoint the Conference delegates to Mennonite Church USA General Assembly.
17. Review the nominees for the corporation members and approve nominees for the Board of Trustees of Christian Schools, Inc.
18. Approve spending plan.
19. Appoint ad hoc committees as necessary to study, recommend, or assist in matters of policy, property or personnel.

D. Officer Responsibilities

1. The moderator chairs the meetings of the Leadership Team, and shares the role of chairing Conference Assembly with the assistant moderator. Normally, the

moderator supervises the conference minister and performs other duties pertaining to the office.

2. The assistant moderator fills the moderator's role at the moderator's request or absence.
3. The administrative secretary records the proceedings of the Leadership Team.

ARTICLE VIII: MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

A. Membership

The Ministry Development Team consists of members as follows: the moderator, assistant moderator, five people with a passion for faith, worship, and witness (from these five, one person shall be selected to oversee the faith focus, one the worship focus, one the witness focus and one person to oversee the prayer ministry of the Conference); three planners/strategists; Stewardship Ministry Chair; Gifts Discernment Ministry Chair; Credentialing Ministry Chair, conference minister, regional pastors, administrative secretary, communicator/editor, grant writer and the resource team coordinator. Each non-staff member confirmed for two-year terms with a maximum of three consecutive terms on the Ministry Development Team.

B. Relationships

Non-staff voting members of the Ministry Development Team are confirmed by delegates of Conference Assembly. The Ministry Development Team is thereby directly accountable to Conference Assembly, and works in cooperation with the Leadership Team.

C. Functions

1. Respond to congregational needs brought by congregations, staff and others in the focus areas of worship, faith and witness.
2. Develop programs for passionate worship, vibrant faith and bold witness.
3. Conduct studies and surveys to help discern program needs (as appropriate).
4. Create Resource Teams to correspond with needs and assist in locating resources needed to conduct programs.
5. Evaluate programs upon their completion.
6. Review and forward an annual spending plan to the Leadership Team to be adopted by Annual Conference Assembly.

D. Meetings

1. Sessions of the Ministry Development Team are open to observers.

2. A majority of voting members shall constitute a quorum.
3. Members of the Ministry Development Team may meet in executive session as needed.

E. Officer Responsibilities

1. The assistant moderator chairs the meetings of the Ministry Development Team, shares the role of chairing Conference Assembly with the moderator and performs other duties pertaining to the office.
2. The administrative secretary records the proceedings of the Ministry Development Team.

ARTICLE IX: RESOURCE TEAMS

A. Membership

A Resource Team is a temporary group that carries out specific tasks identified by the Ministry Development Team. Each Resource Team will vary in the number of members based on the gifts needed and the task needed to be done. The length of existence of each Resource Team will vary with its specific task. As soon as the task is completed, that Resource Team disbands. Many Resource Teams may be active at the same time, each carrying out its specific task.

B. Purpose

Resource Teams exist to respond quickly to the needs of congregations within the conference. As the need is brought to the Ministry Development Team, the Ministry Development Team along with Gifts Discernment Ministry will form a Resource Team to carry out a response to the congregational need.

This temporary grouping of individuals with specific gifts allows a variety of people to be used where their passion lies without demanding a long-term commitment.

C. Relationship to:

1. *Resource Team Coordinator* – The Resource Team is primarily responsible to the Resource Team Coordinator. The Resource Team Coordinator assists the Resource Team in determining when their task has been completed.
2. *Ministry Development Team* – In the absence of a Resource Team Coordinator, the Resource Team would communicate directly to the Ministry Development Team. The Resource Team would receive the Ministry Development Team's direction and in turn report the action and plans of how they responded.
3. *Congregations* – The Resource Team responds to the congregations' needs and provides resources which will adequately address issues of worship, faith, and witness.

ARTICLE X: STANDING GROUPS

A. General Policies

Except as noted, all terms are for two years, with a maximum of three consecutive terms per ministry. Exceptions to the six-year limit are at the discretion of the Leadership Team. For the purpose of continuity terms should be staggered. Appointments are made by the Leadership Team upon the recommendation of the Gifts Discernment Ministry. Standing groups are accountable to the Leadership Team.

