

# CONSTITUTION

## VIRGINIA MENNONITE CONFERENCE

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### PREAMBLE

Christ Jesus has commissioned the community of faith to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all people, to nurture Christian believers and to show love to all persons. To fulfill this mandate in accordance with biblical principles, we set forth this constitution to describe the relationships and responsibilities which will guide us in our common task.

### ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church body is Virginia Mennonite Conference, hereinafter designated as Conference. The principal office is located at 901 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

### ARTICLE II: IDENTITY

The Virginia Mennonite Conference was organized in 1835 by congregations of the Mennonite faith scattered throughout the Shenandoah Valley. These congregations desired a common organization and fellowship for promoting the work of the church from the perspective of the sixteenth century Anabaptists. Currently, it consists of congregations in Virginia and neighboring states who subscribe to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) and make voluntary commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior a priority.

### ARTICLE III: RELATIONSHIPS

The conference is a charter member of Mennonite Church USA, effective February 1, 2002, sending delegates to the Delegate Assembly and the Constituency Leaders Council as governed by the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA and of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Congregations and individual members of the conference relate to other entities and agencies of Mennonite Church USA as provided in the bylaws of that body and through the extended ministries of the denomination.

### ARTICLE IV: PURPOSE

The purpose of the Conference shall be to:

1. Provide vision and leadership in the mission of the church by promoting and coordinating outreach ministries;
2. Bring persons into saving relationship with God by regeneration through the blood of Christ;
3. Foster a mature understanding of Christ-centered lifestyles;
4. Teach biblical doctrines faithfully;
5. Promote unity within the faith community;
6. Encourage fellowship among believers and congregations;
7. Develop guidelines which enable persons to live in community, promote peace and justice and practice stewardship of resources.

### ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

The Conference shall be composed of affiliated congregations who maintain relationship via mutual fellowship, counsel, and support as provided within the structures of Conference. Procedures for reception and termination of Conference affiliation are set forth in the bylaws of the Conference. Individuals are recognized as members of Conference by virtue of their membership in one of the affiliated congregations. Congregational members shall be baptized believers who have made a voluntary commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who demonstrate their decision to walk in Christian discipleship within the fellowship of the Mennonite Church. Privileges and responsibilities of individual members shall be those accorded by their respective congregations.

### ARTICLE VI: DISTRICT COUNCILS

All member congregations shall participate in a district council which serves as a regional administrative unit of Conference. District councils shall include all ordained and licensed leaders exercising active assignments recognized by Conference, congregational delegates to Conference Assembly, and additional persons as

determined by each district council. Each district shall be represented on Conference Council by a member of the district council executive committee as determined by the respective district council.

#### **ARTICLE VII: CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY**

There shall be a Conference Assembly to serve as the governing body of Conference. It shall hold final powers of identification, organization and dissolution of Conference. Conference Assembly shall include those persons stated in the bylaws. The composition of Conference Assembly as outlined in Article III of the bylaws may be modified only by action of Conference Assembly.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: CONFERENCE COUNCIL**

There shall be a Conference Council to serve as the executive body of Conference, to coordinate the work of Conference commissions and committees, and to facilitate the activities of Conference between Assembly sessions. Conference Council shall include those persons stated in the bylaws. Staff are not eligible to serve on Conference Council.

#### **ARTICLE IX: CONFERENCE COMMISSIONS**

Conference ministries and activities shall be implemented through program commissions established by Conference Assembly, including the following:

- A. The Faith and Life Commission shall provide leadership for spiritual, doctrinal, and faith and life issues, and exercise oversight for ministerial leadership credentials.
- B. Virginia Mennonite Missions shall lead in the development and administration of Conference programs of mission outreach, service, and church planting, both overseas and in the broader geographical area in which member congregations are located.
- C. The Congregational Life Commission shall be a resource to congregations in areas of Christian education, stewardship, peace and justice advocacy, and family concerns including special areas of ministry such as: older adults, men, women, persons with disabilities. It shall also serve as a liaison with church agencies and institutions.

#### **ARTICLE X: LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES**

Conference shall provide guidelines for congregational leadership, pastoral care and nurture of believers in affiliated congregations by recommending leadership patterns consistent with a biblical model. Conference may appoint persons for special ministries and Conference shall establish patterns of oversight for congregations through the Faith and Life Commission. These leaders shall be affirmed for their ministries by Conference Assembly.

#### **ARTICLE XI: CONFERENCE ORGANIZATIONS**

Conference shall authorize, as needed, additional entities within the Conference context. Such entities shall operate within the guidelines of their own constitutions and/or bylaws. Conference organizations shall specify in their constitutions, bylaws or operating manuals their methods of appointing their boards and officers along with the responsibilities of the same.

#### **ARTICLE XII: NONPROFIT TAX EXEMPT STATUS**

Virginia Mennonite Conference is organized, and shall be operated, exclusively for charitable, religious, educational and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, making distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law (the "Code").

