

CONSTITUTION



FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH
PRETTY PRAIRIE, KANSAS



2019 Revised Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Lord admonishes us through the Scriptures to do all things decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). And since it is necessary for every organization to have certain rules and regulations whereby its affairs are conducted, this congregation sets forth the following Constitution as a guide for its work as a church.

ARTICLE 1

NAME

The name of this congregation, according to its charter, is the First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie, Reno County, Kansas, 67570.

ARTICLE 2

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH (Congregation)

Claiming Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, we accept the following purposes:

- A. To worship God as revealed in the Scriptures.
- B. To proclaim the message of God's saving grace at home and abroad.
- C. To minister to the spiritual needs of our community.
- D. To provide the spiritual care and fellowship of the congregation by means of worship, the administration of the sacraments, and by the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God.
- E. To promote and practice the Christian walk as presented in the Scriptures.

ARTICLE 3

AFFILIATIONS (Conference)

We are currently not affiliated with any conference. Should we become affiliated with a conference, these official bodies shall have no governing power over our congregation, but may be appealed to for advice and counsel.

ARTICLE 4

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

We accept these as the basic teachings of the Scriptures:

- A. We believe in the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Word of God (II Tim. 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21), and that it is the only trustworthy guide for faith and life (Luke 16:31; John 12:48).
- B. We believe in the Trinity of the Godhead (Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14).

- C. We believe that God the Father is the source and end of all things (Gen. 1:1; Acts 17:28; I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 4:6).
- D. We believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ (John 1:1; 3:16; 10:30-33; I Tim. 3:16); in His perfect humanity (John 1:14, Heb. 2:16-17); that His purpose in coming into the world was to provide salvation for mankind (Luke 19:10; Acts 4:12; 10:43; Rom. 4:25); that He died as a ransom for us (Mark 10:45); that He arose bodily out of the tomb (Luke 24:39); that He ascended in Heaven to intercede for us (Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1-2); that He will come again to receive His own unto Himself (John 14:3; I Thes. 4:16-17); that He will return personally in triumph, power and glory (Acts 1:9-11; II Tim. 4:1; Rev. 19:11-16).
- E. We believe in the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4); that He convicts of sin (John 16:8-11); that He regenerates those who believe (John 3:5); and that He guides, teaches, sanctifies, seals, and empowers the believer (John 16:13; I Cor. 2:11-12; 6:11,19; 20; Eph. 3:16, 4:30; I John 2:27).
- F. We believe in the reality and personality of Satan (I Peter 5:8; Rev. 12:9-10).
- G. We believe that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27); that he fell into sin through the temptation of Satan (Gen. 3:1-19); that he is therefore in need of redemption (Rom. 3:23; Psa. 51:5).
- H. We believe that salvation is by God's grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5); that it is based on Christ's substitutionary death on the cross of Calvary (Isa. 53:4-6; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:10-14; I Peter 1:18-19; 2:24); and that a person who receives salvation is born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-6); has thereby become a new creation (II Cor. 5:17) and has become a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4).
- I. We believe in the resurrection of the body (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 15:37-38, 42, 44, 49), in the life everlasting of the believer (John 5:24-29; Phil. 3:20,21; Dan. 12:2); and in the endless punishment of the impenitent (John 5:24-29; Dan. 12:2; II Thes. 1:7-10).
- J. We believe that the church is the body and bride of Christ (I Cor. 12:12, 27; Rev. 21:1-2).
- K. We believe that the Christian life is a call to discipleship, to holy life and to a walk pleasing to the Lord (Luke 14:26-27, 33; Phil. 2:15-16; I Peter 1:15-16; 2:9; I John 2:6).

We accept the "Apostles' Creed" as a good summary of our faith. (Ref. page 18)

ARTICLE 5

MEETINGS

A. Worship

The purpose of this congregation shall be to glorify God through the building of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It shall do this through regular public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, the consistent Christian living of its members, Christian stewardship, personal evangelism, missionary endeavor, Christian education and the observance of the sacraments. (John 4:24; Eph. 5:15; Rom. 12:1; II Cor. 5:20; I Peter 4:10; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 28:19-20; Deut.6:7; Luke 22:19b).

B. Business

The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31. The annual business meeting shall be called in the last two weeks of January. All financial accounts are to be closed as of December 31, and audited prior to the annual meeting. A complete report of each committee and auxiliary shall be presented with recommendations and appropriate action taken. The necessary elections for the coming year shall be held. With the exception of the minister our church elected officers are eligible to serve no more than two successive terms. All members in good standing have the right and privilege to participate in the discussions and elections. They shall also deem it their duty to be present, to help, to their best understanding and ability, to finalize each cause.

A majority of votes cast decides except where a two-thirds majority is required. All deliberations and resolutions shall be entered into the church's permanent minute book by the secretary at the earliest convenience.

C. Special

Special business meetings may be called when necessary by the deacons at any time. A minimum of twenty-five percent of the active members can also call a special business meeting by presenting a signed request to the church moderator. Such business meetings and the main subject for discussion shall be previously announced at least once to the congregation at a regular church service.

ARTICLE 6

A. Membership

1. Requirements of Membership are the following:
 - Baptism upon confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Agreement with our 'Confession of Faith' as outlined in article 4
 - Having attained the age of 18 or greater for voting rights
 - Completion of a course of study as approved by the Board of Deacons, specifically our Catechism or Membership class
2. A member of another evangelical church may become a member upon presenting a satisfactory church letter of transfer and shows a willingness to abide by our constitution.
3. All others desiring membership shall be dealt with separately. In every case, applications are to be received and applicants interviewed, if necessary, by the Board of Deacons and then recommended to the congregation. Acceptance, by the right hand of fellowship, shall take place before the assembled congregation, after their intention has been announced at least a week before.
4. All who desire to become new members are to receive a copy of our constitution and are asked to subscribe to support the same. The receiving of new members shall be announced at least one week before.

