

# Highland Mennonite Brethren Church Governance Manual Minute-Taking Guidelines

The writing of meeting minutes is an important responsibility. The minutes of a Highland Mennonite Brethren Church (“HMBC”) Leadership Team Executive (“LTE”) meeting, Leadership Team (“LT”) meeting, Congregational/Membership meeting, or Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) provide an official record of discussions and decisions made. These records show how HMBC as the Body of Christ carries out its mission. The LT Secretary (or their designate in their absence) carries the important responsibility of recording part of God’s story as revealed through the work of HMBC.

To write good minutes, the LT Secretary must concentrate on the task. Minutes must be complete, accurate, and unbiased. Quoted statements must be exact, as must be transcriptions of motions and resolutions. No LT Secretary is perfect. Details may be missed and later pointed out in review of the minutes. However, when the LT Secretary understands the importance of the task and carefully follows along - incorporating the suggestions below - accurate and useful minutes will result.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Recording Minutes

- 1.1. A new LT Secretary examines the minutes of previous meetings to become familiar with the various topics and kinds of information needing to be recorded.
- 1.2. Using a soft copy of the agenda itself as the template for recording minutes on a laptop is the most efficient way for the LT Secretary to follow along with the items being discussed. Having a hard copy of the agenda close at hand will also serve this purpose.
- 1.3. The names of all people present or an estimate of the number of people present (in the case of a large Congregational/Membership meeting) must be recorded.
- 1.4. The LT Secretary takes abundant notes during the meeting; unimportant items can be eliminated later. One of the most persistent problems the LT Secretary faces is how to record accurately a half-hour discussion. Obviously, the entire discussion cannot, and often need not, be transcribed. Careful listening and careful note-taking will be helpful to the LT Secretary in later writing a succinct record, eliminating unnecessary details. A general tendency is to record too little of what transpired. For example, a minute such as: “It was decided to adopt the educational program as presented,” is inadequate. It tells future readers very little, except that some action was initiated. It does not provide the rationale for adopting the program. Minutes must reflect the main points of the discussion leading up to the decision. They should record alternatives that have been under consideration and clarify why this program was adopted in preference to other existing alternatives. The minutes need to reflect what actually went on, with sufficient detail in order that the record can serve as historical information for those who will refer to the decisions years later.
- 1.5. Whenever someone introduces a topic, the speaker’s name is recorded, making an outline of the main points, and noting general comments of the discussion.
- 1.6. A verbatim (word-for-word) record of the important statements, motions, resolutions, amendments, and decisions must be kept.

---

<sup>1</sup> This document includes wording from an updated 2013 version of the *Why Write Minutes?* pamphlet, published by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission of the U.S. and Canadian Conferences of Mennonite Brethren Churches. <https://mbhistory.org/media/docs/why-how-minutes.pdf>

# Highland Mennonite Brethren Church Governance Manual Minute-Taking Guidelines

## 2. Preparing Minutes

After the meeting, the LT Secretary edits the minutes to succinctly and accurately reflect the meeting. The first draft should be finalized within a week of the meeting, to ensure best recall.

### 2.1. Church Name

The minutes must state that the meeting was held on behalf of Highland Mennonite Brethren Church.

### 2.2. Meeting Name

The minutes must state whether it was the Leadership Team Executive, the Leadership Team, or the HMBC Congregation/Membership as a whole who met.

### 2.3. Meeting Number

Minutes should be numbered, with the numbering sequence continued from one year to the next. Numbering indicates how many meetings took place within the year; whereas dates only indicate chronology. Numbering is useful for LTE, LT and the HMBC office to check whether they have copies of all the minutes. (Note: LTE, LT, and Congregational/Membership minutes are numbered separately from each other.)

### 2.4. Meeting Date and Time

This is a vital part of every set of minutes. It is an obvious reference point and establishes when important decisions were made. For historical purposes (e.g., writing the history of HMBC), minutes without dates tend to blur the sequence of HMBC's story.

### 2.5. Meeting Place

This information can be useful later in establishing the number of times a meeting has been held in one location. Being able to picture the location is also helpful with recall.

### 2.6. List of Attendees

An accurate listing of people who attended the meeting is useful in two ways: One, it establishes that the necessary quorum of LTE, LT, or HMBC members was present to make decisions binding. Two, it establishes the record of individual involvement.

### 2.7. Minutes Outline

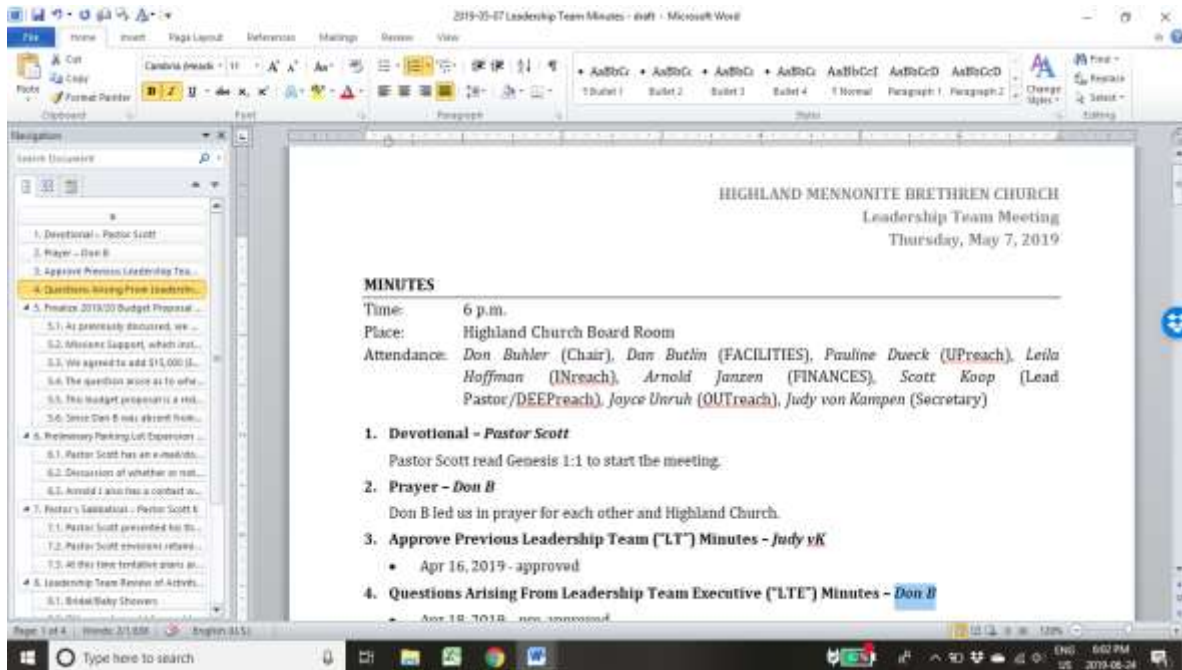
Minutes need to be outlined to assure easy reference. Minutes without an outline tend to become confusing. It is much clearer and more precise if one can directly refer to an action by saying, "In point 5.6. of the October 10, 2011 minutes, we read: . . ."