The Conference shall have all of the general rights, privileges, and powers conferred upon corporations created by the Act (Title 13.1, Chapter 10 of the Virginia Code), but shall be limited to the exercise of only such powers as are in furtherance of the purposes expressly provided for in these articles and as are in furtherance of activities permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code and a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code.

No part of the net earnings of the Conference shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Conference shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof.

No substantial part of the activities of the Conference shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Conference shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the Conference shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Upon the dissolution of the Conference, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

#### **ARTICLE XIII: AMENDMENTS**

The Conference Assembly may adopt amendments to this constitution, upon recommendation by the Conference Council, by a 75% majority vote of the delegates present and voting at any duly called meeting of the Assembly, providing that delegates have received written notice of the substance of proposed changes at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting when the amendment is to be considered.

#### **ARTICLE XIV: BYLAWS**

Bylaws will be hereinafter adopted. The conditions and regulations of Conference membership and function shall be determined by the bylaws. The bylaws may be amended in whole or in part, in the manner provided therein. The bylaws are to be deemed an integral part of this constitution.

Ratified by at least 75% of the delegates present this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1994

As witnessed by:

Laban Peachey, Moderator

David D. Yoder, General Secretary

Attested to by:

Wayne North, Conference Secretary

<i>Amended February 8, 1997,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 97:02</i>
<i>Amended July 15, 1999,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 99:05</i>
<i>Amended July 19, 2002,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 02:14</i>
<i>Amended June 14, 2003,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 03:10</i>
<i>Amended July 25, 2008</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 08:05</i>
<i>Amended February 5, 2011</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 11:03</i>

# BYLAWS

## VIRGINIA MENNONITE CONFERENCE

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### GENERAL

All matters hereinafter contained in these bylaws shall be subject to such provisions in regard hereto, if any, as are set forth in the constitution. All references in these bylaws to the constitution shall be construed to mean the constitution as from time to time amended. The name, place of business and purposes of Conference shall be as set forth in the constitution.

### ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

#### Section 1. Eligibility

Applications for membership in Conference may be received from congregations or groups who are:

- 1.1 A covenanted group of believers, typically composed of at least ten households, gathering regularly for worship, fellowship and Christian ministry.
- 1.2 Ready to function within the Constitution and bylaws of the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 1.3 Directed by clearly designated leadership, recognized by both the congregation and Conference.

#### Section 2. Privileges of Conference Membership

- 2.1 Recognition as a covenanted group of believers functioning within the fellowship and bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Conference.
- 2.2 Credentialing and mutual support for ordained leadership.
- 2.3 Access to fellowship and resources provided through conference assembly, conference council, districts, commissions, and agencies.
- 2.4 Representation in the conference assembly by the congregation's ordained/licensed leaders and other commissioned delegates as provided in Bylaw III, Section 2.
- 2.5 Access to denominational fellowship and resources provided through assemblies and agencies of Mennonite Church USA.
- 2.6 Representation in the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly by the conference's and congregation's commissioned delegates as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.

#### Section 3. Responsibilities of Conference Membership

- 3.1 Gathering regularly for worship, fellowship, and Christian ministry as a covenanted group of believers.
- 3.2 Promoting mutual nurture and discipline in harmony with the stated purposes of the Conference.
- 3.3 Giving and receiving counsel through congregational, district, conference, and denominational structures.
- 3.4 Designating and supporting ongoing congregational leadership, recognized by both the congregation and conference.
- 3.5 Functioning within the constitution and bylaws of the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 3.6 Providing generous prayer, emotional, and financial support for conference and denominational ministries, including prayer and financial backing for congregational representatives to delegate assemblies.

#### Section 4. Application Process

- 4.1 The leadership of a group or congregation desiring affiliation with Conference will engage in discussion with the oversight leader (formerly recognized as bishop/overseer) of the district/cluster with which they wish to identify.
- 4.2 The oversight leader will meet with the group to further explore their commitment to their district and to Virginia Mennonite Conference and their response to the constitution and bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Conference, the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 4.3 When the group is organized, it will present a written request to the oversight leader for affiliation with Conference. The application will include a statement of faith, a statement of acceptance of the principles contained in the documents listed in item 2, and a statement of organization.

- 4.4 The oversight leader will arrange with the respective district's chairperson to have the request considered by the district for action.
- 4.5 The response of the district will be reported to Conference Council which will bring a recommendation for action by Conference Assembly.
- 4.6 Upon approval by Conference Assembly, the fellowship will be recognized as a congregation affiliated with Virginia Mennonite Conference.

### Section 5. Termination

Congregations wishing to terminate their affiliation with Conference shall present a written request for withdrawal to their oversight leader. The oversight leader will notify the district chairperson who will place it on the district's agenda for consideration. The action of the district will be reported to Conference Council through the Executive Conference Minister for further processing. Conference Council will make a recommendation to Conference Assembly for final action.

