

1 **Constitution of**
2 **Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship**

3 Revisions Approved by the Congregation on November 20, 2011
4

5 ARTICLE 1: Name
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7 The name of this organization shall be Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship of
8 Goshen, Indiana. Its church year and fiscal year shall begin on September 1 of
9 each calendar year.

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11 ARTICLE 2: Purpose
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13 The purpose of this congregation shall be to live as a visible manifestation of the
14 Kingdom of God. We recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and seek the
15 empowerment of the Holy Spirit to become the people whom God calls us to be.

16 The vision of this congregation is to live as Christ's loving, caring, healing
17 presence in the world. This means we will:

- 18 a. Recognize the importance of deep personal relationships with God and
19 with each other. (Intimacy)
- 20 b. Strive to be an inviting, welcoming, hospitable congregation, seeking to
21 share our faith in Jesus Christ with other people, while also inviting God
22 into our lives in new ways. (Invitation)
- 23 c. Recognize that God calls us to:
24 1) Worship and grow spiritually
25 2) Nurture healthy Christian community
26 3) Welcome the diversity, sharing, and participation of all God's people
27 while striving for unity in Christ
28 4) Equip one another to carry out God's call for our lives

29 We recognize that the foundation of our life together is Jesus Christ. We
30 acknowledge that any growth as a church body will come as a result of building
31 on this foundation in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.
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33 ARTICLE 3: Relationships
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35 Section 1. Relationship to the Mennonite Church USA

36 This congregation shall participate in the Mennonite Church USA through one of
37 its member conferences.
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39 Section 2. Relationship to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

40 This congregation shall be a member of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite
41 Conference, and shall participate fully in its activities, including its supervisory
42 function.

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44 Section 3. Relationship to the Community

45 This congregation shall be in communication and cooperate with other local
46 Christian congregations and Christian agencies as deemed appropriate by the
47 congregation.

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49 Section 4. Relationship to the State

50 This congregation shall be incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the
51 laws of the state of Indiana. This relationship is governed by Articles of
52 Incorporation, which are superior to this constitution in all legal matters.

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54 ARTICLE 4: Membership

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56 Section 1. Becoming a Member

57 Persons desiring to become members of the congregation shall usually
58 participate in a membership class. Upon completion of the class, persons
59 choosing to accept our Confession of Faith may become members by water
60 baptism, confession of faith, or transfer of membership as deemed appropriate
61 by the Elders.

62

63 Section 2. Transfer of Membership

64 Persons for whom active participation (except for temporary moves, illnesses, or
65 other disability) in the congregation is no longer feasible are requested to
66 transfer membership to a congregation with whom they can actively participate.

67

68 Section 3. Termination of Membership

69 Termination of membership may be requested by any Member, and shall be
70 granted following responsible dialogue and recommendation by the Spiritual
71 Leadership Team or a pastor. Any Member whose conduct brings reproach
72 upon the Church shall be counseled by fellow Members in the pattern of
73 Matthew 18. If such counsel is rejected, said Member shall have his/her
74 membership terminated following recommendation by the Spiritual Leadership
75 Team and approval by the congregation. Membership may also be terminated
76 upon recommendation by the Spiritual Leadership Team and approval of the
77 congregation when a member has been willfully inactive in the life of the

78 congregation for a period of two years, provided serious effort has been
79 initiated by an Elder or other officially designated person(s) to restore
80 relationships.

81

82 Section 4. Right of Members

83 Each person who holds active membership in the congregation is entitled to
84 participate in the activities of the congregation, is eligible to vote on all
85 questions brought before the congregation, and is eligible to hold offices as
86 discerned by the congregation. Members who no longer participate in
87 congregational life may not vote in congregational meetings after two years of
88 inactivity in the congregation. Members have legal and official rights as stated in
89 the Articles of Incorporation.

90

91 Section 5. Responsibilities of Members

92 Members shall commit themselves to participate actively in the life of the
93 congregation including attendance at worship services, exercising gifts of
94 ministry, offering financial support, participating in at least one face-to-face
95 relationship such as Sunday school class, Commission, or small group, and
96 choosing a life style appropriate for members of the Kingdom of God. Members
97 are encouraged to review the Confession of Faith periodically. Members who
98 leave the community on a temporary basis are encouraged to find a spiritual
99 fellowship in their new location. Letters of recommendation for associate
100 membership shall be issued at their request.

