

**College Mennonite Church**  
**Organizational Structure Evaluation Task Group Proposal**  
**FINAL June 28, 2009**

**Preamble:**

**A. Task Force Process:**

The structure evaluation step was announced at the beginning of the transitional period and approved by the congregation with the 2012 Goals in December 2008. The Church Board appointed the Organizational Structure Evaluation Task Group (OSETG): David Birky, Laura Green, Roy Hartzler, Larry Miller, George Smucker (Chair), Klaudia Smucker (Pastoral Team), Vicki Yoder (Elders), Gary Martin (consultant). The task group met 16 times from January 19 to May 6, 2009. Two meetings were devoted to listening to commission chairpersons and the pastoral team.

**B. Why this new structure is needed:**

1. The congregation (via general feedback throughout the transitional period), commission representatives, pastoral team, and elders have all acknowledged the overly bureaucratic nature of our current structure.
2. Responsibility for leadership (guiding, motivating, equipping for pursuit of congregational vision) is not clearly assigned in the current bylaws or in pastoral team ministry descriptions: elders, pastors and commissions all report confusion about who has authority to lead.
3. The pastoral team identified the above concerns in urging the Church Board to consider a transitional period.
4. Confusion about leadership and an overly bureaucratic structure contributed to limited achievement of our 2005 goals.
5. The new structure gives the congregation a stronger voice in decision making through
  - a. the direct discernment of board members,
  - b. more decision-making authority granted to commissions, and
  - c. more opportunities for congregational feedback via written proposals and open hearings to discuss issues.
6. The new structure increases congregational involvement in ministry through a different approach to gift discernment and a pastoral team focused on equipping congregants for ministry.
7. Confusion regarding leadership and authority is connected to Mennonite polity and heritage. In a denomination-wide effort over the last 15 years to address that confusion, more than 150 Mennonite congregations of all sizes have implemented the philosophical foundations of this proposed structure.
8. Structures need to be more flexible in light of the increased rate of change in our culture.
9. Our current basic structure has been in place since 1967. Since then many new pieces have been tacked on. It is time for a new look at our organization.

## **The Proposed Structure Described:**

### **CONGREGATION (as a body)**

*“authority”*

Philosophy: Mennonite polity is clear regarding authority being vested in the congregation. College Mennonite Church (CMC) recognizes that as a congregation it receives authority from Jesus Christ, its head. CMC is a member of and accountable to Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA.

Function & Responsibilities: The congregation as a body votes on a spending plan, selects the pastoral team, discerns vision, and grants authority to the Church Board to govern on its behalf. The board, in consultation with the Vision Leadership Team, discerns which additional items are brought to the whole congregation for action or counsel. Congregational meetings will take place *at least* twice a year, with many additional opportunities for hearings and counsel.

### **CHURCH BOARD**

*“governance”*

Philosophy: The Church Board oversees leadership; therefore it cannot be overly involved in active management. When a board gets involved in management, governance is neglected. However, an effective governing board listens to congregants and is in touch with congregational life.

Function: Governance of the congregation

Accountable to: Congregation

Composition: Congregational Chairperson  
Congregational Vice-Chairperson  
Congregational Representatives (5)  
Pastoral Team Leader  
Vision Leadership Team representative

Responsibilities:

#### *Congregational*

- Oversees vision discernment, goal setting and strategic planning processes.
- Oversees pastoral team: evaluation, employment distribution, personnel policy.
- Sees that a pastoral advocacy structure is in place (e.g. pastor-congregation relations committee).
- Makes some decisions on behalf of the congregation.
- Decides agenda for congregational action or counsel, in consultation with Vision Leadership Team.
- Oversees congregational meetings.
- Evaluates its work annually, seeking feedback from the congregation.

