

South Central Mennonite Conference
Constitution and Bylaws

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

Recognizing the large geographic area served by South Central Mennonite Conference, its member congregations covenant together to create and sustain an area conference that provides vision, strength and support, enabling congregations to be a faithful, missional witness and presence in their communities, and to the world.

ARTICLE I – NAME, INCORPORATION AND AFFILIATION

Section A. Name and Incorporation

The name of this organization is SOUTH CENTRAL MENNONITE CONFERENCE, INC. (SCMC), operating as a nonprofit corporation authorized to hold title to property in accordance with the laws of the state of Kansas. The Conference Treasurer is designated as the resident agent of the corporation.

Section B. Affiliation

The SCMC is a recognized area conference of Mennonite Church USA. It is a member of the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council and maintains a relationship with the constituent agencies of MC USA. SCMC and its member congregations subscribe to the leadership polity statements of MC USA.

ARTICLE II – COMMON MISSION, FAITH, VISION AND PURPOSE

Section A. Mission Statement

The mission of SCMC is to produce healthy, missional congregations through the resourcing, connecting and empowering of pastors and leaders.

Section B. Statement of Faith and Vision

SCMC affirms the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, and commends this confession to each member congregation as a guide to faith and practice.

SCMC embraces the Vision: Healing and Hope statement of MC USA: God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Section C – Purpose

The purposes of SCMC are:

1. To be and do the mission of Christ's church at an area conference level
2. To do together what congregations cannot do alone
3. To serve as a liaison with other Mennonite bodies and agencies
4. To provide resources for pastors and congregational leaders to be and do the mission of their church
5. To provide oversight for congregations and their leadership

6. To carry out the credentialing process for pastor candidates
7. To provide a context to discern together the will of God
8. To enhance relationships of member congregations with each other

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

Section A. General

Congregations seeking membership in MC USA must first become a member of an area conference, of which SCMC is one.

Section B. Admission

A congregation seeking membership in SCMC will submit a written request for such membership to the Conference Executive Committee, including relevant information regarding its organization and structure, present activities, statement of faith and membership list. After due processing of the application, the request for membership will be submitted to the delegates at the next annual delegate assembly. A two-thirds vote of delegates present is required for acceptance.

Section C. Associate Membership

Congregations that have primary affiliation with another area conference but desire a formalized connection with SCMC may apply for Associate Membership by following the procedures outlined in Section B above.

Section D. Limited Membership

Congregations currently a member of SCMC who choose not to maintain affiliation with Mennonite Church USA may do so upon written request to the SCMC Executive Committee. Congregations seeking initial membership in SCMC but choose not to affiliate with Mennonite Church USA will follow the procedures outlined in Section B. above. Members of such congregations will have the rights, privileges and responsibilities of all other member congregations.

Section E. Expectations and Accountability

Member congregations shall be in agreement with the common faith, vision and purposes of SCMC, and support the work of the conference through participation in delegate assemblies and conference gatherings, providing financial and prayer support, and enabling members to serve in Conference leadership assignments. When pastoral vacancies need to be filled, congregations will invite the counsel and participation of regional conference ministers in selecting persons who are in harmony with the faith and mission of SCMC and MC USA, and who are eligible to be credentialed by SCMC.

Section F. Withdrawal

A congregation may request withdrawal from membership in SCMC, submitting such request in writing to the Conference Executive Committee, including the reasons. The Executive Committee will respond in an effort to establish or maintain communication that can result in as complete an understanding as possible, seeking to create a spirit of harmony and mutual respect. If withdrawal action is completed, the termination of membership will be reported to the next annual delegate assembly for proper closure.

ARTICLE IV – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates at a regular or special delegate assembly, provided that written notice of proposed amendment(s) be furnished to all member congregations at least sixty days prior to the voting session.

BYLAWS

Preamble

These Bylaws accompany and expand upon the Constitution of South Central Mennonite Conference, and should be read and referenced in conjunction with the Constitution.

Article 1 – Conference Year

For purposes of activating positions that are elected or appointed, the conference year will begin at the close of the annual delegate session, generally held in the summer. For financial accounting, the fiscal year will begin September 1 and close the following August 31.

Article 2 – Delegate Assembly

The delegate body is the authoritative decision-making body of SCMC, discerning and acting upon issues related to the work of the Conference. Delegates are selected by, and represent the positions of, their congregations and serve to provide communication in both directions.

