

1 **First Congregational Church of Southampton**
2 **Bylaws**

3
4 *We welcome all. Worship God. Grow in faith and love and speak for justice, peace, and the*
5 *environment.*
6

7 **ARTICLE I: NAME AND HISTORY**

8 The First Congregational Church of Southampton was formally instituted on June 8, 1743. Its
9 first pastor and teacher was the Reverend Jonathan Judd. The covenant was signed by thirty-two
10 men of what was then the second precinct of Northampton. It continued as an integral part of the
11 town organization when all Congregational churches were separated town organizations by an
12 act of the state legislature in 1831 after which it became an independent body.

13
14 The church was incorporated as a “Religious Corporation” under the General Laws of the
15 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 67, on January 28, 1924, as The First Congregational
16 Church of Southampton, Massachusetts.¹
17

18 On January 1, 1948 the church members voted in favor of our denomination’s proposal of
19 merging with the Evangelical and Reform Church. On April 16, 1961, the congregation voted
20 unanimously to enter into a covenant with the United Church of Christ by accepting the
21 denomination’s constitution.
22

23 **ARTICLE II: POLITY**

24 The First Congregational Church of Southampton is a congregation in covenant with the United
25 Church of Christ. As such, the congregation abides by the faith and order of the United Church
26 of Christ while maintaining its ecclesial autonomy in matters of worship and congregational
27 governance. The congregation’s authority resides in its voting members.
28

29 As a congregation in covenant with the United Church of Christ, it is a member of the Southern
30 New England Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Hampshire Association. The
31 Hampshire Association serves as the United Church of Christ at the local level to support the
32 congregation’s ministry. The First Congregational Church of Southampton supports the
33 Hampshire Association, the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ,
34 and the United Church of Christ, also known as the wider Church, with designating voting
35 delegates to wider Church meetings and conferences as well as contributing financial support
36 through association dues and United Church Mission.
37

38 The First Congregational Church of Southampton voted to become an Open and Affirming
39 (ONA) congregation on October 6, 2013. ONA is an official designation by the United Church
40 of Christ signifying that the congregation welcomes all people regardless of race, abilities,
41 gender, gender identity, gender expressions, and sexual orientation. By welcoming all people,
42 this congregation pledges to stand with people who face rejection and oppression and to enable

¹ The charter is in the church safe along with a copy of the Certificate of Organization
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1 all people to live fully into Christ’s love and to use their spiritual gifts to further Jesus’ ministry
2 of peace and justice.

3
4 The governance and authority of the First Congregational Church of Southampton rests in the
5 congregation and its voting membership. It has sole responsibility for the stewardship of its
6 resources and assets. They include money, financial securities, and property, as well as its
7 volunteers. It calls its own pastor and teacher. Its covenant with its pastor and teacher includes
8 mutual responsibility to further the congregation’s ministry in this community and the world.

9
10 **ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

11 We believe everyone has spiritual gifts. We use our gifts together to build up the body of Christ.
12 We encourage every person to discern their spiritual gifts and to use them to serve this
13 congregation. As such we believe that everyone who regularly participates in the life of this
14 congregation through regular worship, financial support, and spiritual gifts are covenanted
15 members of the congregation.

16
17 People who wish to affiliate with the ministries of this congregation can pursue membership
18 standing.

19
20 **A. Covenanted Members**

21 People who participate regularly in the ongoing life of this congregation will be considered
22 covenanted members. Standing is automatic and requires no notification to the clerk.

23
24 Covenanted Membership includes:

- 25
- 26 • An expectation of congregational support through their life’s celebrations and sorrows
 - 27 • Participation in the congregation’s activities and in its areas of ministry
 - 28 • Voice without vote in congregational meetings and discussions

29 Covenanted members maintain their status by participating and supporting the ongoing life of
30 this congregation through their presence in worship, financial support, participating in various
31 ministries of the church.

32
33 Covenanted members should provide the church office with their contact information.

34
35 Covenanted members can voluntarily terminate their status by notifying the church office of their
36 desire to withdraw their covenanted relationship with the congregation

37
38 To become a voting member, the covenanted member formally requests voting member status in
39 order to join the church by notifying the pastor and teacher or the clerk.

40
41 **B. Voting members**

42 Voting members will be reported to the United Church of Christ for its statistical purposes.
43 Voting members have responsibilities for the life and ministry of the congregation beyond
44 participating as a covenanted member.

