

By Laws and Organizational Plan

Stone Church of the Brethren

November 1998

current revision: January 2019

BY LAWS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN
Stone Church of the Brethren
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania

Draft: 11-12-15

ARTICLE I CORPORATE NAME

The name of the congregation shall be “(The) Stone Church of the Brethren of Huntingdon.” The congregation was first organized on September 28, 1878. It was incorporated as "The Brethren (German Baptist) Church of Huntingdon, PA” on June 16, 1888, and the name was updated in 1972 to the current name.

ARTICLE II FISCAL YEAR AND CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the congregation shall be designated by the Annual Conference. The church year shall be designated by the Church Leadership Team. Currently, the fiscal year corresponds to the calendar year.

ARTICLE III PURPOSE

The purpose of the church is to nurture a worshiping, working, learning, and serving fellowship with those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and seek new and renewing life as his disciples.

It shall be our goal to foster openness, acceptance, tolerance, mutual respect and all other qualities of Christian love within the fellowship. All persons shall be welcome regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, economic circumstance, or current relationship with God, and we shall seek to develop the sensitivity of members so that we can identify the needs of those within and outside the congregation and act responsibly. It shall be our aim to help the members of our fellowship to be free to be themselves by their own understanding and conscience; and whether biblical interpretation of morality be traditional or innovative, they shall be regarded as brethren free from force, judgment and violation of personality.

The fellowship shall have inner and outer directions for mission. The inner direction will concentrate on the nurture of members in Christian love and maturity, encouraging shared responsibility for the work of the congregation. The outer direction will concentrate on individual and corporate witness to the world, participating in those causes and movements that are perceived as being consistent with God's purpose, while loving and serving others and inviting them to join with us in the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE IV RELATIONSHIP TO THE WHOLE CHURCH

A. The Church

The local church is part of a large whole which comprises the complete body of Christ. The local church, therefore, shall recognize other Christian bodies and denominations, and shall seek to cooperate with, and give direction to, the united efforts of the church universal.

B. The Church Denominational

This congregation covenants to support faithfully the program of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactments as having guidance in its life, and shall remain a congregation of the Church of the Brethren. This congregation recognizes its obligation to send delegates to official conferences of the Church of the Brethren in which it is entitled to have representation.

In case of strife or division, if any part of the congregation refuses to maintain its relationship with the Church of the Brethren, the party of the congregation whether or not a majority of its membership, which continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren, shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all of the property of the congregation.

If the congregation (a) disbands, (b) departs from its relationship with the Church of the Brethren, or (c) so decreases in numbers and financial strength as to render the congregation unable to fulfill its purpose, the district of the Church of the Brethren in which it is located, or its successor, shall have the right to take charge and control of all property, and thereafter to hold, manage and convey the same at the discretion of the district.

ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP

A. Meaning of Membership

Church membership is not to be regarded lightly because it is membership in the body of Christ. Both the congregation and each member shall diligently strive to make membership meaningful and significant.

All members shall be active in seeking and the church shall be diligent in helping them to discover meaningful places in the ministry of Christ's church. It is expected that members shall be faithful in attendance at the worship services, communions and other meetings of the congregation, and in their stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

All members shall be aware that they are responsible for a witness that is Christian in all aspects of their daily living.

B. Reception of Members

Applicants shall be offered instruction in the faith and practices of the Church of the Brethren prior to being received into membership. The occasion of their reception shall be a service of spiritual dignity, beauty and meaning.

Members may be received (a) by confession of faith and baptism by trine immersion as practiced by the Church of the Brethren; (b) by confession of faith and instruction in church membership for those persons who have received infant baptism in another Christian tradition but were never confirmed; (c) by letter of transfer from another congregation of the Church of the Brethren or any other denomination; or (d) by reaffirmation of faith. Membership in the local church shall be open to all persons irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability or economic circumstance.

C. Membership Classification

1. Active member

An active member is one who participates in the life of the church in such ways as he/she is able as defined under "Meaning of Membership."