Spending plan requests for standing ministries are made by the Leadership Team. Expenses of these ministries are monitored and approved by the treasurer.

B. Choice Books Management Board

1. Membership

The Choice Book Management Board consists of a chairperson and four additional members. Because one member also serves on the Board of Directors of Choice Books, LLC, and that Board calls for tenure up to nine years, the terms for this committee shall be three years, with a maximum of four consecutive terms.

2. Functions

- a. Serve as a management group for the Choice Books program of the Conference.
- b. Establish and monitor the philosophy and goals of the Choice Books program. Advise the Choice Books director on the operating activities of the program.
- c. Hire the Choice Books director in consultation with the Leadership Team and arrange for supervision and review of that person.
- d. Arrange for an annual review of the Choice Books financial records by an independent, licensed public accountant, with the review to be submitted to the Choice Books Management Board and the Leadership Team of Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA.
- e. Designate one member of the board to serve on the Board of Directors of Choice Books, LLC, the Inter-Mennonite entity which oversees this ministry and coordinates the work of the several distributors/owners (of which Choice Books of Ohio is one).

C. Credentialing Ministry

1. Membership

The Credentialing Ministry consists of a chairperson, four additional members

and the conference minister as a nonvoting member.

2. Purpose Statement

The Credentialing Ministry exists to assure that the Conference congregations have suitable, approved, cared-for, accountable pastoral leadership.

3. Relationship to:

- a. *Regional Pastors* - The Credentialing Ministry will work with regional pastors in the credentialing of pastors for serving Conference congregations or other specialized ministries. Regional pastors may attend Credentialing Ministry meetings as needed.
- b. *Ohio Conference Congregations* - The Credentialing Ministry will work with congregations through the regional pastors and the conference minister.
- c. *Congregational and Ministerial Leadership of Mennonite Church USA.* The Credentialing Ministry has access to ministerial information and resources through this denominational office.

4. Functions

- a. Credentials for Pastors
 - 1) It is the responsibility of the Credentialing Ministry to establish policy and procedures for the credentialing of pastors called to serve Ohio Conference congregations and/or other specialized ministries.
 - 2) The Credentialing Ministry will examine ministerial candidates, act upon congregational requests for licensure, ordination, and transfer of leadership credentials, and authorize the conference minister and/or the regional pastor and/or a member of the Credentialing Ministry to officiate on behalf of the Conference in such situations.
 - 3) The Credentialing Ministry will oversee the implementation of disciplinary procedures in accordance with Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures.
- b. Education and Nurture
 - 1) Establish educational requirements for credentialing and promote continuing professional development in consultation with the Ministry Development Team.

- 2) Manage the Conference Scholarship Aid Fund which provides financial assistance to pastors and pastors-in-training.
- 3) Assist regional pastors in offering guidance and care for retired pastors.
- c. Vision for the Future
 - 1) Develop strategies to identify, nurture, and call prospective pastoral leaders from within the congregation.
 - 2) Provide financial support for the Ministry/Camping Inquiry program of Mennonite colleges as it relates to the Ohio Conference.

D. Gifts Discernment Ministry

1. Membership

The Gifts Discernment Ministry consists of a chairperson (appointed by the Leadership Team), resource team coordinator and nine other members (three persons from each region), recommended by the Leadership Team and confirmed by Conference Assembly.

2. Purpose Statement

The Gifts Discernment Ministry exists to utilize available spiritual gifts in the work of the Conference by recommending nominees as needed in a spiritually perceptive and sensitive manner.

3. Relationship to:

- a. *Ministry Development Team* - The chairperson is a member of the Ministry Development Team.
- b. *Moderator and Conference Minister* - The chairperson shall be in communication for information and counsel.
- c. *Standing Ministry Chairpersons* - The Gifts Discernment Ministry shall be in communication to be aware of needed persons and gifts.
- d. *Conference Delegates* - The Gifts Discernment Ministry shall solicit suggestions from delegates for possible nominees for the various positions.

4. Functions

- a. Compile and maintain a description of the primary responsibilities of each position for which the Ministry is asked to propose nominees.