45
46 Voting Membership includes:

- 1 • An expectation of congregational support through their life’s celebrations and sorrows
- 2 • Participation in the congregation’s activities and in its areas of ministry
- 3 • Voting privileges in congregational meetings and discussions

4

5 **C. Becoming Voting Members**

- 6 • Makes a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ in any of the following ways:
 - 7 ○ Baptism
 - 8 ○ Affirmation of Faith
 - 9 ○ Letter of Transfer (from another congregation)
- 10 • Makes a public promise in worship to support the congregation through regular worship
- 11 attendance, financial support, and participation in its ministries

12

13 **D. Terminating Voting Membership**

14 When a voting member is unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities for the life and ministry of

15 this congregation and cannot participate in congregational meetings and decisions, his or her

16 voting membership can be terminated.

17

18 Terminating voting membership does not end a member’s covenanted membership.

19

20 A voting membership can be terminated by one of two procedures:

- 21 1. Voluntarily notifying the clerk of their desire to resign as a voting member
- 22 2. When the voting member has not been actively engaged with the congregation for two
- 23 consecutive years, the Board of Officers can begin a process to terminate a voting
- 24 member status using the following procedures:
 - 25 a. The Clerk will send a letter to the voting member inquiring about their status. The
 - 26 voting member has 60 days to respond.
 - 27 b. If the voting member did not respond, a two-thirds majority of the Board of
 - 28 Officers at a board meeting can vote to terminate that member’s voting member
 - 29 status. The voting member will be moved to covenanted member status and at a
 - 30 later date can reactivate voting member status by notifying the Clerk of that
 - 31 desire.

32

33 **ARTICLE IV: MINISTRY TEAMS**

34 The work of the church is ministry. Traditionally, the work falls into one of the five marks of the

35 church:

- 36 • Liturgy or worship (Liturgia)
- 37 • Community (Koinonia)
- 38 • Service (Diakonia)
- 39 • Training or education (Didache)
- 40 • Proclamation (Kerygma)

41

42 We hold fast to our ecclesiastical tradition, the priesthood of all believers. God called all people

43 to serve one another and the world. Baptism sealed in us the Holy Spirit, which animates us and

44 leads us in our ministries in response to Jesus’ call to discipleship. By the Spirit, we have been

45 equipped with spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ.

1
2 The First Congregational Church of Southampton organizes itself around ministry teams,
3 integrating the five marks of the church and operating administratively to support them. A
4 congregation organizes itself to support, promote, and grow in these marks. Its organization
5 should be consistent with its polity and should support the congregation’s vision of itself as the
6 body of Christ.

7
8 All covenanted members and voting members can serve on one or more ministry teams. There is
9 no limit to the size of the ministry team and there is no term of office. As everyone is equipped
10 with spiritual gifts, each person’s participation on a team rests upon that person’s gifts for
11 ministry.

12
13 **A. Organization and Operation of the Ministries**

- 14 • Each ministry will review and evaluate its purpose annually to ensure that it serves
15 this body of Christ and contributes to its health and vitality.
- 16 • Each ministry will meet at least five times a year to fulfill its role and responsibility to
17 this body of Christ and to make necessary decisions to fulfill its ministry.
- 18 • The congregation should receive meeting notices at least one week in advance by
19 posting them in the church, posting them on the website, and sending them through
20 regular church e-mail. Similarly, the minutes for each meeting should be
21 disseminated to the congregation within two weeks of the meeting. Minutes should be
22 posted in the church and on the church website. Minutes should be kept on file in the
23 church office.
- 24 • Actions taken and decisions made in a ministry meeting shall be passed by a majority
25 of the ministry team in attendance.
- 26 • Each ministry team should designate a representative to the Board of Officers. This
27 representative must be a voting member. The representative’s term on the Board of
28 Officers should be no less than one year and should not exceed three years. A
29 ministry team’s representative to the Board of Officers cannot be an elected officer of
30 the congregation
- 31 • Each ministry team will prepare and submit a report of its activities and decisions for
32 the congregation’s annual report.
- 33 • Ministry teams will work closely with other teams to ensure that the congregation can
34 foster and support its discipleship as the body of Christ.

