

# **CONSTITUTION**

of the

## **Biblical Mennonite Alliance**

August, 2018

### **Preamble**

Jesus Christ, having all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23); He, being ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, received gifts for His Church, and gave all offices necessary for the edification of His church and the perfecting of His saints (Ephesians 4:10-12).

Jesus, the Mediator, the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Savior, and Head of the Church, contains in Himself, by way of eminence, all the offices in His Church, and has many of their names attributed to Him in the Scriptures. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister, Bishop and the only Lawgiver in Zion. It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men, thus mediately exercising His own authority and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His Kingdom.

Christ, as King, has given to His Church truth, ordinances and officers; and especially has He ordained His system of doctrine, living, government, discipline and worship, all of which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced therefrom.

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, He is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit, and the benefits of all His offices are effectually applied by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we, as duly ordained Anabaptist ministers of the gospel, fully acknowledging the priesthood of all true believers, yet sensing God's definite direction in providing for the leadership and guidance of His sheep, and acting by Christ's authority as delegated to us, do hereby establish this constitution as a structural outline of the organization of congregations and ministers which we believe Christ has called into being for "such a time as this".

### **Article I Name**

This organization shall be called **BIBLICAL MENNONITE ALLIANCE**.

### **Article II Mission Statement**

Acknowledging the Holy Scriptures as God's timeless truth which is completely sufficient for all of man's needs (Matt. 4:4), the Alliance is committed to the world-wide propagation of that inerrant Word in order to provide fellowship, instruction, accountability, prayer, missions, and service opportunities to the congregations and ministers of conservative Anabaptist theology and practice.

### **Article III Doctrine**

The Alliance endorses the Mennonite Confession of Faith of 1963 as a minimum expression of its doctrine.

## **Article IV Membership**

### **Introduction**

The Alliance shall be composed of congregations and ministers who embrace and promote the practice of biblical doctrines as understood and defined by the Alliance in the “BMA Position and Policy Statement” and other adopted documents (see appendices). This includes working harmoniously with Alliance procedures.

#### **A. Congregational Membership**

Congregations may be received into Alliance membership after thorough examination by the Council of Overseers and satisfactory vote of the Alliance. The ordained ministers of each member congregation shall also be its voting messengers to the Alliance. These ministers must also be members of the Alliance. If a congregation is without an ordained minister, the Council of Overseers may authorize a lay or licensed leader to vote on behalf of that congregation provided that said individual is fully examined using the approved ministerial questionnaire. Such authorization shall be in effect only as long as the congregation is without ordained leadership.

#### **B. Ministerial Membership**

1. The ministerial membership of the Alliance shall consist of ordained men such as overseers, bishops, ministers, and deacons. They shall be the final decision-making body of the Alliance.
2. Ordained ministers may become members of the Alliance by satisfactory vote of the Alliance ministers after they have been given written and oral examinations arranged by the Council of Overseers concerning their call to the ministry, doctrinal beliefs, life practices, and positions on church polity. As a prerequisite to the oral examination, a written recommendation must be submitted by the candidate’s regional overseer.
3. Ministers who come from non-BMA congregations and embrace and promote BMA values may become affiliate members. They may hold office with the exception of serving on the Board of Executors and the Council of Overseers.
4. Ordained ministers who are involved in full-time evangelistic, missionary, or Bible conference ministries may become members of the Alliance by the above process provided that they are recommended by the overseer of their region.
5. Alliance members who are in good standing in the Alliance but no longer hold membership in a BMA congregation shall be given the option to 1) become an affiliate member, or 2) withdraw from the Alliance. All affiliate members shall participate in a BMA region for the purpose of fellowship and accountability.

## **Article V Meetings**

#### **A. Annual Convention**

Each summer, the Alliance will hold a multi-day meeting which will include Biblical exposition, training in ministry, prayer, fellowship, and mutual sharing. The entire Alliance constituency shall be encouraged to attend.

#### **B. Ministerial Enrichment**

Each winter, there will be a multi-day meeting for the Alliance ministers. The program shall include Biblical exposition, training in ministry, prayer, fellowship, and mutual sharing.

#### **C. Business Sessions**

All business sessions shall be scheduled by the Board of Executors. Quorum for business sessions shall be the members present.

