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# Constitution and Bylaws

## Bethel College Mennonite Church

Approved at January 24, 2010 Congregational Meeting  
Amended April 24, 2016, January 29, 2017

## Constitution

(Who We Are)

### Preamble

God calls us to unite under the Reign of God. Jesus Christ calls us to unite in the community of love, peace and justice. The Holy Spirit calls us to unite through relationships within the body of Christ, offering us many gifts.

The basis of our gathering as a congregation is in response to the divine call to be the Church. It is formed out of our voluntary and personal commitment of faith. It is shaped by a shared vision of what God calls us to be and to do. It becomes reality as we work with each other to live to the praise and glory of God.

To respond to this call we covenant together in the following articles.

### Article I: Name

The name of this congregation shall be “Bethel College Mennonite Church.”

### Article II: Our Common Faith and Purpose

#### Section A: One Foundation

“For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 3:11

This Scripture, Menno Simons’ motto, continues to guide our faith and life. It points us toward the true source and object of our love; it instructs us where to find help in our ethical decisions; and it gives the right focus for our commitment to the Kingdom of God. (For a more complete statement of faith see *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* by Mennonite Church USA, [www.mcusa-archives.org/library/resolutions/1995/index.html](http://www.mcusa-archives.org/library/resolutions/1995/index.html)).

#### Section B: Many Ministries

The purpose of the congregation is to participate in God’s work by joining together to fulfill our ministry and needs.

More specifically, the congregation seeks to do the following:

1. Unite in the worship and praise of God.
2. Stimulate Christian growth and discipleship.
3. Provide opportunities for fellowship, sharing and support among members.
4. Engage in service and outreach, both locally and through our conference and institutional relationships.
5. Practice hospitality to others and invite others to faith.

48 **Article III: Relationships**

49 With deep roots in the Christian faith, we affirm an ecumenical vision for the church and commit  
50 ourselves to work cooperatively wherever possible.

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52 We find our particular identity in the Anabaptist Mennonite witness dating from the 16th century  
53 and carried forward to the present by faithful servants of Jesus Christ. We seek to carry out our  
54 ministry as a member congregation of the Mennonite Church USA and its Western District  
55 Conference.

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57 We maintain a special relationship with Bethel College and support the work and services of  
58 other Mennonite organizations including Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World  
59 Conference.

60

61 **Article IV: Membership**

62 Membership in the Bethel College Mennonite Church is open to all who affirm their faith in  
63 God, who seek to live as disciples of Jesus Christ thus claiming him as their Lord and Savior,  
64 who are open to the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and who have received Christian  
65 baptism as the symbol of their commitment and covenant.

66

67 Bethel College Mennonite Church welcomes into fellowship and membership all persons who  
68 confess faith in Jesus Christ, without regard to their race, ethnic background, gender, age, sexual  
69 orientation, education, ability, and other factors which give rise to discrimination and  
70 marginalization.

71

72 Members offer themselves to support Mennonite principles and to share in the life and work of  
73 this congregation.

74

75 **Article V: The Congregation**

76 In keeping with a long Mennonite tradition of congregational autonomy and responsibility, the  
77 congregation as a body shall be the source of major decisions, including but not limited to the  
78 church program, leadership, staff, policies and budget. In periodic business meetings the  
79 congregation shall set the course of the church's life, review work in progress, assign major  
80 responsibilities and commit resources.

81

82 **Article VI: Amendments**

83 This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a regular or  
84 special meeting of the congregation, provided that the notice of proposed amendment has been  
85 published twice, the first time being at least 30 days in advance of the meeting. Notice shall be  
86 in the church bulletin and in at least one of the following: church mailbox, electronic  
87 communication, or newsletter. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be available to all  
88 members.

