

Introduction to Laurel Street Mennonite Church's Living Document

Laurel Street Mennonite Church has a commitment to be together with all our differences. We agree to work out what our life together looks like. Our faith is the common bond we have through Jesus Christ. It is a bond of love, compassion, forgiveness, peace, kindness and caring. We have received these things through Jesus Christ, and we extend them to each other because we have received them in our own lives.

In this spirit, we processed and created a statement of welcome and inclusion throughout 2022 and 2023. This discernment process was highly relational, with the priority focused on consensus and creating safe space for conversation, rather than on theological interpretation. It concluded with the congregation adopting this Living Document, which shares who we are and who we are striving to become as we seek to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly together as followers of Jesus at Laurel Street Mennonite Church.

Our Living Document is alive in two ways. First, it lives in our life and practice as a local expression of the Body of Christ. Secondly, it is not static, but will adapt and evolve as our congregation lives out our faith.

Please continue to the next page to read the Living Document.

**Laurel Street Mennonite Church's
Living Document: Justice and Kindness for All**

This is a living document of who we are and who we are striving to become as we seek to **act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly** (Micah 6:8) together as followers of Jesus at Laurel Street Mennonite Church.

As a community of faith, we at LSMC desire to **act justly** and welcome all peoples including those historically disenfranchised or excluded. We open our doors to worship with and learn from people of all socio-economic classes, racial identities, ethnic backgrounds, ages, diverse mental and physical abilities, languages, giftings, sexual orientations, gender identities, and faith traditions.

We acknowledge we will fall short, nevertheless we want to move toward openness of the Holy Spirit to value all people and welcome their gifts and talents in the ministries of the body. All who affirm our church covenant are invited into the full life of our church including discernment to minister within the church body.

As a community of diverse peoples, we acknowledge and embrace our differences and choose to **love kindness and walk humbly** with one another. We respectfully hold the tensions of our disagreements together as both a resistance of and witness to a culture that constantly works to divide us into groups of "us vs. them." We desire to follow Christ beyond such division into a third way of peacemaking where we are defined by love, mutual embrace, inclusion, and transformation.

We affirm with the apostle Paul that "all are one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28) and approach our differences from a place of humility and a genuine desire to understand each other. By acting justly, loving kindness, and walking humbly; we remain connected, enrich one another, and grow in our love for God and one another.

This document was affirmed on August 14, 2023, with the consensus of the congregation.