101

102 Section 6. Associate Membership

103 Any person who presents a certificate of membership from another
104 congregation desiring to fellowship with this congregation while a temporary
105 resident of this community, and who is in agreement with our Confession of
106 Faith, may be admitted to associate membership upon recommendation of the
107 Spiritual Leadership Team and acceptance by the congregation. An associate
108 member has all the rights and responsibilities of a regular member. Associate
109 membership shall be considered to be terminated with the termination of
110 temporary residence in this community.

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112 ARTICLE 5: Spiritual Leadership Team

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114 Section 1. Spiritual Leadership Principles

115 The congregation desires to embrace the following leadership principles as it
116 organizes its work:

117 a. Congregations flourish with servant leaders.

- 118 b. Congregations flourish when a core group of people lead and guide the
119 congregation in spiritual discernment.
120 c. Congregations flourish when many people are empowered to be engaged
121 in ministry.

122

123 Section 2. Spiritual Leadership Team Purpose

124 A Spiritual Leadership Team shall serve as the governing body of the
125 congregation. They guide the congregation in achieving what it should and in
126 avoiding unacceptable behaviors and situations. Spiritual Leadership Team
127 members are referred to as Elders.

128

129 Section 3. Spiritual Leadership Team Responsibilities

130 On behalf of the congregation, the Spiritual Leadership Team will carry out its
131 purpose by:

- 132 a. Leading the congregation in discerning God's call and long-term direction
133 by:
- 134 1) enhancing the group's own intimacy with God
 - 135 2) testing proposals and leading congregational discussions about major
136 issues of theology, mission, and physical plant
 - 137 3) clarifying the congregation's vision, mission, and theological
138 understandings and revising them as needed
 - 139 4) seeking a path forward amid the diversity of viewpoints in the
140 congregation
 - 141 5) working toward agreement among themselves and supporting Team
142 decisions within the congregation
 - 143 6) forming agenda for congregational meetings
- 144 b. Evaluating the congregation's progress toward the vision and mission by:
- 145 1) upholding the congregation's vision and mission
 - 146 2) setting priorities for the future in consultation with the congregation
 - 147 3) assessing how well the congregation is living its vision and mission
- 148 c. Providing oversight for the congregation's staff and assets by:
- 149 1) delegating responsibility for ministry to the Pastoral Team, and
150 empowering them to carry it out. They shall designate leadership for
151 the Pastoral Team.
 - 152 2) evaluating the work of the Pastoral Team, as well as managing staff
153 transitions, salaries and benefits
 - 154 3) Selecting an auditor to conduct an audit each church year subject to
155 the following criteria:

- 156 i. The auditor shall not be directly involved with any financial
157 operations of the congregation.
158 ii. The auditor shall have the right to examine any and all financial
159 records of the congregation
160 iii. The auditor shall report all findings and recommendations in a
161 letter to the Spiritual Leadership Team.
162 iv. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall convey pertinent
163 information from the Auditor's letter to the congregation.
- 164 d. Serving as the board of directors for the purpose of fulfilling the
165 requirements of incorporation.
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167 Section 4. Spiritual Leadership Team Qualifications

168 Members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall meet the following
169 qualifications:

- 170 a. a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship who actively
171 participates in the life of the congregation
172 b. has a deep awareness of the activity of God
173 c. wants to keep learning about changes in church and society
174 d. can theologically address the congregation's vision, values, and beliefs
175 e. has strength of conviction and flexibility to work with differences of
176 opinion
177 f. can work with the big picture – the whole and how the parts are related to
178 the whole
179 g. can delegate ministry to others and encourage them
180 h. can make this work a priority
181

182 Section 5. Spiritual Leadership Team Accountability

- 183 a. The work of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall be reviewed periodically
184 by the congregation.
185 b. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be open to, and lead the
186 congregation in openness to, working with such supervisory methods as
187 developed by the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.
188

189 Section 6. Spiritual Leadership Team Membership and Tenure

- 190 a. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be comprised of 5-7 members
191 selected to serve the congregation. Pastoral Team and Commission
192 members are not eligible to serve concurrently as members of the
193 Spiritual Leadership Team.