35
36 **B. Authority of the Ministries**

- 37 • Ministries can make decisions and take actions consistent with their respective areas
38 of ministry for the health and vitality of the body of Christ. These decisions and
39 actions should be ethically consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ. When their
40 decisions affect activities and organizations beyond the congregation, they must be
41 affirmed by a congregational teams council.
 - 42 • Ministries are responsible for the administration of the budgeted funds specified for
43 their respective ministry. Expenses in excess of the amount budgeted for that
44 ministry shall be brought to the attention of the congregational teams council for
45 approval, before making the expenditure.
- 46

1 **C. Ministry Teams**

2 **Christian Education/Mission with Women’s Missionary Society**

3 *Purpose: Further the ministry Jesus began by serving the local and global community to*
4 *teach, support, grow, and nurture Christian faith*

5 Responsibilities:

- 6 • Lead the congregation to serve the local and global community through mission
7 projects.
- 8 • Through the congregation’s mission projects, teach, support, grow, and nurture
9 Christian education and faith for all ages
- 10 • Encourage all people in the congregation and the wider community to use their
11 spiritual gifts to further God’s mission in the world and to proclaim the gospel in love
- 12 • Present programs to deepen the congregation’s awareness and understanding of our
13 world locally and globally to promote mission opportunities and to educate the
14 congregation on issues to promote justice as a way of life
- 15 • Prepare an annual budget for the congregation’s mission program.
- 16 • Support and sustain the Women’s Missionary Society (the historical “Female Cent
17 Society” founded in 1803)
- 18 • Support and sustain the Community Cupboard
- 19 • Coordinate the collection of the denomination’s special offerings
- 20 • Mentor to develop Christian discipleship across generations

21
22 **Worship and Music**

23 *Purpose: Nourish, sustain, and grow the congregation’s worship life in order for it to give*
24 *thanks and praise to God and to bind the congregation together in the Holy Spirit as the*
25 *body of Christ.*

- 26 • Work with the pastor and teacher to plan, support, and sustain the congregation’s
27 worship life, including the sacraments of baptism and communion.
- 28 • In addition to weekly worship, this ministry team will also schedule and plan worship
29 to celebrate significant dates on the liturgical calendar, and to mark significant events
30 in the life of this congregation, such as weddings and funerals.
- 31 • Work with the music director to plan, support, and sustain the congregation’s music
32 program in both worship and special events.
- 33 • Work with both the pastor and teacher and the music director to facilitate a mutually
34 supportive relationship
- 35 • Arrange for authorized ministers or lay speakers to lead worship as a substitute in the
36 event the pastor and teacher is not available.
- 37 • Authorize a substitute worship leader to administer the sacraments in the event the
38 substitute is not authorized by standing in the United Church of Christ or by
39 authorized communion agreements with the United Church of Christ.²
- 40 • Responsibility and authority to decorate the worship space to enhance worship,
41 including but not limited to flowers and banners.
- 42 • Responsible for the maintenance of the church’s musical instruments, including the
43 pianos and the organ and the Edward R. Stone Memorial Handbells

² Full communion agreements are with the following denominations: Disciples of Christ, United Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Reformed Church of America, and Presbyterian Church USA
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- Prepare an annual budget to support the congregation’s worship life and music program, including substitute preachers, worship supplies, new music, musicians, and instrument maintenance

Church life and congregational care

Purpose: Tend and care for the collective and individual lives of the congregation to build up and nurture the body of Christ

Responsibilities:

- Hold the congregation, its life, its ministry, and its membership in prayer
- Plan and organize congregational events and celebrations to build and thicken the bonds of community fellowship
- Organize the reception of new members
- Organize and promote the congregation’s hospitality for weddings, funerals, and social time after worship
- Promote and support internal communications within the congregation, including the monthly newsletter
- Work with the pastor and teacher to ensure covenanted members who physically cannot attend worship or other church functions are cared for by the congregation. This can include organizing, leading, and operating a formal or informal congregational care program coordinated with the pastor.
- Recording and maintaining the church history and its records and files
- Prepare a budget to support the congregational events

Communication and Community Engagement

Purpose: Connect the congregation with the wider local community in order to create a platform for community service

Responsibilities:

- Listen carefully to the Southampton community to learn of its ongoing needs and then convey those needs to the congregation
- Promote and publicize the work of the congregation to the Southampton community
- Publicize and invite the Southampton community to programs and educational events produced and sponsored by the church
- Invite people within the Southampton community to participate in and collaborate on ministry and missions organized by the church
- Responsible for external messaging from the church through its website, its signage, and its social media accounts
- Prepare a budget to support the church’s community engagement

Finance, Administration, and Property

Purpose: The stewardship of the congregation’s resources. The resources include financial assets, physical property, and human capital.

Responsibilities:

- Prepare an annual budget and present it to the congregation which reflects the direction and objectives of ministry set by the Board of Officers in order to support the ministries teams.