In instances where a congregation's theological stance or loyalty to Conference is questioned, the issue shall be processed by the respective district council. A report of the process, findings and recommendations shall be brought to the Faith and Life Commission for counsel and action. The response of the commission shall be reported to Conference Council. Conference Council will take responsibility for any further action.

## **ARTICLE II: OFFICERS**

### Section 1. Elected Officers

Conference officers shall be:

- 1.1 Moderator;
- 1.2 Moderator-Elect;
- 1.3 Secretary;
- 1.4 Treasurer.

These officers shall be elected by Conference Assembly from a ballot presented by the Gifts Discernment Committee of Conference.

### Section 2. Terms of Office

Terms of office shall be two years for the moderator and moderator-elect, and three years for the treasurer and secretary. The treasurer and secretary may serve a maximum of two consecutive full terms. Terms of office shall coincide with the Conference year.

### Section 3. Duties

3.1 The moderator shall:

- 3.1.1 Act for the purposes of Conference as "president" to perform generally accepted functions of the office of president on behalf of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.
  - a. Convening the moderator-elect and secretary in order to carry out the designed duties of the Conference Council Executive Committee, delineated in Article VIII, Sections 1.1.1. and 1.1.2;
  - b. Providing counsel to the Executive Conference Minister on leadership, legal, and personnel matters facing the Conference.
- 3.1.2 Assist the Conference in determining and articulating vision and mission;
  - a. Initiating a discernment process with Conference Council periodically to review the vision and mission of the Conference;
  - b. Communicating the vision and mission through written presentations in Conference publications, i.e. Pathways and the Annual Report.
- 3.1.3 Serve as a spokesperson for Conference;
  - a. Articulating the strategic initiatives and official policies of the Conference to constituency upon request by a District or congregation;
  - b. Encouraging the Faith and Life Commission and credentialed ministers in their respective roles within the Conference.
- 3.1.4 Preside over all sessions of Conference Council and Conference Assembly.
  - a. Reviewing and being familiar with the agenda and supporting documents for Conference Council members and Delegates;

- b. Reviewing the minutes of Conference Council and Conference Assembly for accuracy of information and experience;
  - c. Conducting the Delegate Assembly as Moderator within the stated procedures of the Conference.
- 3.1.5 Serve as a member of the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council by:
- a. Attending and representing Virginia Mennonite Conference by providing counsel consistent with Conference discernments.
- 3.2 The moderator-elect shall:
- 3.2.1 Act for the purposes of Conference as “vice president” to perform generally accepted functions of the office of vice president on behalf of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.
  - 3.2.2 Serve as a member of Conference Council and its Executive Committee.
  - 3.2.3 Provide counsel to the moderator;
  - 3.2.4 Substitute for the moderator in the moderator’s absence;
  - 3.2.5 Chair meetings at the request of the moderator;
  - 3.2.6 Serve as ex-officio member of the Constitution Committee.
- 3.3 The secretary shall:
- 3.3.1 Keep and distribute accurate minutes of all proceedings of Conference Council, Conference Assembly and other conference-related meetings;
  - 3.3.2 Correspond on behalf of Conference as requested by Conference Council.
- 3.4 The treasurer shall:
- 3.4.1 Chair the Conference Finance Committee;
  - 3.4.2 Regularly review investment decisions for conference assets.
  - 3.4.3 Provide financial advice and reports to Conference Council and Assembly as requested.

**Section 4. Staff Officers**

**4.1 Executive Conference Minister**

The Conference Council shall appoint an Executive Conference Minister reporting to the conference moderator, with term, responsibilities and compensation as established by Conference Council. The Executive Conference Minister shall exercise general supervision over the administration, financial matters and fundraising, while also serving as a resource to conference overseers and pastors and shall provide staff services for the Faith and Life Commission, and other conference standing committees.

**4.2 Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) President**

VMM shall appoint a president reporting to the Chair of the board, with term, responsibilities and compensation as established by the VMM board. The VMM president shall serve as the Chief Executive Officer of VMM. The VMM president shall provide staff services to VMM, the mission commission of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

**ARTICLE III: ASSEMBLY**

**Section 1. Composition of Delegate Body**

- 1.1 Congregationally-appointed delegates; Congregationally appointed delegates shall be selected on the basis of one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof. Substitutes are allowed, provided they are appointed by an appropriate congregational representative and not the involved congregational delegate.
- 1.2 Ordained and licensed ministers and deacons actively serving in the pastoral ministry of Conference congregations or “Congregations in Formation” (alternates for credentialed leaders are not permitted);
- 1.3 Persons commissioned for pastoral ministry in their congregation with endorsement by the oversight leader;
- 1.4 Up to four members from each district council executive committee who are not otherwise delegates;
- 1.5 Active oversight leaders serving Virginia Conference;
- 1.6 Persons licensed or ordained by Conference and active in special ministries who are not members of a special ministries cluster; if designated as delegates by their respective district councils;
- 1.7 One delegate for every ten members or fraction thereof from each special ministries cluster;
- 1.8 One delegate from each Conference Ministry and Conference Endorsed Ministry;
- 1.9 Members of Conference Council;
- 1.10 Non-credentialed members of the Faith and Life Commission;
- 1.11 Conference Staff Officers as non-voting participants.