#### *Legal/Fiduciary*

- Recommends spending plan (from Administration Commission) to the congregation.
- Represents the congregation for legal purposes.
- Represents the congregation to Goshen College through Amity Corporation.
- Appoints other corporate officers (in addition to chairperson and vice chairperson): secretary and treasurer (note: Treasurer is an ex-officio member of Administration Commission).
- Recommends by-laws changes to the congregation.
- Arranges for and receives annual financial audit or review.

Meets: Approximately once a month

Qualities, Gifts and Characteristics of a Church Board Member:

- Can see the big picture—what’s best for the entire congregation.
- Is spiritually discerning.
- Is excited about achieving the congregation’s vision.
- Has leadership qualities: willing to work at difficult decisions, not afraid of dealing with conflict, willing to leave comfort zones.
- Is an active, available member.

Selection:

*Congregational Representatives:* selected by the congregation (See Appendix I for more details)

1. The congregation is taught about the role and qualifications of congregational representatives on the Church Board. The session is recorded for absentees.
2. Top nominees selected who are willing to serve become congregational representatives on the Church Board. All serve two-year terms.
3. Congregational representatives may serve a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms, but to do so they must be re-selected for each term.

*Congregational Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson:* discerned by Spiritual Gift Discernment Committee (SGDC).

Nominees are brought to the congregation in a written proposal, inviting feedback during a two-week period. SGDC considers feedback, revises proposal if necessary, and presents the names to the congregation for affirmation. If a previously selected congregational representative on the Church Board is named to either of these positions, s/he is replaced on the board by the nominee with the next highest number of affirmations. The chairperson serves one two-year term, and is replaced by the vice-chairperson. If the outgoing chairperson has not served three consecutive terms on the board, she or he is eligible to be re-selected as a congregational representative. Note: The chairperson of the Church Board is the chairperson of the congregation.

*Vision Leadership Team Representative:* appointed by Vision Leadership Team

Committees Accountable to the Church Board (others may be formed as needed):

**Spiritual Gift Discernment Committee (SGDC)**

Function: Facilitates and coordinates the discernment of passion, spiritual gifts, personal style and callings of all CMC participants.

Accountable to: Church Board

Composition: Pastor of Community Life  
Congregational Vice Chairperson  
4 members (one named chair)

Selected by: Church Board

1. The Church Board discerns four members. (See Appendix I for initial process)
2. Candidates are proposed to the congregation in writing: feedback is requested over the next 10 days.
3. Church Board considers feedback, makes warranted adjustments, and presents candidates to the congregation in writing at least one week prior to a congregational meeting.
4. Candidates are affirmed at congregational meeting.
5. All serve two-year terms. Committee members may serve a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms, but to do so they must be re-selected for each term.

Responsibilities:

- Discerns and calls 25 commission members and board/congregational chair and vice-chair.
- Maintains congregational data-base with information from small groups.
- Resources commissions as they discern personnel for all ministries.
- Promotes passion and spiritual gift discernment in congregational life.

Qualities, Gifts and Characteristics: An active & available member who

- Maintains confidentiality.
- Values diversity—can set aside personal preferences when they differ with what is discerned as best for the congregation.
- Listens well, yet is self-confident enough to speak up.
- Is excited about the new vision and structure.
- Affirms and has participated in the spiritual gift discernment process.

## PASTORAL TEAM

“leadership”

Philosophy: The Pastoral Team leads the congregation in achieving vision goals, equipping and empowering all persons in the congregation for ministry. The Vision Leadership Team, a sub-group composed of 4-5 pastors and led by the Pastoral Team Leader, ensures that commissions are keeping vision in focus and working together. All persons in the congregation minister; pastors equip them for ministry.

Function and Responsibilities: Promotes and coordinates implementation of vision goals; team building, ministry skill development, coordination of necessary details (e.g. schedules) to function well as an entire team; congregational leadership work as specified by Vision Leadership Team.