- 1 • Work with the Treasurer and Collector to monitor income and expenses and provide
- 2 regular reports to the congregation.
- 3 • Oversee and manage the church endowment and gift funds.
- 4 • Authorize accepting or declining gifts and bequests to the congregation. It will also
- 5 acknowledge receiving gifts and bequests.
- 6 • Ensure the congregation's property is properly maintained, including repairs and
- 7 improvements.
- 8 • Approve the use of church facilities by outside groups. This includes setting terms of
- 9 use and fees.
- 10 • Develop, evaluate, and adjust internal administrative procedures to ensure the
- 11 congregation's operation.
- 12 • Prepare an annual pledge campaign.
- 13 • Prepare a slate of officers to present to the congregation at its annual meeting.
- 14 • Plan and organize fundraising events
- 15

16 **ARTICLE V: MEETINGS**

17 There are two types of meetings, Congregational Teams Council and Congregational Meeting.
18 Both types of meetings can be held in-person or virtually.

19
20 **Congregational Teams Council** – Regular meetings of the congregation. Decisions having a
21 wide impact upon the congregation made by the ministry teams will be formalized by the
22 Congregational Teams council and will take place at least five times a year.

23
24 **Congregational Meeting** – Formal meeting of the congregation requiring a congregational vote
25 for the purposes of any of the following:

- 26 • Annual meeting of the congregation
- 27 • Affirm the call of a pastor and teacher following a pastoral search
- 28 • Vote upon significant issues as recommended by the ministry team meeting
- 29

30 **A. Congregational Teams Council**

31 Congregational teams council takes place following the individual team meetings. All
32 covenanted and voting members can participate. Only voting members, though, can cast a vote.

33
34 Congregational teams council begins with a short prayer service and approving the minutes of
35 the previous congregational meeting. Following the prayer service and approval of the minutes,
36 the individual ministry teams will meet separately to discuss and decide questions and issues
37 pertinent to its area of ministry. A ministry team can determine its own procedures for affirming
38 decisions.

39
40 Though team ministries will make their decisions to benefit the entire congregation, some
41 decisions may have such a broad impact upon the life and ministry of the entire congregation that
42 the ministry team should bring the decision before the congregational teams council for
43 affirmation.

44
45 Following the separate ministry team meetings, all the ministry teams will gather for the
46 congregational teams council. Each ministry team will provide a short summary of its meeting,

1 especially noting those decisions it believes should be affirmed by the congregational teams
2 council.

3
4 The moderator will chair the congregational teams council. The clerk will record its proceedings.
5 A representative from each ministry team will present a short summary of its meeting. Only
6 voting members are eligible to vote. Questions put to a vote before a congregational teams
7 council require a majority vote of the voting members present. The congregational teams council
8 can refer any question coming before it to the congregation for a full congregational vote at a
9 Congregational Meeting.

10
11 In the event attendance drops by one-third, the moderator has the authority to suspend
12 proceedings.

13 14 **B. Congregational Meeting**

15 A congregational meeting requires notification of the congregation at least two Sundays prior to
16 the meeting. A notice for this meeting will be a warrant issued by the Church Clerk. The warrant
17 shall be announced during a general worship service of the congregation, posted at the church,
18 and posted on the church website. The warrant shall include the date and time of the meeting as
19 well as the meeting's agenda.

20
21 The First Congregational Church of Southampton shall convene once a year for its annual
22 meeting within six weeks after the beginning of the church's fiscal year. The purpose of this
23 meeting is to:

- 24 • Elect voting members to fill the following offices:
 - 25 ○ Moderator
 - 26 ○ Treasurer
 - 27 ○ Collector
 - 28 ○ Clerk
 - 29 ○ Delegates (a total of three)
- 30 • Approve an annual budget for the church
- 31 • Accept ministry team reports
- 32 • Set a direction for the next twelve months for the church's ministry
- 33 • Vote upon significant issues brought forth by one or more ministry teams for a
34 congregational decision.

35
36 The First Congregational Church of Southampton shall convene other congregational meetings
37 as necessary. These meetings include:

- 38 • Affirming a pastoral call to serve the congregation as a settled pastor and teacher or a
39 designated term pastor
- 40 • A question or issue deemed by the congregational teams council as important enough to
41 require a congregational vote. The outcome of congregational teams council can stipulate
42 that the question must pass with a two-thirds majority vote.

43
44 The quorum for congregational meetings shall be 15 voting members. Motions shall pass with a
45 majority vote, unless designated by the congregational teams council. The minutes for these
46 congregational meetings shall be included in the next annual report.