B. Active Members – Regular attendees and/or faithful supporters of the church

1. As members in the family of God (Eph. 3:15), and heirs together of the grace of life (I Peter 3:7), we believe that we are to love one another (I Thess. 4:9), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), and to exhort one another to love and to do good works (Heb. 10:24-25). Therefore we believe that all members should attend as regularly as possible all regular services and all meetings arranged by the church. They should keep up the family altar; bring the children to the Sunday School and worship services; encourage them to attend Bible School and other church activities. They should encourage and assist their children to a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. They should also encourage them to receive catechetical instruction, to be baptized, and to become a member of this congregation. They are to make conscientious use of the means of grace (the Word of God, prayer, and the sacraments). They are to contribute willingly to the work and upkeep of the church. They are also to contribute, according to ability, for all offerings for the purpose of furthering the Kingdom of God, within and without the church. All members shall, if at all possible, take part in the work of the church and serve with the gifts which they have received.

2. Members living a great distance from the church maintain their rights, privileges and obligations. If members live permanently at a great distance and cannot attend services here, they are encouraged to join an evangelical church where they live, and become involved in the Lord's work. After joining another church they may maintain an associate membership and thus keep contact with the home church.

C. Associate Members

1. Temporary residents in the community and others who do not wish to sever relations with their home church (who have shown a definite interest in our church life, either through attendance, contributions, or other means) should be encouraged to become an associate member. Such membership requires no letter of transfer; the reception is accomplished by the right hand of fellowship. Associate members shall enjoy all privileges and rights of active members except to vote and hold any elective church office. This shall in no manner hinder them from active service in the Sunday School, in the music department of the church, or any of the other auxiliaries of the church. Associate members shall have the same burial rights as former members. As associate members they should be willing to make voluntary contributions to the needs of the church. Associate membership is for three years at which time their membership is to be reviewed by the Board of Deacons. In every case, applicants to be received as associate members are to be recommended by the Board of Deacons. Our members may also hold associate membership in other evangelical churches.

ARTICLE 7

OUR BASIC FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP

A. Conduct

1. In matters of faith, we hold to the doctrine of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5); Baptism on confession of faith (Acts 8:12; Acts 2:38); The avoidance of oaths (Matt. 5:34-37; James 5:12); The Biblical doctrine of nonresistance (Matt. 5:39-48; Rom. 12:9-21); Non-conformity to the world (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24); The practice of scriptural discipline (Matt. 18:15-17; John 18:20). These tenets of faith call for a separated life. Each member is charged to employ those acts of love and discipline which will enhance these tenets of faith.

B. Nonresistance

1. Our church holds to the doctrine of nonresistance which is founded on Christ's teachings, His work and His life. (Matt. 5:38; Luke 22:49; 23:34; John 3:15; Rom. 12:17-21; II Cor. 10:3-4; Gal. 4:22; I Pet. 2:21-23; and I Pet. 3:8-9).
2. We believe, that according to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles and the example of our Lord and Master and the first Christians, believers should not take part in any carnal strife or warfare, domestic, religious, or civil, or between individuals, factions, or nations. The believer is admonished to have peace with all men, to love his enemies and pray for them. The Christian duty is to be subject to the higher powers, but when demands are made by a government contrary to our convictions from the Word of God, for example, military service, we are governed by the word of the apostles; "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 4:19; Acts 4:29; Gal. 5:17 and James 4:1).
3. We are persuaded that war, as we know it, cannot possibly be carried on without manifestly violating the fundamental principles of Christ's kingdom. "My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight" (John 18:36); "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves" (Rom. 12:19); "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:20-21); "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." We hold that war is contrary to the spirit and life of the teachings of Christ, who renounced the weapons of worldly possessions and used methods of love and self-sacrifice in their place" (II Cor. 10:4). We therefore, desire that our members aid in the relief of those who are in need, distress, or suffering, regardless of the danger in which they may be placed in bringing such relief. (Luke 10:37) or to do civilian public service work, hospital or evangelistic work.

ARTICLE 8

SECEDING MEMBERS

Seceding members who want to join some other church shall, through the Board of Deacons, receive a letter of transfer according to their merits. The application for such a change shall be reported to the assembled congregation. The church shall deal with special cases. Since church property is indivisible, members who withdraw voluntarily or involuntarily, surrender all rights to said property including burial rights. Burial rights may be granted to former members by paying the burial fee.

ARICLE 9

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- A. SCRIPTURAL BASIS - The duty and purpose of church discipline we find in Scripture (Matt. 18:15-17; II Cor. 2:5-11; II Thess. 3:6,14-15; I Tim. 5:19-20).
- B. PURPOSE- All members of this congregation should sincerely seek to be true disciples of Christ in their conduct. For this purpose, we need not only the leading of the Holy Spirit, but the prayers and discipline of the congregation. The congregation should, therefore, counsel and admonish its erring members so that they may be reclaimed for Christ, and brought into full fellowship of the congregation.

We differentiate degrees in the administration of church discipline. Lighter offenses and disobedience we punish by reproof; more grievous ones by denying the person the right to the Lord's Supper, as it seems right to the Board of Deacons or the congregation.

Besides the so called notorious sins enumerated in the Bible (Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 5:11) and offenses pointed out here and there in the constitution, we mention the following: to follow or embrace false doctrine; willful insult of the brethren; inordinate, contentious, and boisterous conduct within or without the church; failure to appear before the committees on invitation, and the like.

- C. PROCEDURE- Faithful efforts shall be made in the following manner to bring an erring member to repentance (Matt. 18:15-17).
1. Any offended member or vitally interested member should go privately to the offending or erring member, and present his concern, seeking reconciliation and repentance.
 2. Any offended member shall take one or more church members as witnesses to the offending or erring member and present his concern again, seeking reconciliation and repentance.
 3. If this is unsuccessful, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Deacons who shall contact the offending or erring member, explain to him the manner which his conduct is un-Christian, and attempt to effect restoration of the member.
 4. If this is unsuccessful, the Board of Deacons may deem it necessary to present the offending or erring member's name at a special or annual meeting with recommendation for dismissal. Such procedure shall be announced ahead of time.

