

The First Congregational Church of Woodstock, Connecticut

BYLAWS

Adopted by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting, 23 January 2022

I. NAME

This Church will be called **THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, INCORPORATED, OF WOODSTOCK, CONNECTICUT.**

II. FAITH, COVENANT, AND POLITY

We accept the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ (1981 revision) as a declaration of our faith.

*We believe in you, O God, Eternal spirit,
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,
and to your deeds we testify:*

*You call the worlds into being,
create persons in your own image,
and set before each one the ways of life and death.*

*You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness
and sin.*

*You judge people and nations by your righteous will,
declared through prophets and apostles.
In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior,
you have come to us and shared our common lot,
conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.*

*You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.*

*You call us into your church
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
to be your servants in the service of others,
to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil,
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,
to join him in his passion and victory.*

*You promise to all who trust you
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
your presence in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.*

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

The covenant under which this Church serves, and which its members accept, is that we have promised to be God's people on earth. We agree to maintain the teachings of the Gospel, and to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church. We strive to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures. We pray for one another and for our world, and we seek to work together in love and holy accord.

We believe God calls us to:

WORSHIP and **PROCLAIM** God's living presence,
GROW in our awareness of God's love,
CELEBRATE the fellowship of a loving,
supportive community of friends, and
CHALLENGE the Church and its members to use their gifts
in service with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the guide.

(Mission Statement of The First Congregational Church of Woodstock, adopted in 1987.)

The polity of this Church is that of the United Church of Christ. We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and in the right of private judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all external ecclesiastical control. This Church cherishes the fellowship of other churches of Christ of every denomination and doctrine. We seek to foster a sense of community with those of other faiths. We particularly recognize our relationship with the churches of the United Church of Christ joined in the Windham Association, the Connecticut Conference, and the national church. We maintain a policy of welcome to all worshipers and hold to our Open and Affirming status, adopted on January 10, 2003.

In matters not provided for in these bylaws, we will be governed by the usage and practices of the United Church of Christ.

III. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. QUALIFICATIONS

The membership of this Church will consist of those who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior. Prospective members may join this Church by letter of transfer from another Christian church. New members may be admitted by vote of the Diaconate after demonstrating evidence of baptism or being baptized before joining the Church. All those who join this Church agree to subscribe to the bylaws of the Church and to accept its faith, doctrine, and covenant.

Section 2. RECEPTION

The reception of members will take place during Sunday worship. Any who are unable to attend a Sunday service in person may be received as members by representatives of the Diaconate, acting on behalf of the Church.

Section 3. DUTIES

Members and Associate Members are expected to be faithful in the spiritual duties essential to Christian life, to attend the services of this Church, to give regularly to its support and its mission, and to share in its organized work.

Section 4. RIGHTS

The ruling body of the Church is the Congregation. The right to elect Officers of the Church, to call or discharge a Pastor, to set the Church's annual budget, and to decide about matters affecting the property of this Church is solely that of the Congregation. Active Members are entitled to vote at duly called meetings of the Congregation and to serve as officers and as members of the boards and committees of the Church. Active Friends can serve on committees, but they are not entitled to vote at congregational meetings.

Section 5. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

A. Any member in good and regular standing who requests a letter of dismissal and recommendation to any other Christian church is entitled to receive it. The letter will be valid as a recommendation for one year from its date, unless renewed, and this restriction will be stated in the letter.

B. If any member desires to join a religious body with which this Church is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the Church may, upon request, give a certificate of good standing and terminate the membership.

C. If a member in good standing asks to be released from the covenant obligations of this Church, the Pastor may grant the termination of membership and may request an exit interview, with the permission of the departing member, to determine the cause of separation.

D. All members, resident and non-resident, are expected to communicate at least once a year with the Church and to make some contribution to its support. If any member neglects to do so for a period of three years, that member's name will be placed on an inactive list upon recommendation of the Diaconate and the Church Council, and will no longer be reported in the active membership. The Diaconate, with the assistance of the Clerk, will be responsible for an annual review of the membership lists.

Section 6. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Any person who is a member of another Christian church, and who does not wish to terminate that membership, may be received as an Associate Member upon the recommendation of the Pastor and the Diaconate. Associate Members are officially listed as such by the Clerk and, if active, are entitled to all the privileges of membership, including the right to hold office and the right to vote at any meeting on all matters. They are subject to the duties outlined in Article III, Section 3.