Section A – Membership

All congregations in good standing are entitled to one delegate for every 25 members or fraction thereof. In addition, all active licensed or ordained pastors recognized by the conference are accorded delegate status.

As a small area conference, SCMC encourages the presence and participation of non-delegates in annual assemblies. They are eligible to participate fully in discussions and discernment processes, but will not vote on official actions that are limited to official delegates.

Section B – Meetings

SCMC will conduct an annual delegate session at a time and place to be determined by the Executive Committee. Special delegate sessions may be called if matters of importance require action prior to the next annual meeting, in which case a minimum of 30 days advance notice to congregations is required.

In addition to serving as a time for official delegate actions to be taken, the annual meeting will be organized to provide maximum opportunity for congregational sharing, worship and fellowship for all ages, with an emphasis on strengthening family life. For these reasons, attendance is encouraged for persons in addition to congregational delegates.

Section C – Quorum

A quorum will consist of a majority of SCMC delegates present at a properly slated delegate meeting

Section D – Nominations, Elections and Appointments

The Executive Committee will appoint a Nominating Committee whose members will be selected from member congregations.

Those positions calling for the official vote of delegates require a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting, for approval.

The Executive Committee will be authorized to fill vacant positions that occur between annual meetings. Such interim appointees will complete the unexpired term of the position needing replacement.

Article 3 - Officers

The officers of SCMC are the Moderator, Moderator-elect and Treasurer.

Section A - Duties

1. The Moderator shall serve a two-year term as the lead officer of the Conference for a period of two years. The moderator shall preside at Conference delegate sessions and other executive groups and sessions. The moderator will refrain from voting except in the event of a tie.

2. The Moderator-elect shall be elected for a period of two years at the annual delegate assembly in even years. At the end of that term, the Moderator-elect assumes the office of Moderator.

3. The Conference Treasurer is appointed by the Executive Committee for a period of three years and shall lead in the administration of all Conference funds in accordance with the budget adopted at the annual delegate session. The Treasurer shall submit periodic financial reports to the Executive and/or Administrative Committees, and an annual report to the delegate body. The Treasurer may serve successive terms.

Section B – Unexpired terms

In the event an unexpired term exists, the Executive Committee will fill such vacancy, with the appointee serving the remaining time.

Article 4 - Executive Committee

Section A. Functions

The Conference shall organize an Executive Committee to coordinate and administer the total Conference mission, program and budget, accountable to the Conference delegate body. The primary tasks of the Executive Committee include the following:

- Create and appoint members to commissions and task force teams.
- Appoint delegates and/or representatives to church-wide delegate sessions and meetings.
- Prepare agenda and nominations for delegate sessions.
- Provide for congregational and ministerial oversight and support through Regional Conference Ministers or other designated staff.
- Submit Conference Delegate Sessions agenda to congregations in a timely fashion.

- Promote church-wide and conference-wide interests, activities, programs and studies.
- Deal with important conference business between delegate sessions.

Section B. Composition

The conference Executive Committee shall consist of the Moderator, Moderator Elect, Treasurer, two designated Regional Conference Ministers, Ministry Coordinator, Chairperson of the Ministerial Commission, Chairperson of the Church Growth and Vision Team, and a representative from Unidad Cristiana de Iglesias Menonitas (UCIM) appointed by their officers, and one member at large to be recommended by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will meet monthly or on a schedule to be determined by the Committee.

Article 5 – Commissions and Teams

Section A. Ministerial Commission

The Ministerial Commission will consist of at least 5 members appointed by the Executive Committee for a term of 3 years. Members may be reappointed for an additional 3-year term.

In cooperation with the Regional Conference Ministers the commission shall:

- A. Oversee all items relative to pastors and leadership in the conference congregations.
- B. Lead in the credentialing process from interviewing/examining to commissioning, licensing and the ordaining of ministers in the conference.
- C. Provide and renew ministerial credential documents and ensure that copies of all documents and credentials relative to ministers in the conference are kept current in the Conference office.
- D. Provide for and encourage personal, spiritual and professional continuing education and growth opportunities for pastors and lay leaders.
- E. Provide continuing support, advocacy and accountability for pastors and congregations. In cases of difficulties and misconduct, lead and/or monitor the implementation of redemptive processes.
- F. Provide resources to congregations relative to remuneration and working relationships for pastors and staff.

