

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

3 Revisions Approved by the Congregation on November 20, 2011, Updated 8-21-16  
4

5 ARTICLE 1: Name  
6

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

10 ARTICLE 2: Purpose  
11

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

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

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

28 We recognize that the foundation of our life together is Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that  
29 any growth as a church body will come as a result of building on this foundation in the power  
30 and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.  
31

32 ARTICLE 3: Relationships  
33

34 Section 1. Relationship to the Mennonite Church USA

35 This congregation shall participate in the Mennonite Church USA through one of its member  
36 conferences.  
37

38 Section 2. Relationship to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

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

42 Section 3. Relationship to the Community

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

46 Section 4. Relationship to the State

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

51 ARTICLE 4: Membership

52  
53 Section 1. Becoming a Member

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

59 Section 2. Transfer of Membership

60 Persons for whom active participation (except for temporary moves, illnesses, or other  
61 disability) in the congregation is no longer feasible are requested to transfer membership to a  
62 congregation with whom they can actively participate.  
63

64 Section 3. Termination of Membership

65 Termination of membership may be requested by any Member, and shall be granted  
66 following responsible dialogue and recommendation by the Spiritual Leadership Team or a  
67 pastor. Any Member whose conduct brings reproach upon the Church shall be counseled by  
68 fellow Members in the pattern of Matthew 18. If such counsel is rejected, said Member shall  
69 have his/her membership terminated following recommendation by the Spiritual Leadership  
70 Team and approval by the congregation. Membership may also be terminated upon  
71 recommendation by the Spiritual Leadership Team and approval of the congregation when a  
72 member has been willfully inactive in the life of the congregation for a period of two years,  
73 provided serious effort has been initiated by an Elder or other officially designated person(s)  
74 to restore relationships.  
75

76 Section 4. Right of Members

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

84 Section 5. Responsibilities of Members

85 Members shall commit themselves to participate actively in the life of the congregation  
86 including attendance at worship services, exercising gifts of ministry, offering financial  
87 support, participating in at least one face-to-face relationship such as Sunday school class,  
88 Commission, or small group, and choosing a life style appropriate for members of the  
89 Kingdom of God. Members are encouraged to review the Confession of Faith periodically.  
90 Members who leave the community on a temporary basis are encouraged to find a spiritual

91 fellowship in their new location. Letters of recommendation for associate membership shall  
92 be issued at their request.

93  
94 Section 6. Associate Membership

95 Any person who presents a certificate of membership from another congregation desiring to  
96 fellowship with this congregation while a temporary resident of this community, and who is  
97 in agreement with our Confession of Faith, may be admitted to associate membership upon  
98 recommendation of the Spiritual Leadership Team and acceptance by the congregation. An  
99 associate member has all the rights and responsibilities of a regular member. Associate  
100 membership shall be considered to be terminated with the termination of temporary residence  
101 in this community.

102  
103 ARTICLE 5: Spiritual Leadership Team

104  
105 Section 1. Spiritual Leadership Principles

106 The congregation desires to embrace the following leadership principles as it organizes its  
107 work:

- 108 a. Congregations flourish with servant leaders.
- 109 b. Congregations flourish when a core group of people lead and guide the congregation  
110 in spiritual discernment.
- 111 c. Congregations flourish when many people are empowered to be engaged in ministry.

112  
113 Section 2. Spiritual Leadership Team Purpose

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

117  
118 Section 3. Spiritual Leadership Team Responsibilities

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

- 120 a. Leading the congregation in discerning God's call and long-term direction by:
  - 121 1) enhancing the group's own intimacy with God
  - 122 2) testing proposals and leading congregational discussions about major issues of  
123 theology, mission, and physical plant
  - 124 3) clarifying the congregation's vision, mission, and theological understandings and  
125 revising them as needed
  - 126 4) seeking a path forward amid the diversity of viewpoints in the congregation
  - 127 5) working toward agreement among themselves and supporting Team decisions  
128 within the congregation
  - 129 6) forming agenda for congregational meetings
- 130 b. Evaluating the congregation's progress toward the vision and mission by:
  - 131 1) upholding the congregation's vision and mission
  - 132 2) setting priorities for the future in consultation with the congregation
  - 133 3) assessing how well the congregation is living its vision and mission
- 134 c. Providing oversight for the congregation's staff and assets by:
  - 135 1) delegating responsibility for ministry to the Pastoral Team, and empowering them  
136 to carry it out. They shall designate leadership for the Pastoral Team.