IV. OFFICERS, OFFICIALS, BOARDS, and COMMITTEES

Election of officers and of members of boards and committees is determined by the vote of the majority at the Annual Meeting. Those elected at the Annual Meeting take office immediately. Vacancies may be filled at any business meeting of the Church or by vote of the Church Council, until the next Annual Meeting. All officers and chairmen of boards and committees will prepare a written report of the previous year's work for the Annual Meeting.

Any officer, or board or committee member who changes residence to a location that renders his or her service ineffective, or who ceases to worship in this Church, will forfeit the office to which he or she was elected.

Section 1. OFFICERS

A. A **Pastor**, to be chosen and called by the Church. When a vacancy in the office of Pastor occurs, the Church will elect a Pastoral Search Committee of no fewer than seven or more than twelve members, who, in consultation with the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, will nominate a successor. The new Pastor must be called by ballot vote of at least two-thirds of those members of the Church present at a meeting called for that express purpose. The Pastor's term of office will be of indefinite duration. After becoming a member of the Church, the Pastor will be installed by an Ecclesiastical Council called by the Windham Association of the United Church of Christ, at a time agreed upon by the Church and Pastor.

As an ordained minister, the Pastor serves with ministerial standing in the association to which this Church belongs. He or she has charge of the worship services of the Church and carries on a ministry of teaching, pastoral care, and leadership. As ordained leader of the Congregation, he or she is a member *ex officio*, without vote, of all Boards and Committees, and is entitled to attend any meeting of any church-sanctioned group. The Pastor has a vote on the Church Council, except in matters affecting his or her compensation. The Pastor supervises the work of all paid employees of the Church and prepares their yearly performance reviews, in conjunction with the appropriate church leadership. In the exercise of the office, the Pastor will seek and cherish the advice and assistance of the Diaconate. He or she administers the sacraments and officiates at weddings and funerals.

The termination of the relationship between the Pastor and the Church will be subject to not less than sixty days' notice. The Pastor may be dismissed for substantial, documented cause upon a two-thirds vote of the Church Council, followed by a two-thirds vote of a congregational meeting, duly called for that purpose. Such cause shall be determined only after lengthy and careful consideration, within which every attempt will be made to resolve conflict.

B. A **Moderator**, to serve a single four-year term. Every two years, a Moderator is elected to serve two years as assistant to the incumbent Moderator, then to become Moderator for the second two years. The Moderator will not serve successive elected terms.

The Moderator presides at all business meetings of the Church and at meetings of the Church Council. The Moderator is the elected lay leader of the Congregation and works closely with the Pastor, the Trustees, and the Church Council to exercise leadership and prepare agendas for

meetings. In the absence of the Moderator, the Assistant Moderator will preside at meetings. In the absence of both the Moderator and the Assistant Moderator, the Clerk will call the meeting to order, and a Moderator pro tempore will be elected for that meeting.

C. **A Clerk**, to serve for one year. The Clerk may serve up to five successive one-year terms.

The Clerk:

- Keeps the records of the Church, including minutes of all duly called meetings of the Church, including the Annual Meeting, which will be published or read for approval at the next business meeting.
- Keeps a correct list of the members of the Church with a record of baptisms, marriages, and deaths within the membership.
- Preserves on file all communications and written official reports, gives legal notice to all meetings when such notice is necessary.
- Serves as a member of the Church Council, keeping minutes of its regular meetings.

D. **A Treasurer**, to serve a single four-year term. Every two years, a Treasurer is elected to serve two years as assistant to the incumbent Treasurer, then to become Treasurer for the second two years. The Treasurer will not serve successive elected terms.

The Treasurer:

- Keeps records of all monies raised to support the budgets of the Church.
- Maintains the accounts of the Church, and monitors the investment account.
- Makes deposits and draws all checks in the name of the Church.
- Reports to the Board of Trustees as requested.
- Makes an annual written report of all receipts, expenditures, investments and all funds of the Church.
- Is the keeper of the corporate seal.
- Notifies the Trustees when gifts are made to the Church.

The Assistant Treasurer has the powers of and performs the duties of the Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer, and gives assistance to the Treasurer as determined by the two officers. The Treasurer will make every effort to delegate responsibility to his or her assistant during the period of the assistant's service.

Section 2. OTHER OFFICIALS

A. **A Historian**, to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for one year.

The Historian:

- Keeps a record of all events that may be of interest in the history of the Church, or relating to it.
- Takes responsibility for calling significant anniversaries to the attention of the Church for purposes of observance.
- Presents a report of the history of the previous year to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

B. **An Archivist**, who collects, preserves, organizes, and maintains the archival collection of the Church; provides accountable access to the collection; and consults with and provides resources to other church committees and to the wider community.