- 194 b. The members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall serve three year
195 terms with one third of them selected each year. They shall be eligible to
196 succeed themselves for up to three consecutive terms.
- 197 c. The Chair of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall be chosen from among
198 the members and affirmed by them.
- 199 d. The Chair of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall provide for such further
200 organization as needed to assist the group in its work.
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203 ARTICLE 6: Program Ministry

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205 Section 1. Purpose

206 The purpose of Program Ministry is to implement the congregation's vision,
207 mission, beliefs and values in concrete and practical ways. The Spiritual
208 Leadership Team delegates the responsibilities for Program Ministry to the
209 Pastoral Team.

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211 Section 2. Pastoral Team

212 The Pastoral Team is responsible for managing all aspects of Program Ministry.
213 They coordinate the work of the various Ministry Teams called Commissions to
214 accomplish the congregation's ministry goals.

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233 Section 3. Commission Responsibilities

234 Commissions are responsible to conduct their work within the scope of their
235 ministry assignment as clarified by the Pastoral Team. Additional ministry
236 teams may be created as necessary to support the program ministry needs of
237 the congregation. Detailed responsibilities are listed in the congregation's
238 Handbook.

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240

- a. Worship Commission shall be responsible to plan and implement worship services in collaboration with the Pastoral Team.

- 241 b. Christian Education Commission shall be responsible to provide formal
242 educational experiences for the congregation.
- 243 c. Fellowship Commission shall encourage and promote fellowship within
244 the congregation.
- 245 d. Stewardship and Finance Commission shall give oversight to the church
246 property, the development and control of the church budget, and the
247 development of an understanding of stewardship.
- 248 e. Mission Commission shall seek to develop a mission vision within the
249 congregation and facilitate outreach activities.
- 250 f. Caregiving Commission (Deacons) shall work with the pastors to offer
251 pastoral care to people in the congregation.
- 252 g. Each Commission shall establish structures, secure individuals, appoint
253 committees as may be necessary to accomplish its designated tasks.
- 254 h. Each Commission shall maintain written descriptions of all policies,
255 guidelines, programs, and committees to facilitate clear understandings
256 to the congregation and to the participants.
- 257 i. Additional duties may be delegated to each Commission by the Pastoral
258 Team.

259

260 Section 4. Commission Qualifications

261 A Commission Member shall be:

- 262 a. personally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, seeking to know and follow
263 His will as discerned in the scriptures, practicing a life of prayer, and
264 maturing in faith
- 265 b. a committed and active member of the congregation
- 266 c. committed to and working for mature relationships in his/her household
- 267 d. affirmed by the congregation for gifts appropriate to the work of the
268 Commission
- 269 e. willing to invest gifts and quality time and energy in the work of the
270 Commission
- 271 f. able and willing to exercise leadership

272

273 Section 5. Commission Membership and Tenure

- 274 a. Each Commission shall include at least three members, with the exact
275 number to be determined by the Pastoral Team in consultation with the
276 individual Commissions.
- 277 b. Commission members shall be affirmed by the congregation as a part of
278 the process conducted by the Leadership Discernment Team.

- 279 c. Commission members shall serve three year terms, with their terms
280 expiring on a rotational basis.
281 d. Each Commission shall organize itself, with a chairperson, recording
282 secretary and other offices as deemed necessary by the Commission.
283

284 ARTICLE 7: Congregational Meetings
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286 Section 1. Chairperson

287 The Congregational Chairperson shall be a member of the Spiritual Leadership
288 Team who has been affirmed for this role by the congregation. The
289 Congregational Chairperson shall preside at congregational meetings. If the
290 Chairperson cannot chair the meeting, the Spiritual Leadership Team shall
291 appoint another person for this purpose. The term of the Congregational
292 Chairperson shall be for one year and may be renewed as long as the person
293 continues to serve as Elder.
294

295 Section 2. Agenda

296 The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be responsible to develop the agenda for
297 each congregational meeting. The agenda shall be announced at least two
298 weeks in advance of each meeting.
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300 Section 3. Decision-making

- 301 a. Congregational meetings shall be open meetings. Decision making shall
302 be the responsibility of active members and of persons in the process of
303 becoming members.
304 b. The members present shall constitute a quorum.
305 c. Congregational decisions shall be made preferably by consensus, but in
306 the absence thereof, by approval of 80% of the total yes and no votes
307 cast.
308 d. Absentee ballots shall be permitted in the following circumstances:
309 i. The vote being taken has been scheduled and announced two
310 weeks prior to the designated time for casting a vote by written
311 ballot (as per Article 7, Section 2). This policy only applies to voting
312 by a preprinted ballot and is intended for use in decisions of long-
313 term significance to the congregation. After consultation with
314 other committee or Commissions, the Spiritual Leadership Team
315 will decide whether absentee ballots will be used for a particular
316 vote.
317 ii. If the preprinted ballot is modified or amended at the
318 congregational meeting, the absentee ballots cast may not be