- 137 2) evaluating the work of the Pastoral Team, as well as managing staff transitions,  
138 salaries and benefits  
139 3) Selecting an auditor to conduct an audit each church year subject to the following  
140 criteria:  
141 i. The auditor shall not be directly involved with any financial operations of  
142 the congregation.  
143 ii. The auditor shall have the right to examine any and all financial records of  
144 the congregation  
145 iii. The auditor shall report all findings and recommendations in a letter to the  
146 Spiritual Leadership Team.  
147 iv. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall convey pertinent information from  
148 the Auditor's letter to the congregation.
- 149 d. Serving as the board of directors for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of  
150 incorporation.  
151

#### 152 Section 4. Spiritual Leadership Team Qualifications

- 153 Members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall meet the following qualifications:  
154 a. a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship who actively participates in the  
155 life of the congregation  
156 b. has a deep awareness of the activity of God  
157 c. wants to keep learning about changes in church and society  
158 d. can theologically address the congregation's vision, values, and beliefs  
159 e. has strength of conviction and flexibility to work with differences of opinion  
160 f. can work with the big picture – the whole and how the parts are related to the whole  
161 g. can delegate ministry to others and encourage them  
162 h. can make this work a priority  
163

#### 164 Section 5. Spiritual Leadership Team Accountability

- 165 a. The work of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall be reviewed periodically by the  
166 congregation.  
167 b. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be open to, and lead the congregation in  
168 openness to, working with such supervisory methods as developed by the Indiana-  
169 Michigan Mennonite Conference.  
170

#### 171 Section 6. Spiritual Leadership Team Membership and Tenure

- 172 a. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be comprised of 5-7 members selected to serve  
173 the congregation. Pastoral Team and Commission members are not eligible to serve  
174 concurrently as members of the Spiritual Leadership Team.  
175 b. The members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall serve two-year terms with one-  
176 third of them selected each year. They shall be eligible to succeed themselves for up  
177 to three consecutive terms. Term limits will begin for people recruited during the  
178 2017-18 year unless the SLT comes back with a different proposal. The  
179 understanding will be that person could continue for a full 6-year term.  
180 c. The Chair of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall be chosen from among the members  
181 and affirmed by them.  
182 d. The Chair of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall provide for such further  
183 organization as needed to assist the group in its work.

184 ARTICLE 6: Program Ministry

185

186 Section 1. Purpose

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

190

191 Section 2. Pastoral Team

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

- 195 a. Composition. The Pastoral Team shall be comprised of the pastoral staff who have  
196 been called to serve the congregation.
- 197 b. Leadership. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall designate leadership for the  
198 Pastoral Team. The leadership will work with the Pastoral Team to clarify  
199 responsibilities among themselves based on their respective gifts and the needs of the  
200 congregation. The leadership will meet regularly with the Spiritual Leadership Team.
- 201 c. Responsibilities. The Pastoral Team is responsible for all aspects of congregational  
202 ministry including preaching, pastoral care, coordinating the work of the various  
203 Commissions, and providing oversight of any other paid staff.
- 204 d. Accountability. The Pastoral Team is accountable to the Spiritual Leadership Team  
205 for its work. The Spiritual Leadership Team will conduct regular evaluations of the  
206 work of the Pastoral Team based on clearly stated criteria.
- 207 e. Terms. The terms of the members of the Pastoral Team are set by the Spiritual  
208 Leadership Team and approved by the congregation.