## **Article VI Regionals**

- A. The Alliance shall be divided into regions for purposes of local fellowship and accountability. Each of these regionals shall operate under the watchful care of an overseer. When a regional exceeds seven congregations, the Council of Overseers will initiate a process for the formation of an additional regional(s).
- B. All the BMA ministerial members in a region are encouraged to meet quarterly under the leadership of their Regional Overseer for fellowship, prayer, and accountability. One of these meetings will be held during Ministerial Enrichment, and one of them will be held during the summer Convention.

## **Article VII World-wide Missions**

- A. Taking the great commission of our Lord very seriously, the Alliance will endeavor to do its part to carry the gospel into all the world, attempting to establish biblical Anabaptist churches wherever our missionaries labor. BMA mission work shall prioritize unevangelized fields (those with less than 5% Christian population); however, such shall not be the exclusive BMA missionary thrust. Under-evangelized fields shall also be given appropriate consideration.
- B. The mission agency known as DestiNATIONS International (DNI) is and is to remain a wholly-owned and integral subsidiary of Biblical Mennonite Alliance.
- C. DNI shall be directed by a mission board consisting of seven Alliance ministers nominated by the Council of Overseers and elected by the Alliance. The DNI Board will be accountable to the Council of Overseers on policy issues, to the Board of Executors for the execution of said policies, and ultimately to the Alliance for the conduct of all Alliance mission work. The term of office for DNI board members shall be five years. A board member may not serve on the board more than two consecutive five-year terms, not to exceed ten consecutive years. A former board member may be elected to the board after having been off the board for at least a year.
- D. The board is authorized to appoint sub-committees (which should be chaired by an Alliance minister and may include laymen from Alliance congregations) to handle most collateral responsibilities. Long term ministries that are supplemental to church planting, such as an orphanage, should be overseen by sub-committees. Such appointments shall be subject to the approval of the Alliance. The term of office for sub-committee members shall be three years. A sub-committee member may serve three successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.
- E. The administrative officer of the mission shall be a President. He shall be an ordained minister, a member of the Alliance, nominated by the Council of Overseers in consultation with the Mission Board and elected by the Alliance. To be eligible for this office the candidate must evidence a strong commitment to the BMA missionary vision as summarized in section A of this article. The term of office for the President is 4 years. He shall be an ex officio (voting) member of the DNI board.
- F. Great care shall be taken by those with oversight responsibility in the mission to guard the doctrinal stand of the Alliance in all areas of missionary activity.
- G. The President, in concert with the DNI board, shall prepare an annual Guideline Budget covering all aspects of mission operations which shall be presented to the Alliance for approval at the annual Convention Business Session.

## **Article VIII Short Term Missions and Service Ministries**

### **Introduction**

BMA shall provide various world-wide opportunities for short term mission experience, voluntary service and compassion ministries. These are seen as distinct from, yet complementary to, the regular BMA mission program.

- A. To administrate these programs a four-member Voluntary Ministries Board (VMB) of Alliance ministers shall be nominated by the Council of Overseers and elected by the Alliance. The term of office for VMB members shall be four years with a one-term succession possible. A VMB member may not serve more than eight consecutive years without at least a one-year break. The chairman shall be chosen annually by the VMB with the assistance of the BMA moderator or assistant moderator.
- B. The VMB will be accountable to the Council of Overseers on policy issues, to the Board of Executors for the execution of said policies, and ultimately to the Alliance for the conduct of its assigned ministries. The Board of Executors shall appoint one of its members to serve as a liaison between it and the VMB.
- C. The VMB shall actively work to provide short-term mission and voluntary service opportunities to enable BMA youth (and others) to serve the Lord and the needy around us, edify the church, and gain missionary experience. For purposes of this section, short-term missions shall be defined as of two years duration or less. The VMB shall diligently work to enlist our people in these programs and maintain accountability structures in the best interests of the Alliance. When the short-term mission or voluntary service ministry directly involves the responsibilities of DNI, the VMB shall operate under and in concert with DNI.
- D. The VMB shall oversee BMA interests in disaster relief and humanitarian aid, the Mexico orphanage, short-term mission endeavors, and voluntary service opportunities. Bona fide efforts shall be made to cooperate with and supplement the work of other Anabaptist agencies as long as the positions and policies of BMA are not compromised. Where feasible, special effort shall be made to harmonize work projects with other BMA outreach ministries.
- E. The above four areas of responsibility shall be conducted by sub-committees that are appointed by the VMB and affirmed by the Alliance. Lay brethren may serve on these sub-committees. These sub-committees shall be chaired by the VMB member who is assigned that task.
- F. As the need arises, VMB will facilitate alternative service for conscientious objectors.