## Section 2. Delegate Terms

Congregational delegates will typically serve three-year terms coinciding with the Conference year or as specified by the sending congregation. Delegates are eligible for reappointment.

## Section 3. Qualifications of Delegates

Delegates to Conference Assembly shall be members of affiliated congregations who are willing to give the time required by the assignment.

## Section 4. Duties of Delegates

- 4.1 Attend all meetings of the Conference Assembly and their respective district councils;
- 4.2 Share perspectives in accordance with biblical principles;
- 4.3 Represent the convictions of their constituents faithfully;
- 4.4 Provide reports and promote decisions to their respective congregations, districts, agencies and boards;
- 4.5 Perform other duties as assigned by the Conference Council.

## Section 5. Meetings

Conference Assembly shall convene a minimum of twice annually at times and places determined by Conference Council. Special sessions may be called by Conference Council. Delegates shall have a minimum of thirty days' written notice for all Assembly meetings.

## Section 6. Motions

Delegates may submit motion(s) for consideration by assembled delegates, via Conference Council, in advance of Assembly or the Winter Delegate Session. All motions must be signed by at least 3 delegates and be received by the moderator no later than the day before Conference Council meets. Motions made from the floor may be received for consideration but may only be acted upon at the next delegate assembly.

## Section 7. Decision Making

- 7.1 Each delegate shall be eligible to cast one vote. There is no provision for proxy voting.
- 7.2 A majority of votes cast shall determine any matter, except when the Assembly agrees otherwise or when otherwise provided in the Constitution or By-Laws.
- 7.3 Forty percent (40%) of delegates shall constitute a quorum. Approval of actions shall require a simple majority of those present.

## **ARTICLE IV: CONFERENCE COUNCIL**

### Section 1. Composition

Conference Council shall consist of;

- 1.1 The elected Conference officers;
- 1.2 One representative from each district council executive committee;
- 1.3 The chair and secretary from each commission. Exceptions to having these officers serve in this capacity require specific action of the commission;
- 1.4 Virginia Conference representatives to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA;
- 1.5 A substitute when a member is unable to attend;
- 1.6 Staff officers serving as non-voting participants;
- 1.7 Heads of Conference Ministries invited as non-voting participants.

### Section 2. Personal Qualifications

Conference Council members shall be:

- 2.1 Fully committed to Jesus Christ, the church and congregational life;
- 2.2 Persons of vision, spiritual discernment, maturity and leadership;
- 2.3 Knowledgeable of their district, its congregations and programs;
- 2.4 Positive in attitude toward the Mennonite Church, Virginia Mennonite Conference, and their districts;
- 2.5 Willing to devote the time required by the assignment including attendance at meetings;

- 2.6 Able to work effectively with bishops, overseers, district chairpersons, congregational leadership and their colleagues;
- 2.7 Able to contribute creatively and productively to the work of Conference Council;
- 2.8 Skillful in communication;
- 2.9 Able to work in contexts of diversity.

### Section 3. Corporate Duties

Conference Council as a corporate unit shall:

- 3.1 Serve as the executive body of Conference;
- 3.2 Act as the “operational body” for VMC personnel and VMC property/real estate acquisition and disposition;
- 3.3 Project vision, define direction and promote unity in coordinating the work of Conference;
- 3.4 Decide what issues shall be brought to Conference Assembly;
- 3.5 Define the functions, responsibilities and lines of accountability of conference officers, commissions and conference committees;
- 3.6 Provide for staffing of Conference;
- 3.7 Facilitate the work of Conference Assembly between sessions;
- 3.8 Arrange for an inspirational component of Conference Assembly;
- 3.9 Prepare the agenda for business meetings of Conference Assembly;
- 3.10 Receive reports from commissions and agencies;
- 3.11 Evaluate the work of Conference commissions and agencies annually;
- 3.12 Develop plans to meet the financial needs of Conference, including adoption and supervision of the annual budget;
- 3.13 Prepare minutes for Conference Assembly delegates to review and approve;
- 3.14 Commission three representatives to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 3.15 Appoint Conference based delegates and alternates to the Delegate Assembly of Mennonite Church USA as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.

### Section 4. Meetings

Conference Council shall meet quarterly. Additional meetings may be called by the moderator and the secretary. All meetings, except for executive sessions, are open for observation. For participation, prior arrangement shall be made with the conference coordinator.

### Section 5. Quorum

Two-thirds of the voting members of Conference Council shall be present to constitute a quorum. Actions shall require a seventy-five (75%) affirmative vote of members present for implementation.