2. Associate member

Associate members are those who choose to retain membership in a Christian denomination other than the Church of the Brethren, or another Church of the

Brethren congregation, but would also like to become “associated” with the Stone Church of the Brethren. Associate members are eligible to hold leadership position on the leadership team, serve as team members, and vote in congregational business meetings. Associate members are not eligible to represent the congregation as delegates to district or annual conferences, or serve as officers of the church. The associate member category is a local one and is not transferable to or from another congregation.

3. Non-resident member

A non-resident member is one who lives at such distance from the church as to make it impossible or impractical to discharge the responsibilities of active members. Ordinarily such a member should seek a new church home where he/she may be actively involved and should transfer his/her letter to the congregation. As the home congregation, we will encourage the non-resident member in this procedure.

4. Inactive member

Any member who without sufficient reason fails to fulfill the responsibilities for active membership for two consecutive years will no longer be considered an active member of the congregation.

5. Friend

A person attending and participating in church programs who has not come to the point of desiring membership.

D. Membership Termination

Membership in the Stone Church of the Brethren may be terminated by any of the following:

1. Death

2. Transfer of letter

Letters of transfer shall be sent directly from the granting to receiving congregation.

3. Withdrawal

This action shall be taken by the local congregation at the written request of the individual.

4. Removal

The name of a member may be removed from the membership rolls of the congregation in appropriate instances in a manner consistent with the reconciliation emphasis of the Church of the Brethren. Removal may only be done by a consensus vote of the Leadership team, and then only after notice to the member and opportunity to be heard.

ARTICLE VI CONGREGATIONAL FORUM

A. Organization and Function

The Congregational Forum is the final authority and governing body within the local congregation; it is the church in business session. The Congregational Forum shall hear reports and evaluate past accomplishments, study present conditions, approve the future program of the church, record the voice of the congregation on current issues where Christian witness is urgent and provide the opportunity for sharing and coordinating differing points of view. It shall also affirm officers, adopt budgets, extend a call to the pastor(s) and other set apart church leadership, rule on policy and organizational matters, and authorize church officials to act on behalf of the congregation. All active, associate, and non-resident members are eligible to vote in the Congregational Forum.

B. Meeting Dates

Congregational Forums shall be held at least once per year on dates determined by the Leadership Team, the membership being provided at least twenty days written notice. Special meetings may be called by the Moderator or the Leadership Team upon giving at least seven days written notice to the members. Such notices may be sent by regular or electronic mail and may be incorporated in regular communication media of the church. All notifications of Congregational Forums shall include a statement of the agenda.

ARTICLE VII OFFICIALS OF THE CHURCH

A. Legal Officers

The legal officers of the corporate body shall be the Moderator, Leadership Team Chair, Leadership Team Vice Chair, Church Clerk, and Treasurer. All legal documents shall be

signed by the Moderator or Leadership Team Chair and attested to by the Church Clerk or Treasurer. The legal officers may not hold any other elective position in the church. All legal officers are ex-officio members of the Leadership Team with vote.

B. Church Officers

All officers shall be members of the congregation. They are recommended by the Gifts Discernment Team and affirmed by the Congregational Forum. The officers shall be selected in such a way as to have staggered terms insofar as is possible.

1. There shall be a Moderator who presides at the Congregational Forum and performs all other duties that pertain to the office. The Moderator shall relate to other groups and committees in the church as appropriate.

The Moderator serves a term of three years and may succeed him/herself but not for more than two terms in succession. The Moderator takes office at the beginning of the next church year after the Congregational Forum at which he/she is affirmed. The Moderator may sign checks drawn on the bank accounts upon proper authorization.