Section B. Church Growth and Visioning Team

The Church Growth and Visioning Team will consist of at least 5 members appointed by the Executive Committee for a term of 3 years. Members may be reappointed for an additional 3-year term. Principal duties of this team include the following:

1. Promote and resource churches in outreach, evangelism and growth.
2. Function as consultants to congregations in the above-mentioned areas and to church planters individually.
3. Be knowledgeable of material and seminar meetings and resources for congregations, providing a means to share their information throughout the conference.

4. Be knowledgeable of growing congregations who can function as learning models that can stimulate passion for and ideas for home congregations.
5. Help nurture interest, oversee and coordinate various forms of church planting, including the ensuring of adequate preparation/planning including appropriate salaries and funding:
 - a. Congregation creating satellites
 - b. Congregation initiating a church plant by itself
 - c. Congregation and conference together initiating a church plant
 - d. Several congregations together initiating a church plant
 - e. Several congregations and conference initiating a church plant
 - f. Conference initiating a church plant

Section C – Other Commissions, Committees and Teams

The Executive Committee may organize other working groups as needs and opportunities become evident. Any such action will be reported to the delegates at the next annual session.

Article 6 – Staff

Staffing will consist of persons, both compensated and volunteer, who can best fulfill the mission of the conference within the financial constraints imposed by available resources. Priority will be given to providing the needed support for pastoral and congregational leadership and fulfilling the obligations inherent in existing as an area conference of Mennonite Church USA. At any given time, this will include some combination of the following:

Section A – Regional Conference Ministers

For the northern region, regional conference ministers will provide direct services to pastors and congregations; one of whom will serve on a part-time basis as the Conference Minister Coordinator. S/he will be responsible to the Executive Committee, which will conduct or arrange for annual reviews. S/he serves as the supervisor of regional conference ministers and is the primary contact for the conference for persons both within and outside the service area.

The primary task of regional conference ministers is to be in regular communication first with pastors and as needed with lay leaders. They will assist in pastoral search, pastoral reviews and evaluations, pastoral transitions, and in situations of conflict that will profit from outside counsel and support.

For the southern region, organized as a group known as Unidad Cristiana Iglesias Menonitas (UCIM), a part-time regional conference minister will provide oversight for the pastors and lay leaders. S/he will be responsible to the UCIM Executive Committee.

Regional conference ministers will be appointed by the SCMC Executive Committee, which will assume responsibility for monitoring and supervision.

Section B – Ministry Coordinator

Typically in the absence of an executive conference minister, a Ministry Coordinator will be appointed by the Executive Committee to give overall direction to the conference office; to carry on needed communication programs and activities; to represent the conference in

relationship to other area conferences and MC USA; to meet with regional conference ministers periodically; and to perform other duties as assigned. Time allocation will be determined by mutual discernment with the Executive Committee.

Section C – Administrative Support

The Executive Committee will ensure that adequate administrative support is provided to maintain proper accounting, record-keeping and communication functions.

Article 7 – Institutional Relationships

As an area conference of Mennonite Church USA, SCMC relates to a variety of organizations that are independent but invite or request an official tie. The Executive Committee will ensure that members from SCMC member churches are available to relate to such organizations as requested. Such appointees, or their respective agencies, may report annually to the delegate assembly, giving an overview of the work and ministry of their affiliated organizations. Such institutional relationships exist with the following organizations:

- A. Hesston College
- B. Schowalter Villa Corporate Advisory Board (appoints one member)
- C. Mennonite Central Committee Central States (appoints one member)
- D. Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership (relates to a denominational minister)
- E. MC USA Biennial Delegate Assembly (appoints one delegate per 1,000 members or fraction thereof)
- F. MC USA Constituency Leaders Council (appoints up to 3 members)
- G. Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp (appoints one representative).
- H. Camp Mennoscah (appoints two board members)
- I. Missional relationships with border congregations in Mexico.
- J. Kansas MDS (appoints 2 board members).

Article 9 – Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by action of the Executive Committee. As such amendments are made, updated copies will be made available to each member congregation for distribution to congregational delegates. In addition, the then-current version of the Bylaws will be included as part of the annual delegate session report book.

Article 10 – Policies and Procedures

The Constitution and Bylaws constitute the organizational structure and function of SCMC. Refer to the manual of Policies and Procedures for detailed implementation steps to achieve the desired outcomes. It can be modified as needed at the discretion of the Executive Committee.