Section 3. BOARDS

A. **A Board of Deacons** of six members, also known as the Diaconate, the term of office to be three years, with the goal of a gender diversified Board. Two members will rotate off the board each year with two new members elected to the Board each year. The Diaconate shares with the Pastor the oversight of the spiritual life of the Church. Deacons will serve no more than two successive elected terms.

At the first meeting where the newly elected deacons are welcomed, the entire board will elect two members to serve as Senior Deacons to serve a one year term. It will be the Senior Deacons' roles to arrange and preside at meetings of the board and to be the two primary contacts for the pastor and the congregation.

The Deacons:

- Examine and approve candidates for membership.
- Schedule regular services of worship.
- Assist the Pastor in the preparation and administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism and in other ways, as occasion requires.
- Advise the Pastor and the Congregation on matters of faith and morals, when they become subjects at issue in the Church.
- Conduct a program of evangelism, reaching out to welcome and invite new members into the Church, and will be concerned for the care and spiritual well-being of members. To that end, they will assist with and support the program of Adult Education for spiritual growth, in conjunction with the Board of Outreach.
- Have charge of the supply of the pulpit during the absence or disability of the Pastor, or during any interim between pastorates.
- Conduct an annual performance review of the Pastor, ensuring full and proper communication with the Pastor well before the review.
- The Senior Deacons, with the Pastor, administer the Mary E. Carroll Fund and the Deacons' Fund.

B. **A Board of Trustees** of six members, one man and one woman to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a three-year term. Trustees will not serve successive elected terms.

The Trustees:

- Have care and custody of the place of worship, the parsonage, and any other property, real or personal, that is owned by the Church.
- Handle the business affairs of the Church and work with an Investment Committee as needed.
- Make requests for regular reports and special reports from the Treasurer and set policies for bill payment as needed.
- Accept monetary gifts to the Church, including bequests and legacies.
- Manage the funds contributed to the wider mission of the Church and direct the

- Treasurer to distribute these funds.
- Secure an independent auditor to perform an audit of the church accounts and records every three years.
 - Provide bonding for the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Administrative Assistant.
 - Call meetings of the Church as necessary concerning unusual distributions of church money or other concerns.
 - Hire, in cooperation with the Pastor, all paid employees of the Church. The Pastor supervises the work of these employees and prepares their yearly performance reviews, in conjunction with the appropriate church leadership.
 - Prepare, with the Church Council, a budget for the upcoming year.
 - Do not dispose of any real property of the Church without approval, given at a legally called meeting of the Congregation.
 - Hold in trust any property so required by the laws of the State of Connecticut.

C.1. **A Board of Outreach** of six members, to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a three-year term. Members of the Board of Outreach will not serve successive elected terms. In addition to the six members, the Delegates and Alternate Delegate are members of the Board of Outreach, as described in Section C.2., and also serve three-year terms. At any given meeting of the board, two Delegates or their alternate may be seated as voting members.

The Board of Outreach:

- Provides the Congregation with avenues for mission at local, state, national, and global levels, and recommends appropriate relationships and responses.
- Maintains a covenantal relationship with our national and state denomination (UCC) and interprets its work to our members.
- Helps the Congregation to define and address social and political issues from the perspective of the Christian faith.
- Develops and maintains relationships with service agencies and programs whose work is consistent with the values of the Church.
- Designates the special offerings of the Church each year.

C.2. **Two Delegates and one Alternate Delegate**, to represent the Church at the meetings of the Windham Association, at the meetings of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, and at any other meetings to which this Church should send delegates. The Delegates are members of the Board of Outreach, as noted above, in order to interpret fully to that body the concerns, goals, and objectives of the Connecticut Conference and of the national United Church of Christ. The Delegates also send a representative to meetings of the Church Council.

D. **A Church Council**, consisting of the Moderator; Assistant Moderator; Clerk; Treasurer; two representatives each from the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees; one representative from the Board of Outreach and one Delegate; one representative from the Christian Education Committee; two Members-at-large to be elected annually from the membership for not more than three successive terms; a Youth Representative; the chairmen (or their designated alternates) of all other boards and standing committees of the Church; and the presidents of all church groups. Each of the previously named members will have a vote. The Pastor(s), the Director of Youth Ministry, and the Director of Christian Education will be voting members, except in matters

affecting their own compensation, in which case they will recuse themselves from voting. Seven members will constitute a quorum of the Church Council.