2. The Church Clerk is responsible for keeping minutes of the Congregational Forum and the Leadership Team meetings. Minutes shall be kept in a volume provided for that purpose and they shall be and remain the property of the congregation. The Church Clerk is responsible for delegating minutes taking at any meeting at which the Church Clerk is absent. The Church Clerk serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself, but not for more than two terms in succession.
3. The Treasurer shall keep the books of accounts of the congregation. He/she is responsible for insuring the proper deposit of all income and contributions to the church. He/she is responsible for the disbursing of all funds upon proper authorization and can sign checks drawn on the accounts. The Treasurer is responsible for the production of all financial reports as requested by the Congregational Forum and/or the Leadership Team at intervals decided by the Leadership Team. He/she shall submit all accounts to an audit annually at the direction of the Leadership Team. The Treasurer is an ex-officio member of the Finance Ministry Team with vote.

The Treasurer serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself upon mutual agreement with the Leadership Team and the Congregational Forum:

4. The Leadership Team Chair shall prepare agendas for, convene and preside at the Leadership Team meetings. He/she and the Moderator shall be considered the official representatives of the church to outside bodies except as specified elsewhere. The Leadership Team Chair serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself, but not for more than two terms in succession. The Leadership Team Chair may sign checks drawn on bank accounts upon proper authorization.
5. The Leadership Team Vice-Chair shall preside at Leadership Team meetings in the absence of the Leadership Team Chair and shall perform the duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's inability to perform his/her duties. The Leadership Team Vice-Chair shall be responsible for communicating the actions and meetings of the Leadership Team to the congregation. The Leadership Team Vice-Chair serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself, but not for more than two terms in succession. The Leadership Team Vice-Chair may sign checks drawn on the church bank accounts with proper authorization.

ARTICLE VIII LEADERSHIP TEAM

A. Organization

There shall be a church leadership team, hereafter referred to as the Leadership Team, consisting of from twelve to seventeen voting members affirmed by the Congregational Forum. The Moderator, the Leadership Team Chair, the Leadership Team Vice-Chair, the Church Clerk, the Treasurer and each Ministry Team will send a representative who shall have a vote. The Church Clerk shall serve as secretary for the Leadership Team.

B. Responsibilities and Functions

The Leadership Team shall be invested with administrative powers to:

1. Fulfill the directives of the Congregational Forum.
2. Act on behalf of the Congregational Forum in the interim except for those actions specifically reserved for the Congregational Forum as set forth in these bylaws.
3. Assign, supervise, and coordinate the work of the ministry teams.

4. Conduct long-range planning, set goals, and initiate new programs.
5. Interpret rules of procedure for ministry teams and committees.
6. Make all appointments of positions not otherwise provided for in these bylaws.
7. Prepare a ballot or slate for use by the Congregational Forum in affirming the Gifts Discernment Team members.
8. Fill all vacancies in elective offices occurring between Congregational Forums and fill other vacancies as circumstances may require.
9. Bring essential recommendations related to filling pastoral vacancies to the Congregational Forum.
10. Prepare the agenda for the Congregational Forum.
11. Approve the proposed budget for presentation to the Congregational Forum.
12. Approve and supervise, within the limits of the budget established by the Congregational Forum, the expenditures of all funds.
13. Approve and supervise all contracts of employment.
14. Provide for the annual audit.
15. Allocate and define authority annually with respect to the accounts and the signing of checks. All checks written against church accounts shall require two (2) authorized signatures.
16. Solicit, receive, consider, and make disposition of concerns of any group or individual member.
17. Report its activities and actions at the Congregational Forum.
18. Bring recommendations to the Congregational Forum concerning establishment, execution or interpretation of major church policy.
19. Enlist the help and the counsel of the district minister and/or other district personnel in program planning and handling of special concerns.

C. Meeting Dates

The Leadership Team shall ordinarily meet monthly. Special meetings of the Leadership Team may be called by the Leadership Team Chairperson or Moderator. Leadership Team meetings are open to all members, except during an executive session. No action shall be taken in executive session.