## **Article IX Training Institutions**

### **Introduction**

Recognizing that training for Christian service is essential as illustrated by the three year training course that Christ conducted for the disciples, the Alliance has two schools for the training of its leaders and members for Christian service — the Elnora Bible Institute - A Ministry of Biblical Mennonite Alliance (EBI) and the Mission Training Center (MTC). These schools are and shall continue to be wholly owned and integral subsidiaries of the Biblical Mennonite Alliance. Extreme care shall be taken in the structure and operation of these institutions to insure as much as possible that there is no compromise of the doctrines and applications of the Alliance.

#### **A. Elnora Bible Institute - A Ministry of Biblical Mennonite Alliance**

1. The EBI shall be directed by a board of five Alliance ministers nominated by the Council of Overseers and elected by the Alliance. The EBI board shall be accountable to the Council of Overseers on policy issues, to the Board of Executors for the execution of said policies, and ultimately to the Alliance for the operation and doctrinal purity of the Institute. The term of office for EBI board members shall be five years. A board member may serve two successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.
2. The EBI board shall concentrate on structuring an educational and social environment at the Bible Institute that first involves spiritual formation and second provides intellectual stimulation in the area of Biblical knowledge and understanding. The board may appoint sub-committees (which should be chaired by an Alliance minister and may include laymen from Alliance congregations) to help handle those responsibilities that do not directly relate to the educational mission of the Bible Institute. Such

appointments shall be subject to the approval of the Alliance. The term of office for sub-committee members shall be three years. A sub-committee member may serve three successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.

3. The administrative officer of the EBI shall be a Principal. He shall be an ordained minister, a member of the Alliance, nominated by the Council of Overseers in consultation with the EBI board and elected by the Alliance. The term of office for the Principal is 4 years. He shall be an ex officio (voting) member of the EBI board.
4. The Principal, in concert with the EBI board or board-appointed ad hoc committee, shall prepare an annual Guideline Budget covering all aspects of the Institute's operations which shall be presented to the Alliance for approval at the annual Convention Business Session.

#### **B. Mission Training Center**

1. The MTC shall operate under the general supervision of the DNI board. A sub-committee of Alliance ministers and lay members of Alliance congregations shall be appointed by the DNI board and confirmed by the Alliance specifically to oversee the affairs of the Center. The chairman of said committee is to be an Alliance minister. The term of office for sub-committee members shall be three years. A sub-committee member may serve three successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.
2. The administrative officer of the MTC shall be a Director. He shall be an ordained minister, a member of the Alliance, nominated by the DNI board, approved by the Council of Overseers, and confirmed by the Alliance. The term of office for the Director shall be five years. He shall be ex officio (voting) member of the MTC sub-committee.
3. The Director shall be accountable to the President of DNI in cooperation with the chairman of the MTC sub-committee.
4. The Director in concert with the sub-committee shall prepare an annual Guideline Budget covering all aspects of the Center's operations which shall be presented to the Alliance for approval at the annual Convention Business Session.

## **Article X Publications**

### **Introduction**

Believing in the importance of publishing materials for information, instruction, and discipleship, the Alliance shall make every effort to provide relevant literature available to its constituency. This would include original essays, pamphlets, booklets, books, and periodicals.

#### **A. Publications Board**

The publications ministry of the Alliance shall be directed by a board of three Alliance ministers nominated by the Council of Overseers and elected by the Alliance. The Publications Board shall be accountable to the Council of Overseers on policy issues, to the Board of Executors for the execution of said policies, and ultimately to the Alliance for the content of its publications. Materials of an instructional nature that bear the endorsement of BMA must be reviewed by the Publications Board. The board shall be responsible to insure that theological purity is not violated by any BMA publications. The term of office for Publications Board members shall be three years. A board member may serve three successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.