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94 **Bylaws**  
95 **(How We Organize and What We Do)**

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97 **Bylaw No. 1: Membership**  
98 **Section A: Membership Categories**  
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100 1. Full Membership: Full Membership assumes that this congregation is the primary focus of  
101 Christian commitment and relationships. It includes both resident and nonresident members  
102 whose primary church relationship is with the Bethel College Mennonite Church.  
103

104 2. Wider Fellowship Membership: Wider Fellowship Membership identifies those who have  
105 reasons for relationship to this congregation other than full membership. Such reasons might  
106 include the following:

- 107 • Those of temporary residence in our community.
- 108 • Those removed geographically from our community and who have joined other Christian  
109 congregations but who desire to maintain their relationship to the Mennonite heritage through  
110 this congregation.
- 111 • Those who have special circumstances and reasons to maintain affiliation with this  
112 congregation.

113 Wider Fellowship members shall not be counted in official conference statistics.  
114

115 **Section B: Expectations and Procedures**

116 Persons joining the congregation shall be recommended by the Deacon Commission. Persons  
117 may become members by baptism upon their confession of faith, by letter of transfer or by  
118 affirmation of faith if previously baptized and no letter of transfer is available.  
119

120 All members, including Wider Fellowship, shall be eligible to vote in congregational meetings.  
121 Only Full Members may hold positions elected by the congregation. Only Full Members or  
122 Wider Fellowship Members are eligible for positions appointed by the Gifts Discernment  
123 Committee or for standing committees appointed by the Church Board. This assumes  
124 geographical proximity as well as willingness and ability to participate.  
125

126 Requests for letters of transfer of membership to another congregation or termination of  
127 membership may be granted by the Lead Pastor and reported to the Deacon Commission and the  
128 congregation.  
129

130 The Deacon Commission shall have primary jurisdiction over membership concerns and be  
131 responsible for maintaining a relationship with nonresident and inactive members. Members  
132 who give no indication of continuing interest and/or participating over a period of three years  
133 may be considered inactive and their names may be removed from the membership roll. This  
134 shall not be applied to anyone before age 30. Members who become nonresident are encouraged  
135 to identify with a Christian congregation where they reside.  
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138 **Bylaw No. 2: Organization**

139 All meetings of the Church Board, commissions, and committees are open to members of the  
140 congregation. The designated members of these bodies shall have decision-making powers. The  
141 Chair may extend the right to speak to all present. The Church Board, commissions, and  
142 committees may declare an executive session when needed in order to determine appropriate  
143 action to be taken when they return to the open meeting.  
144

145 **Section A: Church Officers**

146 1. Moderator: The Moderator of the congregation shall also serve as Chair and voting member  
147 of the Church Board. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Church Board and shall,  
148 subject to the control of the Church Board, have general supervision and direction of the business  
149 of the Church Board. The Chair shall be a member ex officio of all the commissions and  
150 committees and shall exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may be assigned to  
151 the chair by the Church Board or by these bylaws. The term of office shall be two years.  
152

153 2. Moderator Elect: The Moderator Elect of the congregation shall serve as a voting member of  
154 the Church Board and shall preside at meetings of the Church Board and the congregation when  
155 the Moderator is unavailable. The term of office shall be two years followed by two years as  
156 Moderator.  
157

158 3. Clerk: The Clerk of the congregation shall also serve as secretary and voting member of the  
159 Church Board. The Clerk shall be the recorder of minutes at all meetings of the congregation  
160 and at all meetings of the Church Board and shall keep a book of minutes for the congregation  
161 and for the Church Board at the main office of the congregation. The Clerk shall keep a record  
162 showing a current list of all church members and their addresses. The Clerk shall give notice of  
163 all meetings of the congregation and of the Church Board as required by these bylaws and shall  
164 have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Church Board  
165 or these bylaws. The term of office shall be two years with a maximum of three full consecutive  
166 terms.  
167

168 If the Gifts Discernment Committee is not able to discern an officer in time for the annual  
169 congregational meeting in April, the Church Board may develop and implement alternatives to  
170 ensure the smooth functioning of the congregation until the April congregational meeting of the  
171 following year.  
172

