

Frequently Asked Questions About Pilgrims Mennonite Church

Below are frequently asked questions about Pilgrims Mennonite Church. For FAQ about Mennonites, check out Third Way Cafe's www.thirdway.com/menno/faq.asp" (*Who Are the Mennonites*).

1) When did PMC begin and what was the vision for the church?

Pilgrims Mennonite Church was formed in 1977 to be a group small and intimate enough that true accountability between members would be a reality. Emphasis remains on discipleship and taking seriously the teachings of Christ.

The aim of the fellowship is to involve all areas of life in the Christian walk and support each other in that walk through involvement in each other's lives. Since its beginnings, a mark of the congregation has been willingness to care for one another and to be supportive in times of need.

2) Tell me about the Sunday worship service?

The group meets weekly on Sunday at 10 a.m. - about noon for corporate worship. It takes place at the the *Welcoming Place* in Akron unless indicated otherwise on the monthly calendar (see next question). There are worship and song leaders as well as a worship planning team.

We continue to use a variety of activities in worship, such as teaching, drama, music, storytelling, dance, silence, and sharing. All members are encouraged to use their gifts in worship. Children are encouraged to participate in various ways including music, Scripture reading and drama.

3) What do people wear to services and what does the worship area look like?

Our worship format and dress is informal. An assigned small group sets chairs each Sunday in a semi-circle configuration so people can be seen and heard. People will come dressed in a variety of ways: slacks, skirts, blue jeans, dresses, polo/dress shirts, sweaters and an occasional sport coat. We accept diversity in dress as well as in theology and lifestyle.

4) How many people attend Sunday worship services

Attendance varies --- between 60-75 people is common for most worship services.

5) I enjoyed my first visit. How do I know when and where the Sunday worship services will be the rest of the month?

Do note that we have worship services that are not at the Welcoming Place on occasion. A monthly calendar is published and circulated by email to those on the Pilgrims mailing list. You can get a paper copy on the literature table in the lobby where we meet for worship. The calendar is also published each month on the website. You will find it on the Monthly Calendar webpage.

6) Okay. I've visited regularly. What is the first step in getting involved with Pilgrims formally?

Most Pilgrims participate in small groups. All members and regular church participants are welcome in small groups. Joining a small group is usually the first step in getting involved with the church. Leadership Team coordinates assigning new people to small groups, considering factors such as group size and geography.

When the new person is in a group, the members help with orientation and ask the new person how they would like to be involved in church life. If a person cannot be in a small group and wishes to join the fellowship, the person would work the decision through with a person or persons selected by the leadership team.

7) Can you tell me more about small groups?

Small groups have functioned in many ways and been involved in many goals throughout Pilgrims history. This includes mission, worship, the support and nurture of members, and accountability for both inward and outward disciplines.

Small groups have included Bible and book study, personal sharing, discussion and socializing. The essential purpose is to help each of us give and receive the kind of support that is essential to being disciplines of Christ. Each small group works out how best to do this.

8) How are new people incorporated into small groups?

New people are incorporated into the small group in various ways. In all cases, the Leadership Team will follow up with new people. The Leadership Team:

- Assists new people in feeling at home
- Gives new persons handbooks and discuss questions about Pilgrims
- Encourages new people to get involved in church as interested and appropriate, including arranging for them to use their gifts
- Discusses their interest in joining a small group or in church membership.

9) How do I become a member of the fellowship? I have enjoyed my experiences at Pilgrims and can affirm the Statement of Mission and Commitment.

When a person wants to be a covenant member, they express that to the small group (or a contact person designated by the Leadership Team if not in a small group), who recommends them for membership. This can take place any time during the year.

All Pilgrims renew their covenant membership at the Maundy Thursday that is held on the Thursday before Easter each year. The Leadership Team initiates the recovenanting process a few weeks before Maundy Thursday and people indicate their intentions prior to the service, to allow time for members to give and receive counsel.

10) What happens when a person who attends PMC has a personal need?

Small groups make sure people get "emergency" assistance when it is needed, for example, meals when someone is ill, help when someone is moving, etc. The leadership team or

someone designated by them carries deacon responsibilities for people not in small group. Structures are in place to help individuals or families with health-related expenses and financial needs.

11) Who takes care of pastoral needs?

Small groups are the primary place where pastoral care occurs. Small groups may work together to meet specific pastoral needs, may designate a person within the group to give time to a specific need or assist in finding support from outside the group for a specific need. In addition, the pastor and nurture elder on the Leadership Team give attention to meeting pastoral needs.