### Section 6. Appeals

Conference Council shall serve all conference committees, ministries and subsidiary organizations as a final level of appeal. Congregations desiring counsel, assistance or resolution shall first contact their respective district councils. When resolution is not achieved at this level, the congregation may appeal to Conference Council through the officers of Conference Council. Such appeals must be supported by at least five members or ten percent (10%) of the congregation, whichever is greater. The officers of Conference Council will determine further processing of appeals including consultation with appropriate commissions and district councils.

## **ARTICLE V: DISTRICTS**

### Section 1. Composition

Districts shall typically be composed of a minimum of one cluster of at least four congregations. Consideration shall be given to geographical location, affinity of theological faith understandings, historical developments, and congregational preference in determining district composition. Modification of district composition shall have the approval of the districts and clusters affected and of Conference Council, in accordance with guidelines established by Conference Council.



## Section 2. Purpose

Districts shall encourage, coordinate, and provide counsel and financial assistance to church extension programs and projects beyond the resources of individual congregations and clusters. Such endeavors shall be established and operated in consultation with appropriate commissions and agencies.

## Section 3. Organization

Districts shall form a district council composed of all active district pastors, congregational delegates to Conference Assembly, oversight leaders and additional leadership persons as determined by the respective district council.

Districts shall appoint an executive committee composed of its officers, oversight leaders, and the district delegate to Conference Council. Councils typically shall organize annually in September. They shall be chaired by a member of their executive committee, who is preferably its representative to Conference Council.

## Section 4. Terms of Service

Officers and congregational delegates to district councils shall serve three-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms or as specified by the district.

## Section 5. Duties of District Councils

- 5.1 Serve as an administrative unit of Conference;
- 5.2 Communicate and interpret policies and actions of the Conference and Mennonite Church to their constituencies;
- 5.3 Recommend or appoint members to Conference agencies and boards as requested;
- 5.4 Implement actions of Conference Assembly;
- 5.5 Assist congregations or clusters in establishing and operating programs.

## Section 6. Appeals

Appeals by individuals for counsel, assistance arbitration or resolution shall be made to their district councils which will determine further processing.

# **ARTICLE VI: CLUSTERS OF CONGREGATIONS**

## Section 1. Organization

Districts with more than five congregations may form clusters within the district, including clusters for persons serving in special ministries. Each cluster shall have an oversight leader. The responsibilities of the oversight leader on behalf of the district shall be designated by the district council. Clusters should normally not exceed five congregations.

## Section 2. Purpose

Clusters shall provide for fellowship and nurture of pastors and leadership persons within the congregations forming the cluster. Except for the selection of the oversight leader, they will not perform administrative functions.

# **ARTICLE VII: LEADERSHIP MINISTRY**

## Section 1. Oversight Leader

### 1.1 Oversight leader designation

A district may designate the oversight leader with the term bishop, overseer, or district minister.

### 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Oversight leaders shall be named for districts or clusters of congregations to provide counsel, oversight and pastoral resources to local congregations and their leaders. They shall facilitate communication and foster the building of positive relationships between pastor and congregation, assist congregations in developing vision and goals with periodic reviews, and assist in resolving conflicts in consultation with the Faith and Life Commission. Generally oversight leaders who also serve as pastors shall not carry oversight for the congregations of which they are pastor. Where there are exceptions, the Executive Conference Minister shall provide support and counsel, in consultation with the district chair. General responsibilities and

relationships of bishops/overseers shall be in accordance with guidelines established by the Faith and Life Commission.

### 1.3 Qualifications

Oversight leaders shall be ordained persons with ministry experience and with personal schedules that allow regular visits and consultations with the pastors and congregations for whom they have oversight. Qualifications shall be in accordance with guidelines established by the Faith and Life Commission.

### 1.4 Selection and Appointment

The selection of an oversight leader shall be facilitated by the district chairperson and approved by the Faith and Life Commission in accordance with guidelines established by the Faith and Life Commission. District councils shall be responsible for the expenses of the oversight leader

### 1.5 Terms of Service

Oversight leaders shall serve for an initial three-year term. They shall be commissioned by Conference Assembly upon the initial appointment. They are eligible for reappointment with terms specified by the district or cluster in which they serve. Terms of service shall coincide with the Conference year. Reappointments shall follow procedures in accordance with guidelines established by the Faith and Life Commission.

## Section 2. Credentialed Ministerial Categories

Ministerial categories shall be consistent with categories as established by the Faith and Life Commission for ministerial credentialing.

### 2.1 Role and Responsibilities

Ministers licensed or ordained for pastoral/congregational ministry shall serve in such functions as preaching of the Word, outreach, nurture, pastoral care and administration. They shall be responsible to their oversight leader, to their district council and to the councils of congregations which have called them.

### 2.2 Qualifications

Ministers must be persons with a mature faith and an exemplary life. They shall have ability to teach and preach the Word, provide pastoral care and administrative leadership, and must possess a sense of the call of the Spirit.