#### **B. Editor of Publications**

The administrative officer of the Publications Board shall be the Editor of Publications. He shall be an Alliance minister nominated by the Council of Overseers and elected by the Alliance. The term of office for the Editor is four years. He shall be an ex officio (voting) member of the Publications board. The Editor may appoint, with the approval of the Publications Board, various sub-committees from the membership of Alliance congregations to assist him in his task. Such appointments shall be subject to the approval of the Alliance. The term of office for sub-committee members shall be three years. A sub-committee member may serve three successive terms and be reelected after having been out of office for at least a year.

### **C. Intra-Alliance Communication**

A regular newsletter including congregational and regional Alliance news, elucidation of Alliance positions on contemporary issues, and open forum topics will be published. Other informational literature may be published at the discretion of the Publications Board.

### **D. Teaching Literature**

The Publications Board shall do whatever is feasible to provide instructional materials for use by BMA congregations. This would include such things as New Believers' Class curriculum, Sunday School curriculum, and other materials to enhance and promote Biblical discipleship.

## **Article XI Officers**

### **A. Regional Overseers**

1. Regional Overseers shall be selected by their respective Regionals as follows: the Alliance Moderator and/or the Chairman of the Council of Overseers shall assist the regional ministerial members through a nomination and selection process resulting in the combined leadership of each congregation submitting one nomination. Two-thirds of the total congregational members voting on the matter from the regional congregations must then ratify the selection by vote. Finally, the Alliance must confirm the selection.
2. A Regional Overseer must be a minister of an Alliance congregation with considerable experience in the ministry and who demonstrates capability in supervision.
3. Term of office for a Regional Overseer shall be five years with re-appointment possible.
4. The duties of the Regional Overseer shall include:
  - a. Organize and conduct quarterly Regional meetings.
  - b. Motivate to holiness and maturity by loving example and counsel all those ministers and congregations under his oversight while avoiding "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."
  - c. Assist local ministers in resolving congregational problems.
  - d. Develop vision and encourage growth and multiplication of congregations.
  - e. Communicate decisions of the Council of Overseers to local ministers.
  - f. Represent the region to the Alliance.
  - g. Promote Alliance programs and activities.
  - h. Report regional activities to the Council of Overseers.
  - i. Facilitate the process of licensing and ordaining new leaders in the region.
  - j. The above does not require the Regional Overseer to administer the ordinances.
5. In summary, the responsibilities of the Regional Overseers are to be seen as primarily pastoral and preventative rather than administrative. While a Regional Overseer may indeed be called to assist with conflict resolution, his primary objective should be to provide shepherding support in creating a culture of peace.

### **B. Council of Overseers**

1. The Council of Overseers shall be composed of all the Regional Overseers. There shall be no limit to the size of this group.
2. The duties of the Council of Overseers shall include:
  - a. Give leadership in policy-making for approval by the Alliance.
  - b. Be the appellate body in cases where problems cannot be resolved at the regional level.
  - c. Be responsible to discipline congregations and ministers who turn away from the Alliance doctrines and their respective applications.
  - d. Prepare appropriate reports to the Alliance of Council actions.
3. The Chairman of the Council of Overseers shall be nominated during a regularly called meeting of the Council and be elected by the Alliance. He must meet the requirements of a Regional Overseer but need not be currently serving in that capacity. He will act as liaison between the Council of Overseers and the Board of Executors. The term of office for the Chairman is four years.

### **C. Board of Executors**

1. The Board of Executors of the Alliance shall consist of seven members: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary/Treasurer, Chairman of the Council of Overseers, President of DNI, Principal of EBI, and Editor of Publications.
2. The Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary/Treasurer, and Chairman of the Council of Overseers shall be elected by the Alliance after having been nominated by the Council of Overseers. They must be ministerial members of BMA and members of an Alliance congregation. Regional Overseers shall not normally serve on the Board of Executors.
3. The Board of Executors is to be seen as the administrative arm of the Alliance.
  - a. It shall be responsible to see that the work of the Alliance goes forward and that tasks are completed.
  - b. It is not a policy-making or legislative body. Co-ordination of all the parts and ministries of the Alliance shall be the responsibility of the Board of Executors.
  - c. The Moderator or Assistant Moderator shall preside at the meetings of the Alliance.
  - d. The President of DNI, the Principal of EBI, and the Editor of Publications shall implement Alliance decisions pertaining to their respective responsibilities.
4. Board of Executors' term of office shall be four years.