173 **Section B: Church Board**

174 The Church Board's primary task is to understand and articulate the vision and mission for  
175 Bethel College Mennonite Church. In doing so it leads and unifies the congregation. It provides  
176 the leadership and strategic structure for accomplishing the vision. It delegates most decisions  
177 about specific means for accomplishing the vision by hiring staff and organizing commissions  
178 and committees. The Church Board is responsible for all decisions not reserved by the  
179 congregation. It has the responsibility of monitoring that the vision is carried out.  
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181 The Church Board shall consist of eight elected members plus the Moderator, Moderator Elect,  
182 and Clerk. All are voting members. The term of the elected members shall be two years with a  
183 maximum of two full consecutive terms.

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The tasks of the Church Board are:

1. To lead a periodic process to discover and articulate the mission and vision of the congregation. The current vision statement will be included as an attachment to the bylaws.
2. To establish policies and maintain a record of these policies.
3. To initiate programs in the interest of the congregation.
4. To act for the congregation between its business meetings.
5. To approve job descriptions for all pastoral staff.
6. To prescribe the method and procedure for the selection and/or removal of persons of the pastoral staff and all other persons employed by the Congregation. To recommend to the congregation the length of terms of the pastoral staff.
7. To prescribe the method and procedure for the removal of Church Board members or officers, commission or committee members.
8. To call regular or special meetings of the congregation.
9. To borrow money and incur indebtedness on behalf of the Congregation and to execute, in the church's name, any promissory notes, bonds, mortgages, pledges, or other evidences of debt and securities therefore. To execute, in the church's name, any bill of sale, deeds, and all other conveyance documents necessary to transfer real or personal church property.
10. To review and monitor the work of the commissions. The focus of the Church Board is to develop and monitor the mission and vision that guides the overall goals of the commissions. The focus of the Lead Pastor is to work with commissions in managing the ministry of the church in relation to the mission and vision.
11. To act on requests from commissions to change the number of members specified in these bylaws.
12. To prepare the budget and recommend it to the congregation at the first meeting of the calendar year.
13. To handle routine management tasks, facilitate the work of the Church Board, and strengthen communication, the Church Board may authorize an administrative team chaired by the Lead Pastor.
14. To define the financial services needed by the congregation and to develop a process to secure these services within the framework of the annual budget.

### **Section C: Church Board Appointed Committees**

The Church Board shall appoint five standing committees: Gifts Discernment, Facilities, Finance, Staff Congregation Relations, and Auditing. The Church Board may appoint other committees and task forces as needed to carry on the work of the congregation and the Church Board.

225 1. Gifts Discernment Committee. The Church Board shall appoint a Gifts Discernment  
226 Committee.

227

228 Tasks include:

- 229 a. Identify and nurture the skills, talents, and passions of members and participants by  
230 focusing on gifts rather than tasks and the use of those gifts both within and outside the  
231 congregation.
- 232 b. Assist the congregation to discern persons to serve as officers (Moderator Elect and  
233 Clerk) and Church Board members and to assist the congregation in filling any vacancies  
234 in these positions.
- 235 c. Identify and appoint persons to serve on or fill vacancies on the following commissions:  
236 Deacon, Faith Formation, Hospitality, Witness, and Worship. These appointments will  
237 be reported to the congregation.
- 238 d. Provide for the appointment of delegates to Western District Conference, Mennonite  
239 Church USA, and other bodies as requested by the Church Board.
- 240 e. Assist the Church Board in identifying persons for Church Board appointments and in  
241 related tasks as requested.
- 242 f. Assist and encourage the Church Board, commissions, and other committees to use a gift-  
243 based approach to involving others.

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245 2. Facilities Committee. The Church Board shall appoint the Facilities Committee.