### 2.3 Selection

Selection and assignment to congregational leadership shall follow guidelines established for ministerial credentialing by the Faith and Life Commission.

### 2.4 Special Ministries

Ministers licensed or ordained for special ministry shall serve in such functions as church planting, evangelism, pastoral care, chaplaincy, administrative leadership, and Christian education.. The role and responsibility of persons licensed or ordained for special ministries shall be determined by the nature of their assignment in accordance with guidelines on ministerial credentials established by the Faith and Life Commission.

## Section 3. Deacons and Deaconesses

### 3.1 Role and Responsibilities

Deacons and deaconesses may be ordained or appointed for a designated term. Decision to ordain or appoint rests in the councils of the congregation subject to the pattern followed in the congregation's district. Deacons and deaconesses may assist in the teaching of the Word, the administration of the ordinances and other functions in the congregation, in discipline and in the mutual care of the congregation.

### 3.2 Qualifications

Those called to the deacon and deaconess office shall exhibit the qualities in I Timothy 3:8-13.

### 3.3 Selection

Congregations may appoint deacons or deaconesses as they have need in consultation with their cluster and district councils. Where credentials are desired, the oversight leader shall forward the request to the Faith and Life Commission according to the guidelines for ministerial credentialing established by the Faith and Life Commission.

Section 4. Other Leadership Ministries

Congregations, in counsel with their oversight leader, may designate other leadership roles within the congregation, such as elders and pastoral assistants in accordance with guidelines established by the Faith and Life Commission.

**ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES**

Section 1. Standing Committees

1.1 Conference Council Executive Committee

1.1.1 Composition/Appointment

The Conference Council Executive Committee shall consist Conference Moderator, Moderator-Elect, and Secretary. The Moderator shall chair the committee and the secretary record minutes of its meetings. The Executive Conference Minister shall serve as staff member for the committee.

1.1.2 Duties

1. Develop agendas for Conference Council in advance of their quarterly meetings.
2. Develop draft agendas for delegate meetings for approval by Conference Council.
3. Make decisions, or complete assignments, delegated by Conference Council.
4. Act on urgent or emergency requests which may arise between Conference Council meetings.
2. Initiate a triennial performance review for the Executive Conference Minister, to be led by the Chair of the Faith and Life Commission.

1.1.3 Tenure

Members shall serve in keeping with their elected or appointed terms.

1.2 Gifts Discernment Committee

1.2.1 Composition/Appointment

The Gifts Discernment Committee shall consist of six members appointed by Conference Council. The chairperson shall be designated annually by Conference Council.

1.2.2 Duties

1. Through an appropriate process, discern persons within Conference with gifts, time and calling to serve as members of Conference commissions and committees as required by the Constitution and Bylaws along with other appointments for which Conference Council may request assistance.
2. Present a list of such nominees to the Conference Council for review and approval.
3. Recommend to the Conference Assembly, upon approval of Conference Council, persons to serve as officers of Conference.
4. Contribute to the appointment process for officers and members-at-large of VMM through having the chair of the Gift Discernment Committee to serve on the Gift Discernment Committee of VMM.
5. Monitor appointments for breadth of representation and to avoid conflicts of interest that might be created by having individuals serving in more than one capacity.
6. Maintain a master list of Conference appointments to Conference offices, commissions and committees, recording the length of term and termination date.

1.2.3 Tenure

Members shall serve three-year staggered terms. Nor more than two consecutive terms may not be served.

1.3 Finance Committee

1.3.1 Composition/Appointment

The Finance Committee shall consist of the conference treasurer, who chairs the committee, and at least two other persons appointed by Conference Council. The Executive Conference Minister shall attend all meetings of the committee as non-voting staff.

1.3.2 Duties

1. Prepare the Conference budget for Conference Council approval.
2. Regularly review investment decisions for Conference assets.
3. Interpret, coordinate, and promote Conference and church-wide giving within the constituency.

4. Assist in fundraising for Conference programs.
5. Collect, study, and publicize stewardship information.
6. Monitor trends in giving and expenditures within congregations and Conference and provide counsel concerning them.
7. Assist congregations in budget planning, including the support of pastors, oversight leaders, evangelists and other church leaders.
8. Develop and implement procedures to manage endowments in accordance with the agreements between donors and VMC.
9. Provide Conference Council with advice on financial practices and recommend financial policies to Conference Council.

#### 1.3.3 Tenure

Members shall serve three-year terms with at least one member being elected or appointed annually. Members may serve a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

### 1.4 Constitution and Bylaws Committee

#### 1.4.1 Composition/Appointment

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall consist of three persons appointed by Conference Council plus the assistant moderator serving as an ex officio member. The chairperson shall be designated annually by Conference Council.

#### 1.4.2 Duties

1. Monitor the current effectiveness of the constitution and bylaws as a living document.
2. Suggest appropriate amendments for consideration by Conference Council.