5. Possible complaints against the Deacons, Trustees or the Pastor must be presented to the church moderator in writing and be signed. These complaints shall be handled by a specially appointed committee; two to be appointed by the person(s) bringing the complaint, two by the person(s) the complaint is against and these four shall appoint a fifth member. The church moderator shall help organize the committee.

D. REINSTATEMENT - The church shall endeavor to win back a dismissed member (Gal. 6:1). They may be reinstated upon repentance, evidence of a sincere change of heart and recommendation of the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE 10

BAPTISM

We believe that baptism 1) is commanded in Scripture (Matt. 28:19); 2) is to be administered upon the applicant's personal request; and 3) is to follow a public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

A person's admissibility for baptism shall be determined by the Board of Deacons. The minister of the congregation shall officiate at the baptismal service. In case of necessity the Board of Deacons shall provide for a substitute.

ARTICLE 11

THE LORD'S SUPPER

We observe the Lord's Supper in obedience to our Lord's command and in remembrance of Him (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; I Cor. 11:23-29).

The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least twice a year.

All who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have participated in believers Baptism are heartily invited to participate.

ARTICLE 12

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

- A. The Family - The family is the foundation of society being instituted by God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:18-23). The marriage relationship illustrates the union existing between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-23). Children are to honor their parents and parents are to educate their children in the fear of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). It is in the home where the precepts of the Christian faith are to be taught and practiced. Each member of the family is to seek, to discover, support and use those spiritual activities which will contribute to the development of the Christian faith and character of each member of the family. Regular family worship and the reading of choice Christian literature are musts for the Christian family.
- B. Child Consecration - The Scriptures furnish us with the examples of the consecration of the Lord (I Sam. 1:24-28; Luke 2:22-24). We commend such consecration as a proper expression of Christian parenthood. Parents should make arrangements with the pastor for the service of consecration.
- C. Marriage- Since marriage among Christians should be in the Lord, betrothed members should notify the minister and are requested to seek counsel on marriage preparation from the minister, preferably before the wedding date is set. The church encourages a public announcement on a Sunday before the wedding in order that the blessing of the Lord may be invoked in the church for the betrothed. As a rule, the marriage shall be performed by the minister of the church. Exceptional cases shall be agreed upon beforehand with the Board of Deacons. Members of other churches, who want to be married here, shall bring a church letter unless the minister of that church is present in person.

That the deeper purpose of marriage and their spiritual welfare may not suffer, marriage with persons who do not believe in the virgin-birth of our Lord, the shed blood of Christ for the remission of sins, the bodily resurrection of our Lord, shall be dealt with individually by the Board of Deacons.

- D. Divorce - The Church believes the scriptures teach that divorce and marriage of a divorcee are serious transgressions of God's law and will for His children (Mal. 2:13-16; Matt. 5:32, 19:3-9; Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:39; Eph. 5:21-33). Any church member involved in these transgressions is requested to meet with the Board of Deacons for counseling and instruction.

ARTICLE 13

CHURCH COMMITTEES AND OFFICERS

Due to the responsibilities entrusted to the governing body of the church, all church elected officers and the Church Council are to be members in good standing, who are willing to serve the best interests of the church.

All committees are to organize within ten days following the annual meeting and report the organization of their committee to the church secretary and the pastor's secretary. All committees shall keep a permanent record of their official actions.

A. Church Council

1. Membership - The Church Council shall consist of the pastor, assistant pastor, deacons, trustees, church moderator, church secretary, church treasurer, and the chairman (or a representative) from each church elected committee, from each church auxiliary, and from the music committee. 60% of the Council members shall constitute a quorum.
2. Duties- The Council shall meet at the beginning of each fiscal year to prepare a schedule for Council meetings. Special meetings may be called when necessary. The Council shall:
 - a. represent the congregation and shall coordinate the work of the committees, auxiliaries, and all church activities.
 - b. serve as the "pulpit" committee
 - c. provide for a reception committee whose members shall serve as a welcoming committee and as ushers.
 - d. provide for an auditing committee comprised of three persons whose duty it is to audit all incomes and expenditures administered by the church officials, and to report at the annual business meeting.
 - e. act as a nominating committee for delegates to all meetings where delegates are elected by the church. The congregation shall have the privilege to name additional delegate nominations from the floor at the time of election. Nominations for elections at the annual meeting or special meetings will come from the floor.
 - f. prepare the agenda and call the annual business meeting of the congregation.
 - g. fill all vacancies temporarily until the next congregational meeting.

- h. recommend to the church the pastor's salary, retirement, travel expense, etc. A two-thirds majority vote of total votes cast by the Council membership present shall be necessary for approval.
- i. prepare and recommend to the church the annual operating budget. A two-thirds majority of the total votes cast by the Council membership present shall be necessary for approval.
- j. following the annual business meeting, appoint the Church Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary to a 1-year term.

B. Minister and Assistant

1. The Minister - The minister shall be a faithful messenger of the true Gospel. He shall lead the church services, visit the members to help them along spiritually, and where necessary, he should warn and instruct. He shall try to win the careless and the unsaved. He shall give catechetical instruction, administer the sacraments, perform marriage ceremonies, and conduct memorial services. As ex officio member, he should attend the meetings of the auxiliaries and committees whenever possible. He shall be responsible for the church record, and perform such other duties as pertain to this office.

The church elects its minister from candidates who have been recommended for consideration by our pulpit committee. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast shall be necessary in a well-announced business meeting for a decision to extend a "call".