1
2 Voting members of the congregation shall receive an annual report two weeks prior to the annual
3 meeting. The annual report should include the following:

- 4 • Agenda
- 5 • Necrology (Listing of deceased persons)
- 6 • Current membership status of the congregation including but not limited to the total
7 voting membership, number of deaths, number of baptisms, number of transfers in and
8 out of the congregation, number of members by affirmation of faith.
- 9 • Financial reports by the Treasurer and Collector
- 10 • Congregational meeting minutes during the preceding 12 months, including the minutes
11 of the last annual meeting
- 12 • Ministry team reports

13
14 **C. Rescheduling a Congregational Meeting**

15 In the event circumstances force a cancellation of a congregational meeting, including an Annual
16 Meeting, it can be rescheduled no less than two weeks after the original meeting date. The
17 rescheduled meeting date shall be announced to the congregation at least one week prior to the
18 rescheduled meeting date and a notice of the rescheduled meeting's date, time, and place should
19 be posted in the church, announced at worship, and posted to the church website.

20
21 **D. Lack of Quorum**

22 In the event a duly called congregational meeting lacks a quorum, items requiring a
23 congregational vote cannot be affirmed. The voting members present, however, can set a new
24 date and time for a congregational meeting no less than one month after the meeting. The new
25 meeting date shall be announced to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the new meeting
26 date for two consecutive worship service no less than one week apart, posted on the church
27 website, and posted at the church, Should a second congregational meeting lack a quorum, a
28 third congregational meeting can be set with a new date no less than two weeks after the
29 meeting. The third assembly date should be announced to the congregation and posted in the
30 church, announced as part of the worship service, and posted on the web page. Quorum for this
31 third meeting shall be at least twelve voting members. An affirmative vote on behalf of the
32 congregation shall require a two-thirds majority of the members present to pass a question or
33 issue.

34
35 **ARTICLE VI: VOTING PROCESSES**

36 The authority of the congregation resides in its voting members. The voting members have
37 responsibility to decide its policies, procedures, finances, and leadership.

38
39 The congregation has the following options to use when voting members must make a decision
40 on behalf of the church. The congregation can exercise one of three voting processes: in-person
41 voting, electronic voting, and mail-in voting.

42
43 Meetings can be held in-person and virtually.
44

1 Regardless whether meetings are in-person or virtual and the voting process used to make a
2 decision, voting members should be able to discuss the issue or issues preceding the vote.
3 Discussions can take place in-person or virtually. Discussions should enable voting members to
4 hear each other and respond to each other in real time.

5
6 **A. Voting Methods**

- 7
- 8 • **In-person:** Votes are taken with the voting members in the meeting present or joining
9 remotely. The clerk will record the vote for the minutes.
 - 10 • **Electronic:** Votes are taken during a virtual meeting. The clerk will record the vote for
11 the minutes.
 - 12 • **Mail-in:** Votes are cast by mail. The procedures are as follows:
 - 13 ○ Following the issue's discussion, the voting members, whether in-person or
14 virtual, can seek a mail-in vote and will authorize a paper ballot with the specific
15 wording for the question or questions. They will also specify the date the ballots
16 must be returned to be counted.
 - 17 ○ The paper ballot shall include a summary of the discussion, the specific question
18 or questions, and the date the ballot must be returned to be counted.
 - 19 ○ The ballot shall be sent to all voting members of the congregation.
 - 20 ○ Ballots shall be signed by the voter. Ballots must be received in the church office
21 by the date specified on the ballot.
 - 22 ○ The ballots will be tallied within one week after the return date.
 - 23 ○ The congregation will receive notification of the final vote through e-mail and
24 through the Cornerstone

25 Questions cannot be decided using more than one voting method.

26
27 **B. Consensus Votes**

28 In the event that a vote could change the fundamental mission of the congregation, the Board of
29 Officers can call for a consensus vote upon the proposal.

30 A consensus vote will be as follows:

- 31
- 32 • Votes will be cast on a scale of 1 to 5, whereby the votes are as follows:
 - 33 ○ 5 = Completely agree with the proposal
 - 34 ○ 4 = Agree with the proposal, but have some questions
 - 35 ○ 3 = Neither for nor against the proposal and will not stand in the way
 - 36 ○ 2 = Disagree with the proposal, but have some questions
 - 37 ○ 1 = Completely disagree with the proposal
 - 38 • In order to pass the proposal, all votes must be 3 or higher.
 - 39 • Discussions will continue until the gathered body decides no further progress will be
40 gained for the proposal.

41
42 **ARTICLE VII: OFFICERS AND DELEGATES**

43 Voting members of the congregation will elect officers and delegates. Officers and delegates
44 must be voting members of the congregation.

1 **A. Election and Term of Office**

2 Officers and delegates will be elected at the congregation’s Annual Meeting. A majority vote of
3 those present at an Annual Meeting shall affirm the appointment. Upon their election, they will
4 assume their responsibilities at the close of the Annual Meeting.