- b. Recommend nominees in due time for:
 - 1) Non-staff Leadership Team members, Standing Ministry chairpersons and non-staff Ministry Development Team members for Ministry Development Team approval and Conference Assembly action.
 - 2) Members of Standing Ministries in consultation with the respective chairpersons.
 - 3) Ministry Resource Teams, working closely with the Resource Team Coordinator.
 - 4) Any other positions as requested, including vacancies because of uncompleted terms.
- c. Be available as a resource when there is a search for staff persons.

E. Salary and Benefits Committee

1. Membership

The Salary and Benefits Committee consists of a chairperson (a member of the Leadership Team appointed by the Leadership Team), a member of the Stewardship Ministry (appointed by that ministry) and two at-large members (appointed by the Leadership Team) from the delegate body with skills or experience in human resource development.

2. Purpose Statement

The Salary and Benefits Committee exists to insure that responsible remuneration policies and procedures are in place, and that equitable remuneration (including salary and fringe benefits) is provided for Conference staff persons.

3. Relationship to:

Leadership Team. The Committee is primarily related to the Leadership Team (minus staff) which receives and acts on Committee recommendations with respect to staff remuneration at times of hiring and renewing contracts with staff persons.

4. Functions

- a. Implement the staff remuneration policies of the Ohio Conference.
- b. Make a yearly recommendation to the Leadership Team regarding any staff cost of living or other wage adjustments.

- c. Review and update job descriptions every three years, or as requested by the Leadership Team.
- d. Review fringe benefit levels yearly.
- e. Resolve salary and benefit policy questions. The committee will not deal with staff hiring, staff termination, staff performance reviews or other areas of personnel policy.

F. Stewardship Ministry

1. Membership

The Stewardship Ministry consists of six members (two each representing finance, stewardship, and endowment), treasurer (staff) and chair (appointed by the Leadership Team).

2. Purpose

The Stewardship Ministry exists to:

- a. Oversee the care and management of Conference finances in order to maintain adequate funding support of Conference programming and administration.
- b. Help Conference leaders, pastors, and congregational members understand and joyfully commit to the practice of biblical stewardship. The goal includes caring for the earth and its environment, practicing mutual aid within the church, and giving sacrificially, generously and cheerfully of time, energy and financial gifts for God's Kingdom work.
- c. Administer the Endowment Fund for Ohio Conference.

3. Relationship to:

- a. *Leadership Team* - The chairperson is a member of the Leadership Team to understand the financial needs of the conference.
- b. *Ministry Development Team* - The chairperson is a member of the Ministry Development Team to understand the financial needs of the projects and programs undertaken.
- c. *Congregations* - The Stewardship Ministry works with congregations as requested through the Ministry Development Team.
- d. *Denominational Stewardship Ministry* - The Stewardship Ministry maintains communication with Mennonite Mutual Aid (the stewardship resource from Mennonite Church USA) concerning stewardship issues.

4. Functions

- a. Assist Ohio Conference staff and Leadership Team to monitor memorandums of understanding for each related ministry such as mission cells, schools and church camps.
- b. Be responsible for capital funds and endowment funds.
- c. Oversee Ohio Conference real estate.
- d. Provide and promote stewardship educational resources and projects to congregations and individuals.
- e. Develop Ohio Conference spending plan proposal and forward to Ministry Development Team for review, the Leadership Team for approval and Annual Conference Assembly for adoption.

G. Capacity Building Team

1. Membership

The Capacity Building Team consists of 5 members, plus the Treasurer. It is recommended that one person represent either the Ministry Development Team or the Leadership Team.

2. Purpose Statement

The Capacity Building Team exists to create and promote additional funding streams to support current and future Conference programs.

3. Relationship to:

- a. *Leadership Team* - Capacity Building Team reports to the Leadership Team for policy matters.
- b. *Ministry Development Team* - Capacity Building Team reports to the Ministry Development Team for program issues.
- c. *Stewardship Ministry* - Capacity Building Team turns designated funds generated over to Stewardship Ministry for distribution. Undesignated funds will be reported to Stewardship Ministry for regular budgeting process.
- d. *Congregations* - CBT will contact individuals to solicit funds.