### **D. Term Limitations**

The following officers shall not serve more than two successive terms: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Chairman of the Council of Overseers, and Secretary/Treasurer. (Exceptions to this section may be made by official action of the Alliance upon recommendation by the Council of Overseers when such is deemed necessary.)

## **Article XII Administrative Secretary**

In order to facilitate the business of the Alliance, an Administrative Secretary shall be appointed to care for the organizational and operational details. He shall receive reasonable remuneration for his services (to be set by the Board of Executors).

### **A. Qualifications**

1. He shall be a BMA ministerial member.
2. He shall manifest the gift of administration including attention to details.
3. He shall be able to make adequate time available in his schedule for timely completion of BMA related tasks.

### **B. Duties**

1. He shall maintain a working office for BMA which shall include filing space and sufficient equipment to fulfill his BMA related responsibilities. The office need not be solely dedicated to BMA purposes but shall be secure for the orderly conduct of BMA business.
2. He shall assist in planning the various BMA Board and committee meetings with view to synchronizing schedules, arranging for meeting locations, and coordinating business considerations.
3. He shall be responsible for all general correspondence and communications from the BMA office to the ministerial body.
4. He shall act as recording secretary for BMA Business Sessions and Board of Executors' meetings and shall see to the reproduction of all necessary ballots and reports, etc. He shall follow up these meetings with all correspondence details such as thank you notes, notification of speaker assignments, etc.
5. He shall prepare the Annual Directory for printing together with other programs and BMA materials.

### **C. Selection, Accountability, and Term of Office**

1. The Administrative Secretary shall be appointed by joint action of the Council of Overseers and the Board of Executors subject to the approval of the BMA ministerial body.
2. He shall be directly accountable to the Board of Executors for the conduct of his BMA responsibilities.
3. The term of office shall be four years and shall be staggered opposite the Moderator's term. Indefinite reappointment shall be permitted.

## **Article XIII Exempt Organization Policy**

No part of the net earnings of the Alliance shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, officers, or other private persons, except that the Alliance 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 this constitution. No substantial part of the activities of the Alliance shall be the carrying of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Alliance 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, while maintaining tax exempt status, the Alliance shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 602 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or any corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## **Article XIV Dissolution**

Upon the dissolution of the Alliance, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## **Article XV Amendments**

This constitution may be amended by the Alliance at a regular business session by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting provided that the proposed amendment is presented in writing to the Alliance ministerial body at least thirty days before the vote is taken.

### **Record of ratification and amendments:**

Ratified June 5, 1998. Amended August 8, 2003; August 4, 2006; August 3, 2007; February 19, 2011; January 26, 2013 [Article XI.A.1.]; July 26, 2013 [Article IV, B, 5; Article X,A]; July 24, 2015 [Article IV, Intro, B3, B5]; January 30, 2016 [corrections of wording and punctuation; length of term for DNI board members changed from seven to five in Article VII B.]; January 27, 2018 [Article VIII changed VMC to VMB]. July 28, 2018 [Article VIII-B: added a liaison from Board of Executors for VMB.]

The following documents have been adopted by BMA as policies and may be obtained in the 2016 Ministers Manual, on the website, or from the BMA Administrative Secretary:

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| 1. 1963 Confession of Faith  | June 5, 1998          |
| 2. Divorce and Remarriage<br>A Pastoral Response<br>Related Bible Passages | August 6, 1999        |
| 3. Position and Policy Statement   | July 24, 2009         |
| 4. Assessment of Unity   | Nov. 1, 2014          |
| 5. Danvers Statement   | July 22, 2011         |
| 6. Ministerial Sexual Misconduct   | July 26, 2013         |
| 7. LGBT Statement  | July, 2014; Jan. 2015 |
| 8. Sharing Financial Needs within BMA                                      | July 23, 2014         |