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247 Tasks include:

- 248 a. Supervise the stewardship of the building, grounds, and equipment.
- 249 b. Review maintenance needs regularly.
- 250 c. Assure maintenance tasks are completed.
- 251 d. Review insurance coverage annually in cooperation with Finance Committee.
- 252 e. Identify major facilities projects and coordinate completion after securing approval from  
253 the Church Board.
- 254 f. Maintain long term perspective of maintenance and improvement needs.
- 255 g. Establish committees and short term task forces as needed.

256

257 3. Finance Committee. The Church Board shall appoint the Finance Committee.

258

259 Tasks include:

- 260 a. Supervise the stewardship of financial resources.
- 261 b. Facilitate the creation of an annual budget on behalf of the Church Board.
- 262 c. Promote the annual budget.
- 263 d. Maintain a long term perspective on financial issues.
- 264 e. Review budget expenditures and monitor giving patterns on a regular basis.
- 265 f. Establish committees and short term task forces as needed.

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268 4. Staff Congregation Relations Committee. The Church Board shall appoint a Staff  
269 Congregation Relations Committee.

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271 Tasks include:

- 272 a. Make recommendations to the Church Board regarding pastoral and other staff positions  
273 required to carry on the work of the church.
- 274 b. Assist the Church Board in establishing a job description for the pastoral staff. Assist the  
275 Lead Pastor in establishing job descriptions for other staff. On a regular basis, in  
276 collaboration with the Lead Pastor, review the job descriptions of the pastoral staff and  
277 recommend any changes to the Church Board. On a regular basis assist the Lead Pastor  
278 in reviewing the job descriptions of other staff and making necessary changes.
- 279 c. Take responsibility for the recruitment of prospective staff members other than pastoral  
280 staff, and together with the Lead Pastor, make recommendations to the Church Board as  
281 to the hiring of such staff.
- 282 d. Take responsibility for the annual review of job performance of the Lead Pastor and  
283 provide a report to the Church Board. Assist the Lead Pastor in conducting an annual  
284 review of job performance of other staff members with a report to the Church Board.
- 285 e. Take responsibility for periodic in-depth congregational review of pastoral staff during  
286 each term in consultation with the Church Board.
- 287 f. Make recommendation to the Church Board for pastoral staff salaries and benefit  
288 compensation through the budgeting process. In consultation with the Lead Pastor make  
289 recommendations to the Church Board annually regarding non-pastoral staff salaries and  
290 benefit compensation through the budgeting process.
- 291 g. Make recommendations to the Church Board regarding the renewal of terms for the  
292 pastoral staff.
- 293 h. Be available to all staff to discuss issues as needed.

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295 5. Auditing Committee. The Church Board shall appoint an Auditing Committee.

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297 The committee shall examine the records of the Treasurer at the end of each fiscal year  
298 and shall report in writing to the congregation concerning the accuracy of the records and  
299 the suitability of the accounting procedures used.

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### 301 **Section D: Commissions**

302 Commissions shall focus their tasks to relate to the overall mission and vision of the  
303 congregation as identified and discerned by the Church Board. Each commission will work  
304 collaboratively with church staff in designing and implementing ministries to fulfill the vision.

305

306 Commission members shall be appointed to serve by the Gifts Discernment Committee.  
307 Commissions may organize and establish committees and/or short term task forces as needed.  
308 These committees or task forces may include non-members. Commissions may ask the Church  
309 Board for a change in commission size.

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311 Each commission shall prepare and maintain a policy handbook defining functions,  
312 responsibilities and program, and listing the committees appointed by and responsible to the  
313 commission.