4. Functions

- a. Create additional funding streams for current Conference programming.
- b. Maintain and monitor these additional funding streams.
- c. Work in tandem with the Ministry Development Team to create and maintain funding streams for new Conference programs.

ARTICLE XI: STAFF PERSONS

A. Appointment

1. The conference minister and the regional pastors shall be appointed by the Leadership Team in consultation with the Ministry Development Team after a candidate interview with the Ministry Development Team. Other staff persons such as the communicator/editor, executive secretary, grant writer, resource team coordinator and treasurer shall be appointed by the Leadership Team.
2. The conference minister and the regional pastors shall normally be appointed for three-year terms, with eligibility for reappointment. All other staff persons are appointed for ongoing terms.
3. Staff persons are delegates to Conference Assembly.

B. Accountability

1. The conference minister is accountable to the Leadership Team, normally supervised by the moderator. Other staff persons are accountable to the Leadership Team and supervised by the conference minister, or as assigned by the Leadership Team.
2. The conference minister conducts a review of the work of staff persons annually. The Leadership Team conducts a more comprehensive review of the conference minister and the regional pastors prior to the end of their terms.
3. Staff positions are established and adjusted by the Leadership Team, taking annual budget implications into account. Job descriptions can be found in the Policy and Operations Guidelines.

C. Purpose

The conference minister and regional pastors maintain a supportive relationship with pastors and member congregations. They help congregations in times of structured feedback, transition, and conflict. These staff persons are integral to the Ministry Development Team in determining program needs and in delivering programs and resources. They facilitate Resource Teams and assist in program evaluation.

D. Conference Minister

As the team leader of the Conference staff the conference minister is responsible to articulate the Conference vision and coordinate Conference ministries and activities. The conference minister works with the Leadership Team, Ministry Development Team and Resource Teams, ministries and committees. The conference minister supervises the regional pastors and serves as a consultant to them.

E. Regional Pastors

Regional Pastors serve as a pastor to the member pastors of the Ohio Conference, giving attention to mentoring, spiritual direction, growth, and accountability. They lead the cluster meetings and facilitate pastor-peer groups in their respective geographic areas. Regional Pastors build working relationships with congregational leadership. They determine program needs and work with the Ministry Development Team and Resource Teams to meet current congregational needs. Regional Pastors are a first contact for congregations in accessing Conference resources including changes in local pastor appointments. They connect with congregational delegates on Conference needs, financial support and volunteer service opportunities.

F. Financial Coordinator

The financial coordinator is responsible for the financial record-keeping of the Conference and is in charge of depositing funds received, paying bills and preparing the payroll. The financial coordinator is a member of the Stewardship Ministry and assists that group in the development of the yearly spending plan. The financial coordinator also serves as a non-voting member of the Leadership Team.

G. Administrative Secretary

The administrative secretary is the staff presence at the Conference office who provides administrative and secretarial support for the Ohio Conference staff, the Leadership Team, the Ministry Development Team and standing groups.

H. Communicator/editor

The Conference editor communicates information and keeps congregations connected through the Conference Web site, newsletters, e-mails and the *Ohio Evangel*.

I. Grant writer

The grant writer researches grant possibilities and writes grant proposals to secure funding for Conference initiatives to resource congregational leaders.

J. Resource Team Coordinator

The resource team coordinator is the liaison between the Ministry Development Team where the concerns and dreams of the congregations are being heard and the Resource Teams. The coordinator checks in with Resource Teams to make sure they have the necessary resources to carry out their tasks and to ensure that the work is being done.

ARTICLE XII: 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, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable or religious purposes, consistent with Anabaptist values, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of

the Internal Revenue Code as amended.

ARTICLE XIII: AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by two-thirds vote of all Conference delegates present, provided that a notice of the proposed change shall be given at least thirty days before Conference Assembly convenes.

ARTICLE XIV: INTERPRETATION

Should questions of interpretation arise regarding any item in this constitution the delegates convened for Conference Assembly shall have the right of final decision.

ARTICLE XV: SUSPENSION OF THE CONSTITUTION

Any provision of this constitution may be suspended *temporarily* to expire at the conclusion of the present meeting by an affirmative vote of 90 percent of the delegates present at any duly called business meeting of Ohio Conference.