The church decides the minister's time of service. When that period expires, he may be re-elected by a majority of votes cast. If possible, a six month notice should be given in advance by the minister, or the church, to terminate his time of service.

2. The Assistant - The qualifications for the assistant minister shall be the same as for the minister. His specific areas of responsibility shall be determined by the Board of Deacons in consultation with the pastor and the assistant. In order to assure unity on the pastoral team the assistant will require the wholehearted recommendation of the Deacon Committee and the Pastor.

C. Deacon Committee

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of four members. Members shall be elected, as needed, each year by the congregation at the annual meeting for a three year term. These shall be men as described in Acts 6:3, and I Tim. 3:8-13, and at least thirty years of age, for the office requires experience.

2. Duties - The committee shall -
 - a. be the spiritual advisor of the minister, consulting with him upon the spiritual welfare of the church.
 - b. assist the minister in official acts.
 - c. be authorized for their office with a simple ordination.

D. Board of Deacons

1. Membership- The board shall consist of the minister, the assistant minister and four deacons. The minister shall be the Chairman of the Board.
2. Duties- The board shall-
 - a. be responsible for the overall welfare of the church.
 - b. supervise the order of the church services.
 - c. plan the time and order of the mid-week service. Be responsible for the selection of teachers and materials for the youth and adult Bible study.
 - d. plan for prayer, revival, and evangelistic services.
 - e. encourage people to join the church and recommend prospective members.
 - f. interest themselves in the care of the needy widows, the sick and the orphans of the church.
 - g. assist according to ability in the care of the spiritually poor.
 - h. supervise the rightful administration of church discipline; if desired, they may call on other church members to serve in problem resolutions.
 - i. give or decline permission for use of the church facilities for special services.
 - j. provide for the services in the absence of the minister.

E. Trustees

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of four members. Members shall be elected, as needed, each year by the congregation at the annual meeting for a three year term.
2. Duties - The committee shall -
 - a. have the stewardship and upkeep of the church, parsonage, cemetery, and all church property. Major purchases, sales and erection of new buildings, and changes on the church property shall be made only with the consent of the church. The church property is to be considered indivisible.
 - b. collect and have custody of the general fund.
 - c. supervise the conduct in the church and on the church premises.
 - d. appoint Church Custodian and Sexton and outline their duties. (In the absence of the Sexton, the Trustees shall perform his duties.)
 - e. appoint secretarial help as needed.

- f. have the authority to grant (or decline) requests for burial of non-members. They shall also set and collect the burial fee.
- g. store the church books and papers in a fireproof place.
- h. provide and keep proper insurance of the church's property, and anything else that may properly belong to this committee.

F. Christian Outreach Committee

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of four members. Members shall be elected, as needed, each year by the congregation at the annual meeting for a three year term.
2. Duties - The committee shall –
 - a. encourage evangelism in the church.
 - b. lead in the evangelistic outreach of the church toward the non- Christian, the indifferent Christian, or others who might need spiritual help.
 - c. work with the Board of Deacons in their ministry to the congregation. (Note items (d) and (e) under Board of Deacons).
 - d. encourage holding services at institutions involved in evangelistic work.
 - e. receive information, promote, and coordinate in the church all concerns related to relief, refugees, aged, hospitals, peace, voluntary service, community concerns, mutual aid, and areas included in the Mennonite Central Committee, and Mennonite Disaster Service.
 - f. administer any other service projects that other organizations cannot readily do.

G. Christian Education Committee

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of six members elected by the congregation. Members shall be elected, as needed, each year by the congregation at the annual meeting for a three year term.
2. Duties - The committee shall-
 - a. have general charge of Vacation Bible School. Plan the course of study, select the teaching materials, and provide qualified teachers and helpers.
 - b. have general charge of the Sunday School and mid-week classes. Plan the course of study, select the teaching materials, and provide qualified teachers and helpers.
 - c. have general charge of the organization of the mid-week schedule regarding the time and place of the various classes, and with the chairman of the Music Committee, and the Youth Group Sponsors, plan the practice schedule for all special events.
 - d. promote the course of Christian education and supervise its administration.

H. Library and Historical Committee

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of four members. Members shall be elected, as needed, each year by the congregation at the annual meeting for a three year term.
2. Duties- The committee shall-
 - a. supervise the church library and appoint one or more librarians.
 - b. select and purchase new materials.
 - c. collect all items and records of historical value to the congregation and appoint one or more historians as needed.
 - d. provide for a correspondent for our church papers and report important events that may be a blessing and benefit to other churches.

I. Music Committee

1. Membership - The committee shall consist of the Pastor, choir directors, a representative from each choir, and organists/pianists, plus additional members to be appointed by the Music Committee, with the preferred membership to be from seven (7) to ten (10) members. Each member of the Music Committee may represent only one group. In case of duplication the individual is to select the group he or she will represent on the Music Committee and the other group(s) is to send an additional representative to the Music Committee. The appointed members shall serve for a term of one year and are eligible for reappointment at the end of the term. The term shall run from September through the following August.
2. Duties - The committee shall –
 - a. coordinate and supervise the various church choirs, and church musical programs. The choirs are to serve on Sundays and at other church services and programs as designated by the Music Committee and/or the church.
 - b. the adult choir officers, directors, and accompanists are to be elected by their respective choirs before May 31. All are to take office September 1st.
 - c. the Music Committee will have its own election of chairman, vice- chairman, and secretary immediately following the choir elections.
 - d. the Music Committee shall select a director and assistant director for the Junior Choir. The assistant Junior Choir director shall also serve as a representative on the Music Committee.
 - e. in order to update and maintain the use of good quality music, and performance, the Music Committee shall encourage representation at music workshops with consideration given to expenses involved, the amount to be determined by the committee.
 - f. the Music Committee shall recommend to the Trustees the necessary maintenance of all musical instruments in the church in order to keep them mechanically in repair.