Accountable to: Church Board, through Pastoral Team Leader

Composition: All pastors

Selection: Pastoral Team Search Committee presents candidates to Church Board; board recommends to congregation; congregation votes. The search committee works in consultation with IN-MI Mennonite Conference minister or representative. Any changes within the Pastoral Team are to be done in consultation with IN-MI Mennonite Conference leadership.

Qualities, Gifts and Characteristics: In addition to those listed for Church Board and Spiritual Gifts Discernment Committee members, and in 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9:

- A call to pastoral ministry.
- A special gifting for ministry in *at least one* of the following arenas: team leader, administration, outreach, worship, faith formation, community life, preaching and pastoral care.
- A philosophy of ministry with priority for equipping and empowering all persons in the congregation for ministry.

### Pastoral Team Leader<sup>1</sup>

Function and Responsibilities: In addition to those listed for the Pastoral Team and the Vision Leadership Team:

- The Pastoral Team Leader leads the Pastoral Team and the Vision Leadership Team.<sup>2</sup>
- The Pastoral Team Leader will assess skills, gifts and personalities within the team, assuming supervisory responsibility for some team members, while assigning one or two other pastors to share supervision of other team members as seems appropriate. The Pastoral Team Leader will work with team members at building a climate that encourages mutual accountability.

Accountable to: Church Board

### Vision Leadership Team

Function: Leads the whole congregation on behalf of the Church Board, by providing visionary leadership for and oversight of all congregational ministry through five commissions, both as separate arenas and one integrated ministry structure.<sup>3</sup> Broad pastoral training will allow for flexibility in providing ongoing pastoral leadership as turnover in the team occurs over time.

Accountable to: Church Board, through Pastoral Team Leader

Composition: 4-5 pastors, each with a suggested minimum of .75 FTE

Responsibilities: Each Vision Leadership Team pastor:

- Provides leadership for at least one commission, as assigned by the Church Board.
- Provides pastoral care, preaching and teaching: load determined by gifting and available time.
- Coordinates with other pastors assigned to his/her commission.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Pastoral Team Leader job description will more fully address the responsibilities given and qualities required.

<sup>2</sup> The Pastoral Team Leader's authority is primarily focused in leading the team and will make “buck stopping” decisions when needed. The traditional “senior pastor” authority in relation to the entire congregation is given to the entire Vision Leadership Team.

<sup>3</sup> Meetings are purpose-driven, including other pastors as agenda dictates.

- Keeps Pastoral Team and commissions focused on vision.
- Avoids micromanaging.

Qualities, Gifts and Characteristics: In addition to those listed for Pastoral Team above:

- A special gifting for and ability to lead *in several* of the following arenas: team leader, administration, outreach, worship, faith formation, community life, preaching and pastoral care.

## COMMISSIONS

*“ministry management”*

Philosophy: Commissions lead the congregation in their respective arenas of ministry, but the majority of their work is management. Commissions are small so they have to call many into ministry to accomplish what needs to be done. Currently, many CMC ministries or responsibilities are either independent (with no accountability) or not clearly assigned.

Function: Commissions oversee all ministries of the congregation. Anything that is part of the church but not governance, leadership or gift discernment, is under the authority of a commission. Commissions are empowered to make most decisions and establish committees to accomplish ministry within their arena. Coordination of commission ministry takes place through the Vision Leadership Team.

Accountable to: Church Board through the Vision Leadership Team

Composition: 5 members, plus its respective Pastor(s)

Responsibilities:

- Develops and maintains a philosophy of ministry for its arena, concurrent with the congregational mission, vision and values statements.
- Oversees all ministries within its arena: beginning new ministries, revising and/or ending existing ministries, and establishing sub-committees and task groups.
- Recommends spending plan for all ministries within its arena.
- Works in collaboration with other commissions when agenda calls for such.
- Oversees communication with the congregation about all of its ministries.
- Recommends appropriate proposals to Church Board.
- Discerns and calls volunteers for all ministries within their respective arena in consultation with Spiritual Gifts Discernment Committee.