#### 1.4.3 Tenure

Members shall serve three year terms for a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

### 1.5 Historical Committee

#### 1.5.1 Composition/Appointment

The Historical Committee shall consist of three persons appointed by Conference Council. One member shall be appointed each year. The archivist, appointed by Conference Council, shall be an ex-officio, nonvoting member of this committee. The chairperson shall be designated annually by Conference Council.

#### 1.5.2 Duties

1. Provide oversight and guidance in establishing policies for Conference archives.
2. Provide personal counsel and assistance to the Conference archivist in the performance of those duties.
3. Encourage and promote the gathering and preservation of documents and artifacts of historical significance and value.
4. Promote programs and studies of historical interest within congregations and Conference in order to foster appreciation for their heritage.
5. Encourage the publication of articles and books of historical significance or interest.

#### 1.5.3 Tenure

Members shall serve three-year terms with one member appointed annually. Members may be reappointed.

### 1.6 Peace Committee

#### 1.6.1 Composition/Appointment

The Peace Committee is accountable to the Congregational Life Commission. It shall consist of a Chair or Co-Chairs appointed by Conference Council, plus a representative appointed by each district, a representative from the Faith and Life Commission, and a representative from Virginia Mennonite Missions. A liaison from EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and from MCC's East Coast Board shall be invited as non-voting participants.

#### 1.6.2 Duties

1. Coordinate activities, provide resources, and encourage the work of Congregational Peace Advocates.
2. Provide regular interaction with conference youth regarding peace issues.
3. Identify and promote peace-related Christian training and witnessing.

4. Communicate regularly throughout the Conference to cultivate an awareness of the biblical teachings about peace and embodied expressions of peacemaking.

#### 1.6.3 Tenure

The Chair or Co-Chairs shall serve three year terms and may be reappointed once. District representatives and congregational advocates serve at the pleasure of their sending entity.

### 1.7 Retired Church Worker Aid and Enrichment Distribution Committee

#### 1.7.1 Composition/Appointment

The Retired Church Worker Aid and Enrichment Distribution Committee shall consist of a person appointed by the Faith and Life Commission and a person appointed by the Congregational Life Commission.

#### 1.7.2 Duties

1. Process applications for assistance from the Fund.
2. Distribute funds as available and in line with established criteria for distribution.

#### 1.7.3 Tenure

Appointed members shall serve three-year staggered terms, and may be reappointed once.

### Section 2. Ad hoc Committees

Conference Council, Commissions, and Conference Assembly may appoint ad hoc committees or task forces for specific assignments. Such committees shall report to the appointing body to whom they are accountable.

## **ARTICLE IX: COMMISSIONS**

### Section 1. Functions and Duties

The programs and activities of Conference shall be the responsibility of commissions as determined by the Conference Assembly. The functions and duties shall be outlined by Conference Council and approved by Conference Assembly. All commissions are accountable to Conference Assembly through Conference Council.

### Section 2. Qualifications

Persons serving on commissions shall give evidence of Christian character and spiritual discernment. They shall have both interest and competence in the area of the commission's responsibility. Persons may not serve on more than one commission concurrently. Conference staff persons are not eligible to serve on commissions.

### Section 3. Faith and Life Commission

#### 3.1 Composition/Appointment

The commission shall be composed of all active oversight leaders of districts or clusters plus three members at large elected by Conference Assembly.

#### 3.2 Organization

The commission shall provide for its own organization. It shall elect a chairperson, assistant chairperson and secretary. These officers will constitute its executive committee. The chairperson may be co-opted from outside the commission. The commission may establish subcommittees from among its members to fulfill its mandate.

#### 3.3 Duties

1. Provide leadership for Conference in spiritual, doctrinal and faith and life issues.
2. Establish guidelines for ministerial leadership within the Conference.
3. Exercise responsibility for granting, maintaining, and discontinuing ministry credentials.

#### 3.4 Terms of Office

Officers and members at large shall serve three-year terms for a maximum of two full consecutive terms. One officer and one member at large shall be elected each year on a rotating basis.

#### 3.5 Meetings

The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of the chairperson to call additional meetings.

### Section 4. Virginia Mennonite Missions

#### 4.1 Composition/Appointment

This commission shall be composed of representation from Conference districts and up to six members at large selected and appointed by the board upon affirmation by Conference delegates.

#### 4.2 Organization

The chairperson shall be elected or appointed by the board and may be a non-board member. Other officers and committees shall be elected or appointed as outlined in the bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, Inc.

#### 4.3 Duties

This commission shall provide missions leadership for the Conference.

#### 4.4 Meetings

The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of calling additional meetings as determined by the officers of the commission.

### Section 5. Congregational Life Commission

#### 5.1 Composition/Appointment

The commission shall be composed of the chairperson and up to eight persons elected by the Conference Assembly through the Conference gifts discernment process. Consideration shall be given to the constituent groups served by the commission.