The Church Council:

- Meets regularly.
- Serves in an advisory role to the Pastor and to the boards and committees of the Church.
- Serves as a long-range planning committee of the Church, allowing for exchange of information among boards and committees to aid in decision-making.
- Drafts the annual budget of the Church, with the advice of the Board of Trustees, for presentation to the Annual Meeting.
- Sets policy for the Church.
- Appoints members of the Nominating Committee.
- Acts for the Congregation, where appropriate, between Annual Meetings.
- Appoints ad hoc committees of the Church, as needed.
- Coordinates and evaluates church programs.

Section 4. COMMITTEES of the CHURCH

The various ministries of the Church will be planned and implemented by committees comprised for those purposes, under the general oversight of the Boards of Deacons, Trustees, and Outreach. The membership of the committees will be identified by the Nominating Committee and elected at each Annual Meeting for a one-year term of service. Members will be eligible for re-election annually for three successive terms, unless otherwise noted in these bylaws. Description of the standing Committees of the Church is maintained in a separate document by the Nominating Committee, the Church Council, and the Pastor.

Each committee chairman whose term of office has expired will call a meeting of the newly-elected committee or board for the purpose of electing its new chairman, who will assume duties immediately.

Each board and committee will also be responsible for:

- Formulating a budget in the area of the board's or committee's interest in consultation with the Trustees and the Church Council.
- Interpreting this budget to the Congregation.
- Administering the activities of the board or committee in a manner that conforms to the limitation of the approved budget.
- Preparing a written report to the Congregation for the Annual Meeting.

[The descriptions of committees are now held in a separate document, appended to the bylaws.]

V. MEETINGS

Section 1. FOR WORSHIP:

A. Public services will be held on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

- B. Communion will be celebrated upon the first Sunday of each month, or as determined by the Pastor and the Deacons.
- C. Special services may be called at the discretion of the Pastor, subject to the approval of the Diaconate.

Section 2. FOR BUSINESS:

A. **The Annual Meeting** will be held on the third Sunday in January, unless otherwise ordered for good cause by the Church Council. At this time the annual reports of boards and committees will be presented, officers and committee members elected, and other business of the Church transacted. The Annual Meeting will be called by the Clerk, who will cause notice to be read aloud to the Congregation, or published in the church bulletin, on the two Sundays preceding the meeting.

B. **Special Meetings:** The Church Council, the Diaconate, or the Board of Trustees may issue a request for a Special Meeting of the Church. Members who wish to present a matter to the Congregation must first consult the Church Council and the Pastor. If the members are not satisfied after working through those channels, five members may enter a written request for a Special Meeting.

The Clerk will read the call for a Special Meeting, or will cause notice to be printed in the Sunday bulletin, for at least two Sundays preceding the day fixed for the meeting. The reason for the meeting will be clearly stated

C. **Quorum:** At the Annual Meeting and all Special Meetings, thirty-five (35) members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. For a given meeting, the Moderator can authorize the entry of written statements in support of or against a particular measure, such statements to be read into the record of the meeting but not considered as votes.

D. **Conduct:** Meetings of the membership and the Church Council will be governed by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, insofar as those rules are not in conflict with the bylaws.

VI. DISCIPLINE

Section 1. In cases where serious contention arises between members, the Pastor, the Moderator, and the Senior Deacons will mediate the conflict.

Section 2. In case of grave difficulty or public scandal, the Church will seek advice of the Regional Conference Minister of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, or of the Windham Association.

VII. CORPORATE SEAL

The Church, legally incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut, adopts as its corporate seal a circle containing the words: “The First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT. Founded 1690, Incorporated 1925.”

VIII. AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those present at a properly convened meeting of the Church, provided that the proposed amendments have been submitted in writing to members of the Congregation at least two Sundays preceding the meeting at which a vote on the amendments will be taken.

Revision prepared by the Bylaws Revision Sub-committee,
appointed by the Church Council in March 2013.