- 319 counted unless—at the discretion of the Congregational
320 Chairperson—the modification or amendment is simply a
321 clarification or minor word change and does not materially change
322 the nature or intent of the ballot.
- 323 iii. Members wishing to cast an absentee ballot may do so by
324 obtaining a preprinted ballot from the church office. Other
325 arrangements may be made to accommodate members who are
326 homebound or physically unable to go to the church office.
327 Completed absentee ballots in signed and sealed envelopes must
328 be received at the church office or by an Elder prior to the time
329 designated for the casting of the vote.
 - 330 iv. At the congregational business meeting, the Congregational
331 Chairperson shall read aloud the list of names of all members
332 casting absentee ballots for the particular vote for which the
333 absentee ballot is permitted.
 - 334 v. No absentee ballots may be cast or counted after the formal vote
335 has been taken.
- 336

337 Section 4. Frequency

338 There shall be at least one meeting per quarter.

339

340 Section 5. Congregational Secretary

- 341 a. The congregation shall name a Congregational Secretary for a term of one
342 year. The secretary may serve an unlimited number of times.
 - 343 b. The duties of the Congregational Secretary shall include:
 - 344 i. keeping the minutes of each congregational meeting.
 - 345 ii. reading or summarizing the minutes of the previous meeting as
346 requested by the Congregational Chairperson.
 - 347 iii. maintaining a complete file of the minutes of each meeting.
- 348

349 ARTICLE 8: Leadership Discernment

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351 Section 1. Leadership Discernment Team

352 The purpose of the Leadership Discernment Team is to practice spiritual
353 discernment in calling out leaders to serve in various positions within the
354 congregation.

- 355 a. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be responsible for the appointment
356 of the Leadership Discernment Team. The committee shall be composed
357 of three members each serving a three year term. One member shall be

358 appointed each year. Members shall not be immediately eligible to
359 succeed themselves.

360 b. The appointments shall be made considering the balance of the
361 committee and the preferences of the congregation.

362 c. Team members are concurrently eligible for any other congregational
363 office except that of Spiritual Leadership Team member (Elder.)

364

365 Section 2. Leadership Discernment Process

366 a. The Leadership Discernment Team shall lead the process for selecting the
367 Congregational Chairperson, members of the Spiritual Leadership Team,
368 Delegate(s) to Conference, and Congregational Secretary in such a way as
369 to enable the congregation to be involved in the gift discernment process
370 of selecting these leaders. They shall seek the perspectives of the
371 Pastoral Team in selecting Commission members.

372 b. The Team shall keep the congregation informed of the discernment
373 process and of how and when individuals are eventually affirmed for a
374 particular assignment.

375 c. The discernment process shall be completed at least one month prior to
376 the beginning of the new church year.

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378 Section 3. Filling Unexpired Terms

379 When a vacancy occurs among the Spiritual Leadership Team or Commissions
380 leaving an unexpired term, the Leadership Discernment Team is responsible to
381 consult with the group having the vacancy and then to bring a recommendation
382 to the congregation for affirmation. This appointment will be for the duration of
383 the unexpired term.

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385 Section 4. Leadership Discernment Team Qualifications

386 Members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall meet the following
387 qualifications:

388 a. a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship who actively participates
389 in the life of the congregation

390 b. has a deep awareness of the activity of God, and a genuine interest in
391 engaging in spiritual discernment practices

392 c. can work with the big picture—the whole and how the parts are related to
393 the whole

394 d. has been part of the congregation long enough to know the talents of
395 members

396 e. can make this work a priority

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398 ARTICLE 9: Amendments

399

400 This constitution may be amended by any properly called congregational
401 meeting.

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403 Any Member of the congregation may propose an amendment. An
404 amendment must be submitted to the Spiritual Leadership Team at least
405 four weeks before the congregational meeting at which it is to be considered.
406 The amendment must be announced to the congregation along with the
407 agenda.