Qualities, Gifts, and Characteristics:

- Is spiritually discerning.
- Has a passion and understanding for that commission’s area of congregational life.
- Has the gifts and calling to help set direction and provide oversight in that arena.
- Has the ability to see the big picture, work together as a team, etc.
- Is committed to enabling all ministries within its arena to work together toward the congregational vision goals.
- Has leadership qualities: willing to work at difficult decisions, not afraid of dealing with conflict, willing to leave comfort zones.
- Commission chairperson: has facilitative gifts to help the entire team work together (not an authority figure who makes decisions on behalf of the commission).

Selection: Spiritual Gifts Discernment Committee, in consultation with the respective pastor.

- 1) Appointments are proposed to the congregation in writing: feedback is requested over the next 10 days.
- 2) Spiritual Gifts Discernment Committee considers feedback, makes adjustments if warranted, and presents the final appointments to the congregation in writing at least one week prior to a members meeting.
- 3) Appointments are affirmed at a congregational meeting.
- 4) All serve two-year terms. Commission members may serve a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms, but to do so they must be re-selected for each term.

Relationship of Vision Leadership Team Pastors with Respective Commissions:

- 1) The VLT Pastor provides *leadership* for the commission by keeping the commission working in concert with the rest of the congregation, i.e. toward the vision goals. The pastor likely has the broadest pulse on what is happening in the congregation. He or she also gives leadership in the sense of having or being aware of resources. The pastor may bring agenda to the commission from the pastoral team, and vice-versa.
- 2) The pastor is not *in charge* of the commission. The commission chair facilitates the commission meetings. The commission together leads the congregation in their arena of ministry.
- 3) The pastor and commission chair work together in establishing the agenda for meetings.
- 4) The pastor of each commission will be consulted in the SGDC process of selecting commission chairs. It is important that the two be able to work well together. It is in the SGDC process of naming commission chairs that the strengths and weaknesses of a pastor can be balanced.

**Commission Descriptions:**

The commission structure is based on three biblical priorities that are equal and inter-related in Christian life, and should therefore be equal and inter-related in congregational life: love God, love one another within Christ's body, and love your "neighbor." The five commissions seek to assist the congregation in living out these biblical priorities and the congregation's vision.

**Worship Commission:** Our relationship with God revealed to us in Jesus Christ:  
*worship (gathered and personal), renewal, spiritual disciplines, prayer, etc.*

**Community Life Commission:** Our relationships within the Body of Christ:  
*pastoral care, fellowship, small groups, mutual aid, membership maintenance*

**Outreach Commission:** Our relationships which share the Love of Christ beyond our congregation:  
*local community and global relief work, mission, evangelism, peacemaking, service*

**Discipling Commission:** formation for the three relationships: worship, community life and outreach:  
*education (all ages), baptism, initial membership, youth, equipping for ministry*

**Administration Commission:** support systems for the four other commissions:  
*finances, facility, office, communication, public relations, conference & denominational links (except mission and education), all non-pastoral team personnel matters and evaluation; work with Church Board to insure uniform policy for all employed persons.*

[to complete the "circle"]

**CONGREGATION (all participants)**

**"ministry"**

In this structure, all persons in the congregation live out the call to love God, to love each other, and to love our neighbors near and far. All are ministers, committed to growing as disciples of Jesus and to helping disciple others whose lives we touch. Together we practice the spiritual gifts we have been given to build up the congregation, a community of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, experiencing and extending God's love and grace.