5
6 The terms of office shall be as follows:

- 7 Moderator – two years
- 8 Treasurer – two years
- 9 Collector – two years
- 10 Clerk – two years

11
12 Officers can serve up to two consecutive terms. After serving two consecutive terms, the officer
13 must wait at least one year before assuming another elected office.

14
15 The Moderator’s and Collector’s terms will begin in even-numbered years. The Treasurer’s and
16 Clerk’s terms will begin in odd-numbered years.

17
18 Should a vacancy occur between annual meetings, the Finance, Administration, and Property
19 ministry team shall put forth a voting member of the congregation to fill the vacancy pending
20 approval from the Board of Officers. The appointment shall continue until the next Annual
21 Meeting at which time the voting members of the congregation can affirm the appointment to
22 continue for the balance of the term.

23
24 **B. Officers and Their Duties**

25 **Moderator** – The Moderator shall preside over all business meetings of the Church and
26 the Board of Officers. The Moderator is the senior lay officer of the congregation and
27 will work closely with the pastor and teacher to ensure church administration and
28 function, to cast and implement a vision, and to address other concerns affecting the life
29 and ministry of the congregation. The Moderator will plan the community discernment
30 meetings with the pastor and teacher and facilitate the session. The Moderator shall
31 submit an annual report to the congregation summarizing the year’s activities and
32 decisions. The Moderator is an alternate signatory for checks and other disbursements in
33 the event the Treasurer is unable to fulfill this function.

34
35 **Treasurer** – The Treasurer is the church’s chief financial officer. The Treasurer has the
36 authority to sign checks and authorize other disbursements. The Treasurer shall allocate
37 revenues and disbursements according to the budget as approved by the congregation at
38 its Annual Meeting. The Treasurer shall prepare budget reports for the Board of Officers
39 and an annual budget report for the congregation. The Treasurer is the custodian for all
40 legacies, memorial funds, trusts, and other invested funds. The Treasurer shall ensure
41 that the church’s endowed funds are managed in accordance with the Endowment
42 Policy³. The Treasurer is custodian of the church seal and has the authority to affix the
43 same to documents requiring it. The Treasurer shall coordinate an audit of the church’s
44 financial records prior to the Annual Meeting.

³ A current copy of the Endowment Policy can be found in the church office
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1 **Collector** – The Collector shall receive and record all income and bank deposits and
2 provide documentation to the Treasurer. The Collector shall provide semi-annual
3 statements to people who pledged to the church. The Collector will record pledges
4 received during the annual pledge campaign. The Collector shall acknowledge gifts
5 given to the church. In the event that the Collector is temporarily unable to receive and
6 record all income and bank deposits, the Collector can designate another officer of the
7 church to fulfill that duty.
8

9 **Clerk** – The Clerk shall record the proceedings of congregational teams councils,
10 congregational meetings, and those of the Board of Officers. The Clerk shall provide
11 minutes of the Annual Meeting for the Annual Report of the church. The Clerk shall also
12 maintain the membership records of the church, including: Baptisms, Confirmations,
13 Weddings, Deaths, Births, Transfers, and the roster of voting members. The Clerk shall
14 certify a quorum at congregational meetings. The Clerk shall provide a membership
15 report to the congregation for the Annual Report. The membership report will include
16 the current number of voting members, the number of baptisms, confirmations, weddings,
17 deaths, and transfers in and out of the congregation. The Clerk shall attend to the
18 correspondence relative to letters of transfer. The Clerk shall submit reports on behalf of
19 the congregation to the Hampshire Association and the United Church of Christ. The
20 Clerk has the authority to affix the church seal to documents in the event the Treasurer
21 cannot fulfill this task.
22

23 **Delegates** – Shall be appointed by the Board of Officers. The Delegates shall represent
24 the congregation at meetings and functions of the Hampshire Association and the
25 Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. Delegates have the
26 authority to cast votes, but their votes do not necessarily have to reflect the sentiments of
27 the congregation. Delegates shall provide a report of their activities to the congregation
28 after each meeting. Delegates shall keep the congregation abreast of initiatives instituted
29 by the Hampshire Association, the Southern New England Conference of the United
30 Church of Christ, and the national setting of the United Church of Christ. The Delegates
31 are not members of the Board of Officers. There are three delegates.
32

33 **ARTICLE VII: THE BOARD OF OFFICERS**

34 **A. Purpose**

35 The Board of Officers is the executive body of the congregation. It ensures the
36 coordination of the congregation’s five ministry teams, seeks to nurture and sustain the
37 vitality of the congregation’s ministry, and promotes the movement of the Holy Spirit in
38 this body of Christ. The Board of Officers has responsibility to set the overall direction
39 of this congregation’s ministries.
40