J. Church Moderator

1. A qualified member shall be elected annually, who presides over the business sessions and the Church Council meetings. The chairman of the Deacon Committee shall temporarily preside in the absence of the church moderator

K. Church Secretary

1. The secretary shall be elected for a term of three years. The secretary is to keep and enter into permanent record books the minutes of the business meetings. These books are to be kept in a fireproof place. Each member shall have access to these books.

L. Church Treasurer

1. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Church Council for a 1-year term. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the financial records of First Mennonite Church, shall disburse funds as needed to pay the operating and other expenses of the church, shall provide financial reports to the Church Council and Congregation, and shall develop an annual operating budget, with input from the Church Committees and Auxiliaries, and present to the Church Council for review.

M. Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary

1. The Financial and Assistant Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Church Council for a 1-year term. The secretaries shall jointly count, record and deposit the tithes and offerings received by First Mennonite Church and shall give receipt, on an annual basis, for all gifts received. In the event that either is not available to count and record the offering, they shall have the authority to appoint a substitute from the Church Council membership. The Assistant Financial Secretary will also serve as the Assistant Church Treasurer.

ARTICLE 14

AUXILIARIES

Auxiliaries which help to further and deepen the spiritual life are recommended and have the support of the church. They are under the supervision of the church, and their activities are to coordinate in harmony with the total church program. Their secretaries or other officers shall report to the church about their activities.

All auxiliaries are to report their officers to the church secretary and the pastor's secretary within ten days following the annual meeting.

A. WOMEN'S MISSION SOCIETY

The Women's Mission Society is encouraged in its purpose for promoting fellowship and the meaning and spirit of Missions.

B. YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

The purpose of the Youth Fellowship is to promote a closer Christian relationship between God, the church, and each other. It also provides avenues of service to others. By learning from each other we become more responsible Christian witnesses.

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (I Tim. 4:12).

ARTICLE 15

AMENDMENTS AND CHANGES

This constitution does not claim to be perfect; therefore, constitutional amendments or changes may be made at annual or special business meetings if proper notification of amendments and changes has been given to the congregation by the Church Council at least thirty days before the meeting. A two-thirds majority of congregational votes cast shall be necessary for such amendments or changes.

The procedure for constitutional change - All suggested amendments or changes are to be presented to the Church Council. The Church Council will then present the constitutional change for congregational action if they deem it worthy of congregational consideration.

APOSTLES' CREED

"I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell*; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the universal church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and life everlasting. Amen."

*That is "continued in the state of the dead, under the power of death, until the third day."

BY LAWS

1. Public announcements made from the pulpit will be at the discretion of the Board of Deacons
2. Members may be granted a maximum of four grave lots per family, except in the case of emergency.
3. The church shall assume the responsibility of the receptions and farewells of our missionaries.
4. Memorial services shall be held the first regular Sunday morning service in January.
5. We as a congregation, interested in Missions, pledge ourselves to encourage and support through prayer and financial gifts, all our members that enter into full time mission work. We therefore, underwrite the full or partial salary support of each missionary who requests and receives congregational approval. (This however does not include field budget or special expenses needed in their service.)
6. The Church offers financial aid through the Christian Service Committee to our church members in Voluntary Service
7. We accept the position paper of the Board of Deacons "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit"
8. We accept the position paper of the Board of Deacons "Divorce and Remarriage"
9. We accept the position paper of the Board of Deacons "The Wedding Policy of the First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie , Kansas"
10. We accept the "Human Life is Sacred" statement prepared by the Board of Deacons
11. We establish the Care Ministry Fund for needy families in the congregation and the community, including the money coming from Everence, and that the Board of Deacons be responsible for this fund.
12. The congregation shall pay all the expenses for the pastor and/or his wife when called upon to represent the congregation in an official capacity.
13. Our congregation shall elect a representative to the Hutchinson EtCetera Shop Board for a three year term.
14. The Church Council will appoint and review the Everence representative.

15. All persons holding an elected office in the Church must consent to abide by the Church Constitution and By-laws.
16. We believe scripture advocates that burial of deceased human bodies be in their natural state. Some of the scripture references are: Gen. 50:26; Deut. 34:4-6; Matt. 14:12; Luke 23:52-56; John 11:17, 44, 12:7, and 19:40.
17. We recognize that there are fiery accidents, accidental burials at sea, and that there may be some circumstances that could necessitate cremation. It is our desire that under normal circumstances, the committal of deceased human bodies to the grave in our cemetery be in their natural state.

We accept the position paper of the Board of Deacons "Human Sexuality" (2002)

RULES OF ORDER

1. All recommendations for the annual meeting shall be included in the printed report.
2. The number of votes on all elections shall be recorded in the minutes but not reported at the meeting.
3. The by-laws, rules of order, and standing rules shall be reviewed by the Church Council and printed in the annual report each year and may be changed at any congregational business meeting by a majority vote.
4. The minutes of the Church Council will be printed and handed out to the congregation.

STANDING RULES

1. The pastor's compensation package will be reviewed annually.
2. The church shall pay the parsonage utilities.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Of all the social problems that confront the church none is more difficult than that of divorce and remarriage. It creates problems in the very depth of our personality and problems in society that reveal themselves in the actions and attitudes of children who suffer the trauma of divorce.

This paper deals with this difficult subject for two major reasons. First, we are disturbed at the ease with which divorce is accepted and justified in evangelical circles. Secondly, we deal with the subject because of our concern for those who are facing marriage. We would spare them the anguish of divorce. We recognize that there are difficulties in dealing with this subject. There are three which make the task almost impossible.

First of all there are the difficulties created by the person who has suffered the trauma of divorce. His/her sense of guilt and hurt make it almost impossible to speak openly and objectively of the experience. To those who have suffered this anguish, speaking of divorce only seems to open up the old wound. Thus there is a barrier created by the person who has suffered the torment of divorce.