## Comparing the Proposed Structure with the Existing Structure

*Note: New tasks not in the current structure are italicized.*

### PROPOSED STRUCTURE

### CURRENT STRUCTURE

#### **Congregation** (authority)

- votes on vision, pastors, budget;
- discusses/votes on some key issues, referred by Board
- *provides feedback via voluntary commission hearings and written proposals*

Congregation

Congregation

#### **Church Board** (governance/oversight)

- vision, long range planning
- oversight of Pastoral Team
- recommend budget to congregation
- legal matters
- congregational spiritual oversight
- congregational administrative oversight
- recommend by-laws changes to congregation

Church Board

Elders

Church Board

Church Board

Church Board

Church Board, PT

By-laws Committee

#### **Spiritual Gift Discernment Committee**

- *oversees all gift discernment processes in small groups*
- *coordinates discernment info from small groups*
- makes commission and other main appointments

Calling Commission

#### **Pastoral Team**

- *equip members for ministry*

#### **Vision Leadership Team** (leadership)

- *lead/motivate congregation to work together toward vision*
- lead each respective ministry (commission) arena

Commissions, PT

#### **Commissions** (ministry management)

**Worship:** our relationship with Jesus-- worship, *renewal, spiritual disciplines,*

Worship & Arts Commissions, specific PT members

**Community Life:** our relationships within the Body of Christ—pastoral care, fellowship, small groups, mutual aid membership

Caring Commission, small groups, Fellowship Commission, specific PT, members; adult Christian Education Church Board

**Outreach:** relationships which share the love of Christ beyond His Body-- relief work, mission, evangelism, peacemaking

Outreach Commission, specific PT members, Mennonite Women

**Discipling:** formation for worship, outreach & community life—education, youth, equipping for ministry, library, baptism

Nurture Commission, specific PT members

**Administration:** support systems for the other four commissions' ministry--finances, building, communication, *public relations,* conference & denominational relationships, oversee support staff

Finance Commission, Amity, Administrative Assistants, PT, Church Board

**Initial Selection Process for Congregational Representatives  
June, 2009**

**1) Instruction.**

The congregation is taught about the role and qualifications of a congregational representative: a single session repeated three times. Each session includes clarification questions. Everyone is encouraged to attend or listen to a recording of one session.

**2) Nomination Process.**

Members gather in a worship context of prayer (possibly on a Sunday morning) to submit names on a signed form. Each may nominate up to the number of Congregational Representatives to be discerned that year. All individuals receiving at least 5 nominations are put on a slate. (The slate is announced at the end of that meeting if possible.) A nominee cannot ask for his/her name to be removed at this point in the process.\*

**3) Vote.**

Congregation gathers to vote one week later in a worshipful context of prayer. Each member votes for *up to* five nominees, in this initial process. (Example: if you feel only four of the 15 nominees are qualified, vote for 4.)

**4) Call discerned.**

The top five are confidentially contacted by a team of one pastor and one elder, to inform them of the congregation's call. The individual has up to a week to discern his/her response. If one declines, the #6 person is contacted, etc.

**5) Results announced.**

The top five who are willing to serve become Congregational Representatives and are announced. All serve two-year terms. Initially, terms are staggered: highest three serve two-year terms, lowest two serve one-year terms. A Congregational Representative may serve a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms, but to do so they must be re-elected for each term.

**6) Chair and vice-chair selected.**

For this initial process, an additional step is needed.

- a) First, the five Congregational Representatives, two elders under the previous structure, and a pastor will together discern members of the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Committee.
- b) The SGDC will then discern the chair and vice-chair of the Board. (See process in structure proposal.) The SGDC has the freedom to find the chair and/or vice-chair among the five Congregational Representatives (CR) or elsewhere. If they call a CR to chair or vice-chair, the next in line from the CR vote results replaces them on the board. This also allows the SGDC some flexibility in balancing out ages, gender, gifting, etc., in the entire board, and still gives the congregation more voice in selecting the board than in the current structure.

---

\*Even though someone may have a very full schedule or have other reasons to be tempted to decline, it is best to allow the Holy Spirit to work through the congregation in this process. If such a person is actually called by the congregation, he/she then has the opportunity to wrestle with whether or not God's call seems evident in the vote. If it is, they make room by changing their other commitments; if they do not hear this as God's call, they decline.