Debora Gray
Alexandra Lyman
Susan Waldron

The First Congregational Church of Woodstock
COMMITTEE STRUCTURE
Revised 11 November 2015
Adopted by the Congregation on 24 January 2016
Revised by Church Council 8 May 2018

From Article IV of the church bylaws:

Section 4. COMMITTEES of the CHURCH

The various ministries of the Church will be planned and implemented by committees comprised for those purposes, under the general oversight of the Boards of Deacons, Trustees, and Outreach. The membership of the committees will be identified by the Nominating Committee and elected at each Annual Meeting for a one-year term of service. Members will be eligible for re-election annually for three successive terms, unless otherwise noted in these bylaws. Description of the standing Committees of the Church is maintained in a separate document by the Nominating Committee, the Church Council, and the Pastor.

Each Committee chairman whose term of office has expired will call a meeting of the newly-elected Committee or Board for the purpose of electing its new chairman, who will assume duties immediately.

Each Board and Committee will also be responsible for:

- Formulating a budget in the area of the Board's or Committee's interest in consultation with the Trustees and the Church Council.
- Interpreting this budget to the Congregation.
- Administering the activities of the Board or Committee in a manner that conforms to the limitation of the approved budget.
- Preparing a written report to the Congregation for the Annual Meeting.

The section below is no longer included in the bylaws:

A. **A Christian Education Committee** of at least four members, to be responsible for a well-rounded program of Christian Education for children from infancy through eighth grade. The Christian Education Director will lead the committee and consult with its members to develop the program.

B. **A Youth Ministry Team** of six members, three from the First Congregational Church, two of whom will be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for three years. (The other three members will be appointed by the East Woodstock Congregational Church.) The Youth Ministry Team will work in cooperation with the Pastor, lay youth leaders, and youth ministry committees of other participating churches, and in liaison with the Christian Education Committee, to provide assistance in planning and support of youth ministry programs.

- C. An **Adult Education Committee** of three members, to be responsible for developing programs and opportunities for Christian Education and spiritual formation for adults, in cooperation with the Deacons and the Board of Outreach.
- D. A **Music Support Committee** of three members, to be responsible for the music of the Church, the securing of an organist and choir director(s), the encouragement of the music staff and choirs, and the care of the organ and other musical instruments belonging to the Church.
- E. An **Ushers Committee** of three members, to be responsible for recruiting a pair of ushers for each Sunday service. The ushers welcome and seat the Congregation at all services of worship, distribute the Sunday bulletins, enumerate the attending Congregation, and gather the offering. Before leaving on a Sunday, they also take responsibility for setting the pew materials in order for the following Sunday service.
- F. A **Hospitality Committee** of three members, to be responsible for recruiting members to greet friends and visitors at all services of worship, and for recruiting members to provide coffee hours after the Sunday Morning service.
- G. A **Catering Committee** of four members, to provide meals for special church events and receptions.
- H. A **Stewardship Committee** of four members, to conduct the annual appeal for funds to support the missions of the Church.
- I. A **Pastoral Support Committee** of three members to serve three-year terms, to be appointed by the Pastor. The committee is responsible only to the Pastor and serves needs determined by her or him.
- J. A **Counting Team** of four members. A member of the Counting Team, paired with a member of the Board of Trustees appointed for this purpose, is responsible for the custody of the Sunday offerings and special offerings, and for depositing funds to the church accounts.
- K. An **Investment Committee** of three members. The Investment Committee is responsible for the fiscal management of the New Century Foundation, according to the “Endowment Fund Policies for Management and Expenditures,” adopted by the Congregation on January 24, 1999, and revised by the Congregation on November 13, 2011. At the request of the Trustees, the Investment Committee will invest and manage assets of the Church that are not included in the New Century Foundation.
- L. An **Interior Planning Committee** of three members, to be appointed on an ad hoc basis by the Church Council. The Interior Planning Committee conducts an assessment of interior spaces in the meetinghouse and makes recommendations about changes or improvements to the Trustees, or to the Congregation with consent of the Trustees.
- M. A **Grounds Committee** of three members. The Grounds Committee inspects, maintains, and beautifies the grounds of the Church and parsonage.

N. **A Nominating Committee** of two or three members, to be appointed annually by the Church Council for a term of two years. The committee recruits and presents a slate of officers and board and committee members at the Annual Meeting of the Church. The committee also identifies candidates for positions that become vacant between Annual Meetings of the Church and presents them to the Church Council for a vote. Each board and committee of the Church may recommend candidates to fill open positions, as may any member of the Church.

P. **A Library Committee** of three members. The Library Committee is responsible for the John Eliot Library, for the purpose of enriching and enhancing the overall ministry of the Church. The Library Committee reports regularly to the Church through the Church Council and annually to the congregation.

Q. **Other committees** may be appointed by the Church, or by the Church Council, as needed.