Secondly, there are grave barriers created by those who would deal with the divorced person. We may quote, correctly, that the spiritual are to restore those taken in a fault (Gal.6:1), but all too often we come through as being judgmental and legalistic. The suffering feels only our attitude and fail to hear what we are saying.

Thirdly, there is the vast disagreement on this subject. We recognize that there are three positions held on this subject, and that good Bible students are to be found in each position. The first position says that remarriage after divorce is never justified. The second position says that the innocent party can be remarried without becoming guilty of adultery. The third position says that both parties can be remarried without being guilty of adultery.

Realizing that there are these three positions on the subject, we are convinced that we must share our conviction of what we believe the Bible teaches on this vital subject.

We recognize that the Old Testament permitted divorce and remarriage (Deut. 24:1-4). The only thing that was forbidden was for the woman to remarry her first husband. This must imply that she was free to marry a third party. Furthermore, we recognize that the social structure of that day sometimes forced divorce upon people (Exo. 21:1-4). To be sure this passage deals not with the people of Israel, but with the slaves they possessed. Still, it is an acceptance of the fact that sometimes in life divorce (and remarriage which must have followed) are a part of life.

But we must turn to the New Testament since our ethical standard is found in its message. Surprisingly, Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage is difficult to explain (Matt.5:31-32; 19:3-10; Mark 10:5-9; Luke 16:18). Why is it that only Matthew has the exception clause, "except it be for fornication."? What did Jesus mean by that exception clause for it has been interpreted in different ways?

"In the two passages from Matthew (one of them a fuller account of what is recorded in Mark 10), Jesus allows divorce for one reason only - 'immorality', or illicit sexual intercourse. His thought is plainly that a person dissolves his marriage by creating a sexual union with someone other than the marriage partner. In that case, the decree of divorce simply reflects the fact that the marriage has already been broken. A man divorcing his wife for this cause does not make her an adulteress, for she is one already. Divorce for unchastity usually frees the innocent partner to remarry without incurring the guilt of adultery (Matt. 19:9), but sometimes this is questioned."¹

There are problems with this interpretation of scripture, because the Old Testament instruction regarding adultery was very definite (Deut. 22:12-29). This passage makes it clear (1) the woman who was found not to be a virgin when she married was to be stoned (v. 21). (2) If a man was caught having intercourse with a married woman, both of them were to be slain (v. 22). If a man had intercourse with an engaged virgin in the city, both of them were to be stoned (vs. 23, 24). (3) If the intercourse between a 'betrothed damsel' and a man took place out in the country, only the man was to be slain (vs. 25-27). (4) If a man had sex with a 'not betrothed' virgin and was found, he had to marry the virgin and could never divorce her (vs. 28-29).

In the light of this passage in Deuteronomy it is difficult to see how Jesus can be interpreted as saying that all that adultery needed was a divorce. The Law said that the guilty party(ies) needed to be executed. It is also true that not everyone guilty of adultery was executed during Old Testament times (cf. David and Bathsheba). Therefore, all we are trying to do is to establish what Law decreed when adultery was involved. One fact is certainly clear. The social implications of adultery were so severe that capital punishment was considered the solution to the problem. Hence, we would conclude that to think lightly of divorce and remarriage is to tread on dangerous ground. God said that He hated divorce (Mal. 2:16).

We will never establish beyond doubt, on the part of some, what Jesus meant when He used the exception clause. Is He saying that all divorce forces one to commit adultery, when remarried? In the case of fornication one has already become guilty of the sin, so remarriage cannot make one guilty of it.

The teaching in the Epistles is not as difficult, but also here we do have some problems. In Romans we are told that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives (Rom. 7:1-3). This must also apply to the husband, namely he is bound to his wife as long as she lives. I Cor.7:39 emphasizes the same truth. Marriage is 'until death do you part.' It is the law, that is, God's law of marriage that has set this standard.

In leading the Corinthians into a godly expression of their professed faith in Jesus Christ the Apostle Paul had some very forceful words to say (1. Cor. 7:1-5, 10-16). There are some basic truths in these verses. (1) The first five verses recognize the tremendous power of the sex drive. Sex is a power that needs to be reckoned with (cf. I Cor. 7:9). (2) That if separation, 'if she depart,' does take place there are only two options open for the women. Either she remains unmarried or she is reconciled to her husband (v. 11). (3) When Scripture says that if the unbeliever wishes to depart, he is to be permitted to do so. Do the same two options apply? Either the person remains unmarried, or is reconciled to his married partner?

What happens if marriage takes place after the separation? If the unsaved person remarries, does this forever bind the Christian to the unmarried state?

The sacredness of marriage is seen in the way it is used in the Bible to illustrate the union which exists between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21-33). For the Christian this is his standard. Christ will never forsake His church, His bride. (Rev. 21:9). How then can a Christian forsake his mate?

How to cope with infidelity in marriage is suggested in an article by Dwight Hervey Small. It deals with Hosea's attitude toward Gomer after her unfaithfulness. Mr. Small says, "Christian divorce counselors are provided a model in Hosea. Our thesis is that this model is consistent through Scripture. While the New Testament allows divorce on grounds of infidelity (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9), there is a higher model. Scripture stresses that it was not Israel's infidelity, but her refusal to repent--her recalcitrance in the face of God's call to return-- that brought about eventual judgment."² The divine procedure is that of repentance, confession and forgiveness.

We believe that the New Testament position on marriage adultery is: "(1) Man is tested by the same standard as woman. (2) The desire, ie, willingness to commit the act, is equivalent to adultery. (3) Since the New Testament considers marriage by its nature to be indissoluble, remarriage following divorce permitted in the Old Testament on grounds of the hardness of the heart enters the realm of adultery. (4) Adultery is incompatible with the hope of life in the kingdom of God."³

But we must go on for we have not yet considered the heart of the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject. The New Testament insists that Christians are priests of God (1Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). If we would look to the Old Testament for direction, we cannot look to what was permitted for the average Israelite. We must look to God's requirements for the priests. We turn to that examination.