209

210 Section 3. Commission Responsibilities

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

- 215 a. Worship Commission shall be responsible to plan and implement worship services in  
216 collaboration with the Pastoral Team.
- 217 b. Christian Education Commission shall be responsible to provide formal educational  
218 experiences for the congregation.
- 219 c. Fellowship Commission shall encourage and promote fellowship within the  
220 congregation.
- 221 d. Stewardship and Finance Commission shall give oversight to the church property, the  
222 development and control of the church budget, and the development of an  
223 understanding of stewardship.
- 224 e. Mission Commission shall seek to develop a mission vision within the congregation  
225 and facilitate outreach activities.
- 226 f. Caregiving Commission (Deacons) shall work with the pastors to offer pastoral care  
227 to people in the congregation.

- 228 g. Each Commission shall establish structures, secure individuals, appoint committees  
229 as may be necessary to accomplish its designated tasks.
- 230 h. Each Commission shall maintain written descriptions of all policies, guidelines,  
231 programs, and committees to facilitate clear understandings to the congregation and  
232 to the participants.
- 233 i. Additional duties may be delegated to each Commission by the Pastoral Team.  
234

235 Section 4. Commission Qualifications

236 A Commission Member shall be:

- 237 a. personally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, seeking to know and follow His will as  
238 discerned in the scriptures, practicing a life of prayer, and maturing in faith
- 239 b. a committed and active member of the congregation
- 240 c. committed to and working for mature relationships in his/her household
- 241 d. affirmed by the congregation for gifts appropriate to the work of the Commission
- 242 e. willing to invest gifts and quality time and energy in the work of the Commission
- 243 f. able and willing to exercise leadership  
244

245 Section 5. Commission Membership and Tenure

- 246 a. Each Commission shall include at least three members, with the exact number to be  
247 determined by the Pastoral Team in consultation with the individual Commissions.
- 248 b. Commission members shall be affirmed by the congregation as a part of the process  
249 conducted by the Leadership Discernment Team.
- 250 c. Commission members shall serve two year terms, with their terms expiring on a  
251 rotational basis. They shall be eligible to succeed themselves for up to three  
252 consecutive terms. Term limits will begin for people recruited during the 2017-18  
253 year unless the SLT comes back with a different proposal. The understanding will be  
254 that person could continue for a full 6-year term.
- 255 d. Each Commission shall organize itself, with a chairperson, recording secretary and  
256 other offices as deemed necessary by the Commission.  
257

258 ARTICLE 7: Congregational Meetings

259

260 Section 1. Chairperson

261 The Congregational Chairperson shall be a member of the Spiritual Leadership Team who  
262 has been affirmed for this role by the congregation. The Congregational Chairperson shall  
263 preside at congregational meetings. If the Chairperson cannot chair the meeting, the Spiritual  
264 Leadership Team shall appoint another person for this purpose. The term of the  
265 Congregational Chairperson shall be for one year and may be renewed as long as the person  
266 continues to serve as Elder.

267

268 Section 2. Agenda

269 The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be responsible to develop the agenda for each  
270 congregational meeting. The agenda shall be announced at least two weeks in advance of  
271 each meeting.