HMBC uses 1., 1.1., 1.1.1., 1.1.1.1, as is the easiest and least confusing numbering method. Microsoft Word has a "Styles" function, which automatically formats each section according to a master set-up and also creates an index within the "Navigation" pane. It is helpful for the LT Secretary to be familiar with these functions.

Organizing minutes by subject is more helpful than strictly adhering to when in a meeting a remark was made. Discussions don't happen in a linear fashion, and sometimes attendees veer off from the agenda item being considered or add a comment that fits better with another agenda item. Grouping points together by topic creates the most helpful minutes.

# Highland Mennonite Brethren Church Governance Manual Minute-Taking Guidelines

## 3. Minutes Preview



## 4. Circulation & Review of Minutes

### 4.1. Leadership Team Executive Minutes

- The LT Secretary alerts LTE members via dropbox when the draft of the LTE minutes is ready, usually within a few days of the LTE meeting;
- LTE members review the minutes within a few days of receiving the alert, and suggest edits (using the “Track Changes” option on the “Review” tab in Microsoft Word);
- The LT Secretary accepts the suggested edits or rejects them in dialogue with the LTE member suggesting the edit;
- The reviewed and edited (if required) LTE minutes are marked “pre-approved” and e-mailed to LT members as a .pdf attachment, so LT stays informed on LTE discussions.

### 4.2. Leadership Team Minutes

- The LT Secretary e-mails the draft LT minutes to LT members as a .pdf attachment as soon as it is ready, within one week of the meeting, if possible;
- LT members review the minutes within a week of receiving the draft, and suggest edits via e-mail response to the whole LT;
- The LT Secretary accepts suggested edits or rejects them in dialogue with the LT member suggesting the edit.

### 4.3. Congregational/Membership Meeting Minutes

- The LT Secretary e-mails draft Congregational/Membership minutes to the Congregation as a .pdf attached to the invitation/agenda of the next Congregational/Membership meeting;

Approval Date: June 2019  
Approved by: Leadership Team Executive  
Notice to: Leadership Team

File Path: C:\Users\Office\Dropbox\DB Executive\HMBC Handbook\Governance Manual\Minute-Taking Guidelines.docx

# Highland Mennonite Brethren Church Governance Manual Minute-Taking Guidelines

- Congregants review the minutes and suggest any edits in preparation for the next meeting;
- The LT Secretary accepts suggested edits or rejects them in dialogue with the Congregant suggesting the edit.

## 4.4. Annual General Meeting Minutes

- An AGM Minutes Review Team is appointed by the LT Chair at the AGM;
- The LT Secretary shares the draft AGM minutes via dropbox with the Review Team, if they are familiar with Microsoft Word; otherwise the draft is e-mailed to the Review Team as a .pdf;
- The Review Team reviews the minutes within two weeks of receiving the draft, and suggests edits (using the “Track Changes” option on the “Review” tab, if they are familiar with Microsoft Word; or via e-mail response);
- The LT Secretary accepts the suggested edits or rejects them in dialogue with the Review Team;
- The reviewed and edited (if required) AGM minutes are e-mailed to the Congregation as a .pdf attached to the invitation/agenda for the next AGM;
- Congregants review the minutes and suggest any additional edits in preparation for the next AGM;
- The LT Secretary accepts suggested edits or rejects them in dialogue with the Congregant suggesting the edit.

## 5. Approval of Minutes

- 5.1. At the next meeting of the LTE, LT, or Congregation/Membership, the LT Secretary makes a motion to approve their respective previous meeting’s minutes as presented;
- 5.2. Any edits not shown in the presented minutes must be listed in the Motion (Sample: *I move the approval of the 2019-05-28 Leadership Team Executive Minutes as presented with the following edits...*);
- 5.3. Approval is given by show of hands;
- 5.4. The LT Secretary marks the minutes “approved” and makes them available via dropbox to the HMBC office for archiving purposes.

## 6. Archiving of Minutes

- 6.1. The HMBC office keeps a soft copy of each set of approved LTE, LT, and Congregational/Membership minutes in a password-protected file in its computer archives. One printed copy is also filed in its physical archives. This collection is available for HMBC members to review.
- 6.2. After some years (e.g., five or ten years), a printed set of HMBC minutes is sent to the Centre for M.B. Studies - 1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3M 3Z6.
- 6.3. HMBC does not circulate its minutes to the general public, unless such procedures have been initiated by the LTE.