12) Is there a pastor? What is the Leadership Team?

We do have a half-time paid pastoral elder who serves on our Leadership team. This Team oversees church life. While the group works together as a team, they divide their responsibilities:

- Administrative elder - facilities, secretary, stewardship concerns, church files and church business
- Convener- keeper of the overall church vision, chairs leadership team meetings, chairs congregational business meetings
- Nurture elder- spiritual direction, encouragement, small group life, Sunday school, youth
- Pastoral elder- monthly Sunday teachings (there is a Teaching Team), pastoral care and serving as a contact for new people at Pilgrims and with other church organizations
- Worship elder - worship planning, worship leaders, music leaders and retreats

13) How are formal decisions made by the congregation?

Our by-laws state that all decisions of the members shall be by a *consensus* of all members attending the meeting. Our policy has been to announce all major decisions prior to a church business meeting, so if a member is not able to be present, she/he can send comments to the meeting. Decisions are to be made by consensus of members.

Since we have frequently had people among us who are regular church attendees but are not covenant members, we have had a policy of also encouraging those people to attend and participate actively in congregational meetings. A copy of our consensus model for decision making is included in the *Pilgrims Handbook*. This handbook is given to all new people who would like a copy.

14) How does PMC deal with church finances?

A weekly offering is taken as a symbol to our children, and to adults, that giving is part of our life together. Contributions can also be made directly to the treasurer.

PMC gives some of its contributions to church-wide programs and ministries. The remaining funds go primarily to local organizations chosen by the congregation. A member is assigned as a contact person for each organization. A list of organizations to which Pilgrims gives is available on this website's *Giving Projects webpage*.

15) Do you have organized activities for your youth?

Pilgrims has three clubs for our children. Each has sponsors who develop age-appropriate activities for the groups. Older children help the sponsors develop the activities and take leadership in those activities as appropriate. The groups are:

- Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF)- for those in high school
- Junior Youth Club- for those in middle school
- Kid's Club- for those in third through fifth grade

16) What role do children play in PMC life?

Pilgrims considers children an important part of the church community. Children are nurtured and guided so they develop their gifts in the church community. Children's Sunday school and their active participation in Sunday worship are valued elements of our life together. The congregation celebrates rights of passage in children's lives with the following traditions/events:

- Recognition of a child's birth with a symbol during Sunday worship
- Child dedication
- Providing nursery during Sunday worship Sunday
- Sunday school and youth club activities
- Bible presentation when they reach the age of twelve
- Inviting youth to attend Maundy Thursday service when they reach the age of twelve
- Encouraging all high school students to have mentors, and making mentors available for junior high years if desired by youth/parents
- Inviting young people to baptism and church membership
- Inviting high school students to join adults for winter/spring spiritual retreat
- Recognizing high school graduation, after which youth are welcome to join a small group as an adult

17) How can I use my gifts and help with the tasks that are done at Pilgrims?

In addition to the Leadership Team, there are many ways you can contribute to church life.

- Sunday School Superintendent
- MYF Advisors
- Junior Youth Advisors
- Kid's Club Advisor
- Mentor Coordinator
- Lancaster Mennonite Conference District Missionfest Representative
- Bishop Coordinating Committee
- Adult Education/Nurture Coordinator
- Worship Planning Team
- Worship Leaders Team
- Song Leaders Team
- Treasurer
- MCC Building Contact for Welcoming Place
- Monthly Calendar
- Weekly Announcement Sheet
- Nursery Coordinator
- Hospitality Coordinator
- Pilgrims Website
- Mennonite Mutual Aid Representative

- Mennonite Women Representative
- Senior Contact and Birth Announcements in The Mennonite
- Sound System
- Pilgrims Mail
- Mellinger's Parent & Preschool Board

Individuals are also asked to list things they would like to do for worship services. A list is then compiled and distributed to the worship planning team, worship leaders and song leaders.

These tasks includes:

- Read or tell a children's story
- Read Scripture
- Provide special music/instruments
- Sing with ensemble
- Perform drama/skits/dramatic readings
- Learn and perform liturgical dance
- Create banners/displays for worship
- Serve communion
- Give children's blessing during communion
- Give anointing with oil during communion
- Provide teaching/input
- Planning special services (ex-Advent, Christmas, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Easter)

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