41 The Board of Officers has the authority to enter into contracts and agreements on behalf
42 of the congregation for its ministries. It has the authority to approve contracts for church
43 personnel and to assume tasks and responsibilities for the congregation which are not
44 covered by any ministry area.
45

46 **B. Membership**

1 The membership of the Board of Officers will consist of the following elected officers:
2 Moderator, Treasurer, Collector, and Clerk. Membership will also include one
3 representative from each of the ministry teams. All members of the Board of Officers
4 must have voting member status in the congregation. The Board of Officers shall not
5 include paid staff.
6

7 **C. Authority and Responsibilities**

8 Fulfilling the Board of Officers’ purpose specifically entails the following:

- 9 1. Discern the movement of the Holy Spirit and in close collaboration with the
10 pastor and teacher to set the overall direction of this congregation’s ministries.
11 Promote cooperation and collaboration between ministries. Evaluate and decide
12 whether particular ministries can sustain the congregation’s mission and
13 ministries.
- 14 2. Has the authority to enter into contracts and agreements on behalf of the
15 congregation with organizations and entities outside of the congregation.
- 16 3. Facilitate and ensure communication between ministries and between leadership
17 and congregation. Coordinate the church calendar of events and special worship
18 services.
- 19 4. Has the authority to call special congregational meetings to consider matters of
20 importance. Circumstances for congregational approval could include, but are not
21 limited to: extraordinary expenditures, approval of a pastoral call, dismissal of a
22 pastor, or major changes to the church’s property.
- 23 5. Work closely with the pastor and teacher to ensure the health and vitality of the
24 congregation and its ministries. This will entail:
 - 25 a. Forming a pastoral relations committee. It shall consist of four
26 representatives from the congregation each appointed by the Board of
27 Officers for two-year terms. One member each year shall be selected by
28 the Board of Officers and one member each year shall be selected by the
29 pastor. The pastoral relations team will serve as a liaison between the
30 pastor and teacher and the congregation. The relationship between the
31 pastor and teacher and the committee is dialogical. It shall advise the
32 pastor, but it has no authority to make decisions. It shall not evaluate the
33 pastor. The proceedings are confidential. This committee shall meet at
34 least every other month.
 - 35 b. Form a pastoral evaluation committee consisting of the congregation’s
36 elected officers. It shall evaluate the pastor’s effectiveness and leadership
37 annually. It will provide the pastor and teacher with guidance to ensure
38 effective ministry. Consulting with the pastor, they can change the
39 pastor’s duties and responsibilities prospectively as circumstances warrant.
40 The committee has the authority to increase or decrease the pastor’s
41 contracted hours. If the committee recommends a decrease in hours, it
42 will take effect after one year has elapsed. It shall report its evaluation to
43 the Board of Officers.
 - 44 c. Lead the congregation in community meetings to discern the movement of
45 the Holy Spirit and to engage the congregation in its call to discipleship.

1 Such meetings should take place at least once a year and is not to be part
2 of a Congregational Meeting.

- 3 d. Conduct an annual evaluation of the congregation’s ministry. This
4 evaluation will be designed with the pastor. It should assess the
5 congregation’s vitality and sustainability. It should critically assess its
6 missions and elicit the congregation’s perspective on its ministry.
7 e. Organize a pastoral search. In the event of a pastoral vacancy, the Board
8 of Officers shall organize and gather a pastoral search committee. It
9 should comprise a broad cross section of the congregation reflecting age,
10 tenure, gender expression, race, and ministries. The committee should
11 consist of six to eight voting members. They do not need to be members
12 of the Board of Officers. The team’s membership should be affirmed by
13 the Board of Officers. The team shall organize itself. Particularly when
14 searching for a settled pastor, the team should seek input from the
15 congregation and keep the congregation informed of its progress.
16

17 **D. Operations**

- 18 • The head of the Board of Officers is the Moderator. The Moderator shall preside over
19 Board of Officers meetings. In the event the Moderator cannot preside over a meeting,
20 the Moderator will appoint another member of the Board of Officers for this
21 responsibility.
22 • The Board of Officers shall meet at least quarterly. Meetings are open to all covenanted
23 members of the congregation. The congregation should be notified of the time and
24 location of Board of Officers meetings at least one week in advance by posting the notice
25 in the church, on its website, and through e-mail.
26 • A quorum for a Board of Officers meetings is two-thirds of the Board of Officers. A
27 majority vote of the members present at the meeting will pass a motion, unless otherwise
28 specified in the bylaws.
29 • Board of Officers will publish and disseminate meeting minutes to the congregation by
30 posting them in the church and on its website.
31