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1. Deacon Commission. The Deacon Commission works with the pastors to be sensitive, aware, and responsive to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of our members, of the congregation as a whole, and to our community. The word “deacon” comes from the Biblical term “diakonia,” a Greek word which means “service.” The Deacon Commission helps our congregation to serve Christ by serving those in need of compassion, care and belonging. The Commission shall consist of six persons. The term of office shall be three years with a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

The Deacon Commission will:

- a. Serve with the pastors as a lay ministry group, offering counsel, support, and participation regarding specific ministry situations as well as for the life and well-being of the congregation.
- b. Oversee membership guidelines and processes. Receive new members through catechism and baptism, upon confession of faith, or through transfer of membership. Respond to issues of discipleship, and to the termination or transfer of membership.
- c. Care for the rites of the church: dedication of children and parents, communion, baptism, anointing, and other identified rites.
- d. Provide for the caring ministry of the congregation through direct personal involvement and by systematic caring/visitation networks. A part of this caring ministry is the responsibility to administer the caring fund in a confidential manner within the congregation and for outreach to our community.
- e. Develop and maintain the ability to contact church members rapidly and initiate the process when the situation demands its use.

2. Faith Formation Commission. The Faith Formation Commission oversees and stimulates educational and other opportunities for continuous, life-long Christian growth and discipleship. The Commission shall consist of five persons. The term of office shall be two years with a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

The Faith Formation Commission will:

- a. Review and evaluate the nurturing of Christian growth and discipleship.
- b. Provide oversight to Sunday School curriculum, teacher recruitment, Sunday School for all ages, Vacation Bible School, guidelines for the safety of children and youth, mentor program, youth ministry, college ministry, nursery and childcare.
- c. Assist and support Sunday School teachers and classes.
- d. Promote and coordinate inter-generational activities.
- e. Provide logistical support to the pastors in the planning and leading of catechism.

3. Hospitality Commission. The Hospitality Commission provides for social activities and events for the interaction of those persons participating with the congregation as well as persons in the wider community. The Commission shall consist of five persons. The term of office shall be two years with a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

The Hospitality Commission will:

- a. Review and evaluate hospitality ministries.



- 360 b. Create guidelines for and coordinate ushers and greeters.
- 361 c. Promote and coordinate fellowship events as needed (meals, funerals, receptions, special
- 362 programs).
- 363 d. Determine methods for inviting, identifying and welcoming guests.

364  
365 4. Witness Commission. The Witness Commission promotes, empowers and equips the  
366 congregation and individual members in ministries of peace, outreach, mission, justice,  
367 reconciliation and creation care. The Commission shall consist of five persons. The term of  
368 office shall be two years with a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

369  
370 The Witness Commission will:

- 371 a. Review and evaluate where God is calling us to serve and witness.
- 372 b. Seek out outreach opportunities locally and globally.
- 373 c. Advocate on peace and justice issues with and on behalf of the congregation within
- 374 guidelines established by the Church Board.
- 375 d. Promote various mission programs and opportunities.
- 376 e. Help individuals and the congregation partner with existing outreach and peace agencies.

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378 5. Worship Commission. The Worship Commission assists pastoral and musical staff in  
379 utilizing available resources to ensure that worship aligns with the congregation's vision, is  
380 spirit-filled and wholistic, and strengthens Christian discipleship. The Commission shall  
381 consist of five persons. The term of office shall be two years with a maximum of two full  
382 consecutive terms.

383  
384 The Worship Commission will:

- 385 a. Review and evaluate music, preaching, art, worship themes, rituals, etc.
- 386 b. Equip members for leadership in worship.
- 387 c. Discern long-range worship themes, directions and projects.
- 388 d. Assist with special worship services.

### 389 390 **Section F: Auxiliaries**

391 Auxiliaries exist to serve special needs and interests within the church. They elect their own  
392 officers and prepare their own programs and budgets. An auxiliary must be approved by the  
393 Church Board. Each auxiliary shall make an annual report of its activities to the congregation.