The priesthood was a very sacred calling. The priest was the go-between between God and man. He came into the presence of God in behalf of man, and brought the blessing of God to man. God had a higher standard for His priests than He had for the rest of Israel (cf. Lev.21:7,14; Ezek. 44:22). These scriptures make it clear that a priest could not marry a divorced person. To do so would have cost him his position. He could not even marry the widow of a lay Israelite. Is it not true that responsibility goes with privilege? If we want the privileges God gives us, do we not also have to accept the responsibility? Therefore, if we are God's priests today, divorce cannot be an option for the child of God.

But, what is to be done in cases where divorce and remarriage have already taken place? We make three observations. The first is that forgiveness is promised to all who confess their sin (1 John 1:9). Since God had promised those who confess their sin, we, who are His Children, also need to forgive those who have confessed their sin to God.

This leads to the second observation. The divorced and remarried person must honestly face the fact that there are some inescapable consequences they must accept. What these are depends so much on the person's personal attitude toward what he has done, and the maturity of those with whom he worships. How can we forget that God would not permit the priest to function in the Old Testament once he had broken his sacred marriage relationship? It may well be that some avenues of ministry may not be open to a divorced person.

Our last observation is regarding the attitude of those who have to deal with the unfortunate situation. The attitude to take is that of Samuel the prophet (I Sam. 12:22-24). Samuel told Israel how serious was their request for a king. He did two other things. First, he promised never to stop praying for them. Secondly, he encouraged them to serve the Lord with all their heart. We will not go astray if we assure the divorced and remarried that we are praying for them, and if we encourage them to live for Lord to the best of their ability. To live for the Lord in total devotion is to open for ourselves the benefits of His grace. Who knows what that grace will do in a yielded life? It is still true where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom. 5:20).

We have written this paper because we felt constrained to witness to what we believe the Scriptures teach on this vital subject. We have also written in full consciousness of the statement, "there but for the grace of God go I." It is our prayer that God will use this effort to encourage those who are planning marriage to put more thought, care, and prayer into their marriage. We would save them the anguish of the guilt and hurt that is involved in divorce.

NOTES

¹"Marriage and Divorce," The Bible Almanac, James I. Packard, Merrill C. Tenny, William White, Jr. plus others, p. 438b.

²Dwight Hervey Small, "The Prophet Hosea: God's Alternative to Divorce for the Reason of Infidelity", Journal of Psychology and Theology, Volume 7; No.2; p. 139.

³The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume 2; p. 583.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

These are challenging days for the Christian and the Church of Jesus Christ. We are seeing the rise of wickedness, lawlessness, satanic worship, cults, drugs and spiritual deception.

In Psalm 71:1 we read, "In the, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion." There seems to be much confusion about the phrase "Baptism of the Holy Spirit"

We as Deacons , present what we believe is a biblical explanation of this term as we understand it and as it has been used in our church , in our conference , and by our forefathers for many years.

We feel this phrase is a part of the "Charismatic movement." We are deeply concerned about this movement because of its unscriptural use of this term and its overemphasis on tongues, miracles, and physical healing. We are aware of our own congregation. An example of how Paul dealt with this problem is revealed 1st Corinthians. He was concerned with their divisions, their different views, and their lack of unity.

In order to understand the term, "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit" we need to recognize the promises given in the gospels were fulfilled at Pentecost (Mark 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5)

We also feel there is much confusion about the term "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" and the "filling of the Holy Spirit". The believer is "Baptized in the Spirit" at regeneration. By this act the Holy Spirit places the believer into the body of Christ, his church. One may be filled with the Spirit as often as he meets the condition, or as often as the need arises. This filling takes place as the believer yields himself to the control of the Holy Spirit. Our Conclusion is, "One baptism, many fillings."

The main passage on the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" is 1st Cor. 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

A statement by Chas. R. Erdmand in discussion of 1st Cor. 12:13 states, "Many persons today employ the phrase 'baptism of the Spirit' to indicate an experience subsequent to conversion, or to describe new increments of spiritual power. It is probably more scriptural to define such experiences by the phrase 'filled with the Spirit'. There may be many 'fillings' but one baptism. The latter is that initial activity of the Holy Spirit by which the believer is brought into union with the one, indivisible body of Christ, namely, the Christian Church to which all believers belong."

In support of the above statement our interpretation of the word "baptized" is that it happens once at conversion and is never repeated (Eph. 4:5, Rom. 6:3-4) . Rev. Wm. L Pettingill in discussing Gal. 3:27 says "The phrase 'baptized into Christ' refers to the one baptism by which in the 'one spirit' the believer is baptized at the moment of regeneration into the 'one body' , that is the body of Christ."

In I Cor. 12:11 Paul also shows that the spiritual gifts are not received by agonizing in prayer or by seeking some additional experience, but are given by the Holy Spirit to every believer as he wills. Therefore, it is not for us to choose our own gift, nor are we to seek additional gifts that are not intended for us. It is also clear that not every believer has all the gifts. (I Cor. 12:29-30)

Some gifts such as speaking in tongues, gifts of healing, and gifts of miracles were designed to inaugurate the church age and were sign-gifts to signify the coming of the Holy Spirit. These sign-gifts are no longer necessary in the same way and intensity as in the beginning. Only on special occasions when God grants the power can these still be exercised. Also, they should be exercised in accordance with Scriptural regulations (I Cor. chapters 12-14).

In no way are we intending to hinder the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst either in conversion or consecration. In fact, we are happy to hear of the reports of conversion in our congregation. However, we suggest more emphasis is needed on the results of the filling of the Spirit which manifests itself in the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Our main concern is that our experiences are based on Scripture and not merely on intellectual or emotional experiences. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21).