#### 5.2 Organization

The chairperson shall be appointed by Conference Council from a slate developed through the Conference gifts discernment process, specifying the term of service. Chairpersons may serve a maximum of six consecutive years in this role, not including previous service as a regular commission member. The commission shall elect a secretary from its members. It shall have the privilege of appointing committees as required to fulfill its responsibilities.

#### 5.3 Duties

1. Listen to and understand congregations and their needs, issues and solutions.
2. Connect congregations to Conference and appropriate organizations to congregations.
3. Resource congregations on issues related to worship, peace advocacy, phases of life and other topics as they are identified.

#### 5.4 Terms of Office

Members of this commission shall serve three-year terms for a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

#### 5.5 Meetings

The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of calling additional meetings as determined by the officers of the commission.

### **ARTICLE X: CONFERENCE MINISTRIES**

Conference Assembly may establish, appoint, or officially recognize particular Conference Ministries, and charge them with the responsibility to fulfill specific ministries of Conference. Sharing a similar constituency with the Conference, such ministries shall be governed by their separate articles of incorporation, constitution and/or bylaws. All such governing provisions shall be subject to review and response by the Conference Council before they are enacted or amended by the particular Conference Ministry.

At least seventy-five (75) percent of the board of each Conference Ministry shall be members of Virginia Mennonite Conference, including those appointed by the Conference Council or one of the conference districts. The officers of respective Conference Ministries shall report to district chairpersons the names of persons from their districts who have been appointed to the ministry's boards. They may request Conference Council to assist in selecting additional board members.

Each Conference Ministry shall present a report annually to Conference Assembly, including a financial accounting. One staff or board leader shall represent the ministry as a voting delegate in the Conference Assembly. Ministry representatives are invited to meet with Conference Council in regular session as non-voting participants. In a spirit of giving and receiving counsel, boards of each Conference Ministry shall meet with Conference Council every three years for an In-Depth Review of the ministry's programs and relationships.

### **ARTICLE XI: CONFERENCE ENDORSED MINISTRIES**

Conference Council may recognize specific programs or agencies, including organizations associated with Mennonite Church USA, as Conference Endorsed Ministries, thereby affirming the respective ministries as

compatible with and supportive of the mission and purposes of Virginia Mennonite Conference. At least 60% of board members of Conference Endorsed Ministries shall be members of Anabaptist churches, as determined by Conference Council at the time of their recognition.

Ministries desiring such endorsement shall make application to the Conference Council through the conference coordinator. As part of the application process, such ministries will present a full statement of their objectives, organization and viability, with attention to how their ministry supports Conference purposes and mission. Upon satisfactory presentation, Conference Council may approve the application for a three-year period, after which the ministry may apply for subsequent three-year endorsements. The conference office shall publish annually a list of Conference Endorsed Ministries.

Interaction between Virginia Mennonite Conference and Conference Endorsed Ministries shall be in a spirit of mutual counsel. These ministries shall present a written report annually to Conference Assembly, symbolizing their intention to continue in their endorsed relationship, and shall make annual financial contributions to the conference, as specified by the Conference Council. One staff or board leader shall represent the ministry as a voting delegate in the Conference Assembly.

#### **ARTICLE XII: CONFERENCE YEAR**

The Conference fiscal year and organizational year shall be September 1 through August 31.

#### **ARTICLE XIII: ACTIVITIES IN QUESTION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Conference shall adopt written policies for maintaining tax exempt status and compliance with conflict of interest requirements necessary for a not for profit corporation.

#### **ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS**

The Conference Assembly may adopt amendments to these bylaws, upon recommendation by the Conference Council, by a simple majority vote of the delegates present and voting at any duly called meeting of the Assembly, provided that delegates have received written notice of the substance of proposed changes at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting when the amendments is to be considered.

<i>Adopted March 26, 1994</i>	
<i>Amended February 8, 1997,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 97:03 and ACTION VMC 97:04</i>
<i>Amended July 1998,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 98:09</i>
<i>Amended July 15, 1999,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 99:06</i>
<i>Amended July 19, 2002,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 02:15, ACTION VMC:02:16 and ACTION VMC:02:17</i>
<i>Amended June 14, 2003,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 03:10 and ACTION VMC 03:11</i>
<i>Amended July 9, 2004,</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 04:05</i>
<i>Amended February 4, 2006</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 06:05</i>
<i>Amended July 25, 2008</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 08:05</i>
<i>Amended April 10, 2010</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 10:04</i>
<i>Amended February 5, 2011</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 11:02 and ACTION VMC 11:03</i>
<i>Amended July 30, 2011</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 11:09 and ACTION VMC 11:10</i>
<i>Amended July 27, 2012</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 12:03</i>
<i>Amended July 26, 2014</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 14:07</i>
<i>Amended February 6, 2021</i>	<i>ACTION VMC 21:03</i>