ARTICLE IX MINISTRY TEAMS

A. Organization

There shall be seven to twelve ministry teams, each of which will be represented by one voting representative along with a voting representative from the Deacon body at Leadership Team meetings. Current ministry teams are as follows:

1. Hospitality and Fellowship
2. Christian Education
3. Worship
4. Finance
5. Church Property
6. Witness
7. Gifts Discernment

Other teams may be determined by the Leadership Team and approved by the Congregational Forum.

Each ministry team shall have a chairperson, who is a member of the church, called out by the Gifts Discernment Team and affirmed by the Congregational Forum. Each ministry team chairperson serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself, but not for more than two terms in succession. Ministry teams shall have such duties and responsibilities as may from time to time be assigned by the Congregational Forum or the Leadership Team.

1. Gifts Discernment

There shall be a Gifts Discernment Team consisting of five members, including a chairperson, affirmed by the Congregational Forum from a slate prepared by the Leadership Team. All selected persons will serve a three-year term and may succeed

themselves, but not for more than two terms in succession. The pastor(s) shall serve ex-officio without vote.

2. Deacons

The Stone Church Deacons are members of the church, called out from the body to be dedicated caregivers using spiritual gifts to support the Stone Church pastors and our community of faith.

Each member of the deacon body shall be called to a three-year term, with no limit to the number of terms the church may call them. Deacon terms shall be staggered. The Deacons shall have a leader or leaders, who shall be chosen by the deacon body yearly in December for the following year.

Deacons shall be called by the following process:

1. The congregation at large shall be invited to provide names of persons in whom they identify a possible call to this ministry.
2. A discernment team, made up of the Pastor(s), Deacon Leader(s), and a member of the Gifts Discernment Team shall review those names and others that arise, and identify candidates for deacon ministry to be invited.
3. After those called have agreed to serve if affirmed, the Leadership Team shall approve the slate for final affirmation by the Congregational Forum.
4. The Congregation then calls the Deacons through an affirmation of the slate by the Congregational Forum.

ARTICLE X COMMITTEES

A. Pastoral Relations Committee

1. The Pastoral Relations Committee serves to enhance the relationship between the pastor(s) and the congregation in a structured way. There are three primary functions of the committee: communication between the pastor(s) and the congregation, evaluation of the work of the pastor(s), and interpretation of the role of the pastor(s) in the life of the congregation. The committee acts as a confidential body for the pastor(s) and an advocate for the pastor(s) in relation to contractual matters with the Leadership Team.

2. The committee will consist of five persons: the Moderator, two members of the congregation selected by the pastor(s), and two members of the congregation selected by the Leadership Team. Appointed persons serve a three-year term and may succeed themselves, but not for more than two terms in succession. All members have a vote.
3. The committee will ordinarily meet quarterly to review the job description and its implementation and to celebrate successes and share any concerns.
4. The chair of the committee will be the Moderator, who will be responsible for calling and conducting all committee meetings.
5. Detailed and specific functions of the committee will be approved by the Leadership Team.
6. The Personnel Committee will negotiate the annual contract with the pastor(s) and recommend the contract to the Leadership Team for approval.

B. Personnel Committee

1. The Personnel Committee serves to enhance the relationship between the employed staff and the pastors and congregation in a structured way. There are three primary functions of the committee: review and execute annual contracts with employed staff positions, assist pastor(s) with staff performance improvement matters, and recommend annual salaries to the Leadership Team.
2. The Personnel Committee shall consist of four members: the Moderator, the Leadership Team Chair, the Leadership Team Vice-Chair, and a member of the congregation at large appointed by the Leadership Team. The appointed person serves a three-year term and may succeed him/herself, but not for more than two terms in succession. The Moderator will serve as chairperson and will convene all meetings.

C. Short-term Committees, Project Teams & Circles

The Congregational Forum and/or the Leadership Team may establish or authorize short-term committees to carry out specific assignments. When the specific assignment is achieved, the committee shall be dismissed.