32 **Article VIII: Indemnification and Settlements**

33 Paul wrote “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) This
34 congregation will accept that covenanted members and voting members who serve this church
35 volunteers do so with their best intentions and to the best of their abilities. Inevitably, people err.
36 As such this congregation will refrain from pursuing immediate punitive measures without due
37 investigation and considerations. The congregation will favor a position that errors were not
38 conscious attempts to damage or hurt the congregation.
39

40 By this understanding this church shall to the extent legally permissible indemnify each present
41 or former officer or member of a ministry against all liabilities, costs and expenses, including but
42 not limited to amounts paid in satisfaction of judgment, in settlement or as fines and penalties,
43 and counsel fees and disbursements, reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the
44 defense or disposition of or otherwise in connection with or resulting from any action, suit or
45 other proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative, before any court or
46 administrative, legislative, on investigative body, in which such person may be or may have

1 been involved as a party or otherwise, or with which such person may be or may have been
2 threatened, while in office or thereafter, by reason of his or her being or having been such an
3 officer or member of a ministry team, or by reason of any action taken or not taken in any such
4 capacity, except with respect to any matter as to which such person shall have been finally
5 adjudicated by a court of competent jurisdiction not to have acted in good faith in the reasonable
6 belief that his or her action was in the best interest of the church. Expenses, including but not
7 limited to counsel fees and disbursements, so incurred by any such person in defending any such
8 action, suit or proceeding, may be paid from time to time by the church in advance of the final
9 disposition of such action, suit or proceeding upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of
10 the person indemnified to repay the amounts so paid if it shall ultimately be determined that
11 indemnification of such expenses is not authorized hereunder which undertaking shall be
12 accepted without reference to the financial ability of such person to make payment.
13

14 As to any matter disposed of by settlement by any such person, pursuant to a consent decree or
15 otherwise, no such indemnification either for the amount of such settlement or for any other
16 expenses shall be provided unless such settlement shall be approved as in the best interest of the
17 church, after notice that it involves such indemnification,

- 18 a) by a vote of a disinterested majority of the Board of Officers then in office, or
- 19 b) by a vote of the majority of the Board of Officers then in office, but only if the Board of
20 Officers shall have been furnished with an opinion of independent legal counsel to the
21 effect that such settlement is in the best interests of the church and that such person
22 appears to have acted in good faith in the reasonable belief that his or her action was in
23 the best interest of the church.
24

25 **ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENTS AND REVIEW**

26 **A. Amending Bylaws**

27 Amendments to these bylaws require a congregational vote. The vote can be taken in one of
28 three ways:

- 29 • In-person at a Congregational Meeting
- 30 • Electronically in a virtual meeting
- 31 • Mail-in
32

33 **B. Procedure**

- 34 1. A bylaw change can be proposed by any covenanted member of the congregation. The
35 proposed bylaw should be submitted to the Board of Officers for review to ensure its
36 intention is not in conflict with the current bylaws, is ethically grounded, and is consistent
37 with the congregation's polity.
- 38 2. The Board of Officers will revise the bylaw with the proposer as necessary. The Board
39 can decide that the bylaw must pass by a two-thirds majority.
- 40 3. The Board of Officers will distribute the proposed bylaw to the congregation for its
41 review. The review period will be no less than two weeks and no more than one month.
- 42 4. Following the review period, the congregation will convene a congregational meeting to
43 discuss the proposed bylaw. The members present at this meeting can amend the
44 language of the proposed bylaw.

- 1 5. Once the congregation agrees on the final language of the proposed bylaw, the voting
2 members can vote upon it. The bylaw can be affirmed by either a vote by the voting
3 members present or by a mail-in ballot.
- 4 6. If the voting members choose to affirm the vote at the congregational meeting, they can
5 vote upon the proposed bylaw at that time.
- 6 7. If the voting members choose to affirm the vote through a mail-in ballot, the clerk shall
7 prepare the ballot. The ballot shall contain the final language for the proposed bylaw, the
8 intention behind the proposed bylaw, and a summary of the discussion from the
9 congregational meeting. The vote will follow the mail-in procedures as indicated in the
10 voting processes article.

11

12 **C. Bylaw Review**

13 The bylaws should be reviewed by the Board of Officers at least every five years from the
14 adoption of the last full bylaws revision. Should the Board of Officers believe a full revision of
15 the bylaws is necessary, it shall appoint a committee of the voting members of the congregation
16 to recommend the revisions. The Board of Officers shall decide the size of the committee.

17

18 Acceptance of revised bylaws is subject to a congregational vote at a duly constituted
19 congregational meeting.