### 394 395 **Bylaw No. 3: Staff**

#### 396 **Section A: Pastoral Staff**

397  
398 The Church Board shall recommend what pastoral staff is needed and make nomination to the  
399 congregation. It shall present the name of the nominee to the congregation along with a  
400 description of the person's abilities and character. A vote shall be taken at a regular or specially  
401 called meeting of the congregation. If the number of votes cast represents a quorum, and if at  
402 least two-thirds of such votes are favorable, the Clerk shall send an official copy of the action of  
403 the congregation to the person elected and an invitation to serve. The same voting requirements  
404 apply to renewal of terms. The Church Board shall recommend the initial term length and the  
405 renewal term length.

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**Section B: Other Staff**

In consultation with the Lead Pastor and the Staff Congregational Relations Committee as well as with appropriate commissions and committees, the Church Board shall determine the positions and persons for non-pastoral staff. Such positions may include administrative assistant, custodians, music staff, and others. The Church Board shall hire and appoint such persons to those positions, working within the limitations of the annual budget and/or action by the congregation.

**Section C: Staff Organization**

The Church Board shall designate a Lead Pastor who shall serve as head of all staff and be responsible for maintaining a productive and effective team, for ensuring that its efforts are directed toward fulfilling the congregation’s mission and vision of ministry, and for staff compliance with all board policies.

The Lead Pastor is accountable to the Church Board. Other staff are supervised by and are accountable to the Lead Pastor.

Staff is expected to work collaboratively with the Church Board, commissions and committees. The Lead Pastor shall determine the most effective and efficient use of staff time in relating to these groups. Staff may attend any meeting of the Church Board, commissions, or committees as non-voting participants unless an executive session has been authorized from which a staff member is excluded. Non-pastoral staff are eligible to serve as voting members of commissions or committees unrelated to their job description.

The Church Board shall have a grievance procedure in place for staff.

**Bylaw No. 4: Congregational Business Meetings**

**Section A: Regular Meetings**

Three regular congregational business meetings shall be held per year.

1. A meeting in January primarily to consider and act on financial and budgetary matters.
2. A meeting in April primarily to hear annual reports and to elect church officers and members of the Church Board.
3. A meeting in September primarily to consider programs of the church.

**Section B: Special Meetings**

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Church Board or upon petition of 10 members of the congregation. Items for consideration at a special meeting shall be included in the advance announcement along with place and time of meeting. Items not so announced may be considered upon unanimous agreement of those present.

**Section C: Quorum**

The presence of 10 percent of the full and wider fellowship members for the current year establishes a quorum at any regular or special meeting of the congregation.

452 **Section D: Procedure**

453 The Church Board shall determine the time and place of all business meetings. The meetings  
454 shall be announced twice, the first time being at least 14 days prior to the congregational  
455 meeting.

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457 Recommendations to the congregation may be made by a member, by a committee, by a  
458 commission, or by the Church Board. However, in the interest of harmonious work, such  
459 recommendations should be shared with the Church Board whenever possible before  
460 presentation to the congregation.

461 **Section E: Elections and Terms of Office**

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463 The election of the Moderator Elect, Clerk, and Church Board shall be by ballot. Nominations  
464 from the floor for elective officers and the Church Board are in order providing the nominee has  
465 agreed to serve if elected.

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467 To be elected the nominee shall receive a majority of the votes cast.

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469 The terms of elected and appointed office holders begin on June 1 of applicable years and end on  
470 May 31.

471 **Section F: Calendars**

472  
473 The fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

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475 The organizational year shall begin on June 1 and end on May 31.

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478 **Bylaw No. 5: Rules of Order**

479 In all matters not covered by the Constitution, the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*  
480 shall be followed. By a two-thirds vote the congregation may adopt alternative rules for making  
481 specified decisions.

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483 **Bylaw No. 6: Amendments**

484 These bylaws may be amended by a simple majority of the members present at a regular or  
485 special meeting of the congregation, provided that notice of proposed amendment has been  
486 published twice, the first time being at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Notice shall be in the  
487 church bulletin and in at least one of the following: church mailbox, electronic communication,  
488 or newsletter. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be available to all members.  
489