At such times as it is necessary to call a pastor, the Leadership Team shall, on its own recommendation or at the direction of the Congregational Forum, form and establish a pastoral search committee consisting of such number of persons as the Leadership Team deems necessary. In appointing a pastoral search committee, the Leadership Team shall endeavor to achieve a broad representation of the formal and informal groupings within the congregation. The pastoral search committee, when formed, shall have responsibility, in consultation with the district minister, for seeking the names of qualified individuals to call as pastor and to interview such candidates and make recommendations to the Leadership Team and the Congregational Forum.

ARTICLE XI EMPLOYED STAFF

A. Pastor(s)

1. The congregation shall employ a pastor(s) whose faith, educational qualifications and aptness to teach, preach, counsel, and administer have been examined in consultation with the appropriate authorities in the Church of the Brethren.

The pastor(s) shall be properly ordained or meet the criteria for ordination. (In special interim situations a licentiate, or a minister from another denomination, may serve.) The pastor shall accept and adhere to the faith and practices of the Church of the Brethren and the local congregation as set forth in Article III of these bylaws, and his/her life and conduct shall witness his/her Christian faith.

2. The pastor(s) shall be the spiritual shepherd of the congregation and the administrator of the church program. He/she shall be an ex-officio member of the Leadership Team without vote and the Ministry Teams. Normally the pastor(s) shall preach and teach, administer the ordinances, visit and counsel, and in various other ways lead the congregation in worshiping and serving God.
3. The selection and call of a pastor or pastor(s), as well as the termination of their services to the congregation, shall be in keeping with Annual Conference procedures and after seeking the counsel and guidance of the authorized officials of the Church of the Brethren.

When calling a pastor or pastors, the procedure will be as follows: The pastoral search committee will recommend a pastoral candidate to the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team will make its recommendation to the Congregational Forum.

B. Additional Staff

The Leadership Team determines the need for additional staff and makes recommendations to the Congregational Forum. Additional staff is employed by the Leadership Team in consultation with the pastor(s).

C. Employment Contracts

The terms of employment for all employed staff shall be carefully stipulated and reviewed annually by the Personnel Committee. When the terms have been mutually accepted, such terms shall be set forth in writing on approved forms and shall be considered an agreement between the contracting parties.

D. Allocation of Responsibility

When there are multiple staff, the allocation of responsibility and the lines of authority shall be clearly defined and periodically reviewed by the Leadership Team. Although there must be close cooperation and harmony among staff members, in the final analysis, all personnel are responsible to the congregation for the conduct of their positions.

ARTICLE XII NOTICES

Unless more specifically set forth herein, advance notice of all meetings shall be given to the membership in a manner determined to be adequate by the Leadership Team.

ARTICLE XIII QUORUM

A. Congregational Forum

Although it is desirable to have as many members present as possible for the Congregational Forum, no quorum shall be required.

B. Leadership Team and Ministry Teams

For meetings of the Leadership Team and the Ministry Teams, a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE XIV RULES OF ORDER

Unless otherwise specified in these bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order shall be the official rules of order for the Congregational Forum and the Leadership Team meetings.

ARTICLE XV AMENDMENTS

These bylaws of the congregation may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular session of the Congregational Forum provided that written notice of the proposed amendment has been given in the call of the meeting issued at least thirty days prior to the meeting.

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Adapted and enforced 11/20/82

By-law changes regarding Pastoral Relations Committee were approved by consensus at Congregational Forum on October 30, 1994.

Deacon body detail was added 2/95.

Changes in Article XIII were approved at congregational business meeting on April 21, 1996 and added 4/22/96.

Retyped and formatted 3/17/97 and finalized 4/17/97

Revised Articles VII, VIII, and XI by CBM 11/1/98

Draft changes made by Harriet Kaylor, 9-29-06; by Betty Ann Cherry and Harriet on October 23, 2006; again by Betty Ann Cherry on September 20, 2014; and by Rick Laabs November 12, 2015.

Changes in Article IX, as recommended by the Deacons, were approved at congregational forum on January 26, 2019 and added on 2/28/2019 by Deborah Barrette, Administrative Assistant.