THE WEDDING POLICY

We believe that marriage is the very foundation of society, and is the most sacred of all relationships (Mark 10:1-12). Marriage is being threatened and undermined in our society. Since one of the tasks of the church is to preserve and strengthen the marriage bond, the following policy on weddings will be in effect in the First Mennonite church of Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

1. Basic theological/moral issue.
 - a. Spiritual compatibility: Both individuals need to be Christian believers, and show evidence of Christian commitment in their daily lives (II Cor. 6:14-18).
 - b. Waiting period: The services of the pastor should be requested at least four months before the wedding date (preferably earlier).
 - c. Pre-marital counseling: The couple must consent to participation in five pre-marital counseling sessions plus any other sessions suggested by the pastor. Included in this will be a commitment to purchase and read assigned materials as well as do all assigned work.
 - d. Right of refusal: If, in the conviction of the pastor, the couple is not compatible or ready for marriage, he reserves the right to refuse to proceed with the wedding.
 - e. Extenuating circumstances: Any appeal for adjustment to any of the above guidelines must be approved by the Board of Deacons.

- f. Moral expectation: Since Scripture teaches that intimate sexual relations are for marriage only (Heb. 13:4), the couple is expected to abstain from such till after the wedding. This is vital if the couple would have the blessing of God upon their marriage. In the case of those who have been living together, they must agree to establish separate residences until after the wedding.
 - g. Divorce and remarriage: Realizing that there are differences of conviction on this subject, and in no sense of the word passing judgment on those who are of a different opinion, the pastor may, because of personal convictions, find it impossible to officiate at a wedding involving divorced person. In those cases where divorced persons are involved the approval of the Board of Deacons is needed for the use of the church sanctuary and for the person who is to perform the ceremony.
 - h. Pregnancy before marriage: Weddings will not automatically be performed in such cases. If the other conditions are met so that marriage seems advisable, then the pastor and the couple will come to an agreement on the wedding to be performed.
2. Some practical aspects of the wedding and wedding reception.
- a. Since the wedding is to be in the church sanctuary, the music selected needs to be in keeping with the sacredness of the house of God. We are seeking God's blessing upon the union, and worshipping Him, not glorifying or worshipping human love and affection.
 - b. No rice or grain is to be thrown in the church.
 - c. No tobacco products on church property.
 - d. No alcoholic beverages on church property.
 - e. The decoration of the couple's car is to be in keeping with the sacredness of the church and the safety of the couple in mind.
 - f. As stated in the Constitution of our church the marriage shall be performed by the pastor of the congregation, unless special permission is granted by the Board of Deacons.

HUMAN LIFE IS SACRED

We live in a society where abortion is freely practiced. Over the years a great erosion of the sanctity of human life has taken place.

God created human life (Gen. 1:27). He punished Cain for killing his brother (Gen. 4:8-12). God told all mankind in the Ten Commandments not to kill anyone (Exo. 20:13). The Scriptures teach that in God's sight human life is precious and sacred.

When does human life begin? "Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb," (read Psalm 139:13-16). Other passages which speak of God forming us within the womb and being the one who took us from the womb are: Job 31:13; Ecc. 11:5; Psalm 22:9-10; Psalm 71:6; 1:5; Is. 46:33-34.

Promoting the use of termination of life by abortion opens the door to other areas such as: euthanasia, handicapped, the aged and the infirm. We ought to say no to any intentional decisions to prematurely end life putting our faith and trust in God.

There are other issues that we also need to be concerned about. Some of them are as follows:

- tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs are responsible for hundreds of deaths every year.
- poverty shortens life and in many cases degrades life.
- starvation causes millions of deaths, both children and adults, each year.
- war terminates lives prematurely. Many innocent lives are snuffed out in warfare.
- sins of the flesh according to Galatians 5:17-21 can end life prematurely and hinder fellowship with God.

May God help us to love and respect the sacred life He has given to all people.

The Board of Deacons, 1992

ISSUES OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

We, the Deacons of First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie adopt the following positions on issues of human sexuality. These are written as guiding principles in living as faithful believers.

1. We accept fully the Biblical truth that male and female are created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27, 2: 13-25, 5: 1-2)
2. We affirm the Biblical teaching of God's plan for marriage being a one man/one woman relationship for life, in a relationship of mutual submission, complementary, rather than competitive.^a God may lead some persons to singleness and others to marriage.^b (^aEph 5:21-33; ^bI Cor. 7:1, 7-9)
3. We see God's emphasis in Scripture to be on the family as the basic unit and on husband (man) and wife (woman) relationships as the one basis for sexual relations. (I Cor. 7: 2-5; Heb. 13:4; Matt. 19:5-6; Gen. 2:24)
4. We believe that premarital or extramarital sexual relations and sex relations between members of the same gender are sin and are a perversion of the union which God creates. (Lev. 18:20, 22; 20:13; Matt. 5:27-28; I Cor. 6: 9-20; Eph.5:3; I Thess. 4:3-8)
5. We hold that same-sex orientation is not a created gift from God, but is a consequence of the brokenness of creation as a result of the fall of humanity, which we must deal with by the strength of divine grace. (Rom. 1:21-32)
6. We are committed to helping all persons to live Holy lives.^a We believe it is important for the church to provide a setting in which men and women, both single and married, can relate together for spiritual enrichment and mutual edification.^b We will seek to avoid legalistic judgments that reject persons who struggle with understanding and/or expressing their sexuality, and will seek to share loving encouragement while holding such persons accountable for holiness in their lives.^c (^aI Cor. 7:32-38; I Thess. 4:3-4; I John 3:6, 9-10 ^bEph. 5:3; Heb. 10:24-25 ^cGal. 6: 1; II Cor. 2:5-11; Matt. 18: 15-20)

Accepted by the congregation on January 27, 2019