272

273 Section 3. Decision-making

- 274 a. Congregational meetings shall be open meetings. Decision making shall be the  
275 responsibility of active members and of persons in the process of becoming members.  
276 b. The members present shall constitute a quorum.  
277 c. Congregational decisions shall be made preferably by consensus, but in the absence  
278 thereof, by approval of 80% of the total yes and no votes cast.  
279 d. Absentee ballots shall be permitted in the following circumstances:  
280 i. The vote being taken has been scheduled and announced two weeks prior to  
281 the designated time for casting a vote by written ballot (as per Article 7,  
282 Section 2). This policy only applies to voting by a preprinted ballot and is  
283 intended for use in decisions of long-term significance to the congregation.  
284 After consultation with other committee or Commissions, the Spiritual  
285 Leadership Team will decide whether absentee ballots will be used for a  
286 particular vote.  
287 ii. If the preprinted ballot is modified or amended at the congregational meeting,  
288 the absentee ballots cast may not be counted unless—at the discretion of the  
289 Congregational Chairperson—the modification or amendment is simply a  
290 clarification or minor word change and does not materially change the nature  
291 or intent of the ballot.  
292 iii. Members wishing to cast an absentee ballot may do so by obtaining a  
293 preprinted ballot from the church office. Other arrangements may be made to  
294 accommodate members who are homebound or physically unable to go to the  
295 church office. Completed absentee ballots in signed and sealed envelopes  
296 must be received at the church office or by an Elder prior to the time  
297 designated for the casting of the vote.  
298 iv. At the congregational business meeting, the Congregational Chairperson shall  
299 read aloud the list of names of all members casting absentee ballots for the  
300 particular vote for which the absentee ballot is permitted.  
301 v. No absentee ballots may be cast or counted after the formal vote has been  
302 taken.

303  
304 Section 4. Frequency

305 There shall be at least one meeting per quarter.

306  
307 Section 5. Congregational Secretary

- 308 a. The congregation shall name a Congregational Secretary for a term of one year. The  
309 secretary may serve an unlimited number of times.  
310 b. The duties of the Congregational Secretary shall include:  
311 i. keeping the minutes of each congregational meeting.  
312 ii. reading or summarizing the minutes of the previous meeting as requested by  
313 the Congregational Chairperson.  
314 iii. maintaining a complete file of the minutes of each meeting.  
315

316 ARTICLE 8: Leadership Discernment

317  
318 Section 1. Leadership Discernment Team

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

- 321 a. The Spiritual Leadership Team shall be responsible for the appointment of the  
322 Leadership Discernment Team. The committee shall be composed of three members  
323 each serving a three year term. One member shall be appointed each year. Members  
324 shall not be immediately eligible to succeed themselves.
- 325 b. The appointments shall be made considering the balance of the committee and the  
326 preferences of the congregation.
- 327 c. Team members are concurrently eligible for any other congregational office except  
328 that of Spiritual Leadership Team member (Elder.)  
329

330 Section 2. Leadership Discernment Process

- 331 a. The Leadership Discernment Team shall lead the process for selecting the  
332 Congregational Chairperson, members of the Spiritual Leadership Team, Delegate(s)  
333 to Conference, and Congregational Secretary in such a way as to enable the  
334 congregation to be involved in the gift discernment process of selecting these leaders.  
335 They shall seek the perspectives of the Pastoral Team in selecting Commission  
336 members.
- 337 b. The Team shall keep the congregation informed of the discernment process and of  
338 how and when individuals are eventually affirmed for a particular assignment.
- 339 c. The discernment process shall be completed at least one month prior to the beginning  
340 of the new church year.  
341

342 Section 3. Filling Unexpired Terms

343 When a vacancy occurs among the Spiritual Leadership Team or Commissions leaving an  
344 unexpired term, the Leadership Discernment Team is responsible to consult with the group  
345 having the vacancy and then to bring a recommendation to the congregation for affirmation.  
346 This appointment will be for the duration of the unexpired term.  
347

348 Section 4. Leadership Discernment Team Qualifications

349 Members of the Spiritual Leadership Team shall meet the following qualifications:

- 350 a. a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship who actively participates in the life  
351 of the congregation
- 352 b. has a deep awareness of the activity of God, and a genuine interest in engaging in  
353 spiritual discernment practices
- 354 c. can work with the big picture—the whole and how the parts are related to the whole
- 355 d. has been part of the congregation long enough to know the talents of members
- 356 e. can make this work a priority  
357

358 ARTICLE 9: Amendments  
359

360 This constitution may be amended by any properly called congregational meeting.  
361

362 Any Member of the congregation may propose an amendment. An amendment must be  
363 submitted to the Spiritual Leadership Team at least four weeks before the congregational  
364 meeting at which it is to be considered. The amendment must be announced to the  
365 congregation along with the agenda.