

CONSTITUTION AND BY LAWS
OF
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
INCORPORATED,
OF PUTNAM, CONNECTICUT

Amended and Adopted September 22, 1991
Amended June 13, 1993; January 16, 1994
Last Amended October 2, 2005

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this church shall be The Congregational Church, Incorporated; of Putnam, Connecticut, United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE II – COVENANT

We do humbly confess our sins, and trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts we do now renounce the dominion of the world over us and dedicate ourselves to the service of God, receiving God's word as our rule of life. We solemnly covenant with God and with the members of this church to share in the regular worship of the church and to participate in Holy Communion that we may be constantly renewed by God's grace; to love its members as our brothers and sisters that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith; to pray for the Church, its pastor, officers, and its work throughout the world, that it may be spiritually vital; and to give glory to God by an upright life that we may witness to the new life which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ARTICLE III – DOCTRINE

We hold the following to be a reasonable and sufficient statement of our faith to be used not as a test, but as a guide. For we further hold the right of every Christian to follow the word of God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STATEMENT OF FAITH IN THE FORM OF A DOXOLOGY

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ 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 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

ARTICLE IV – POLITY

This church is a member of the Windham Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers through which it cooperates in the ordination of pastors and the wider fellowship of the Church. This church is also a member of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ. No action of the association or any higher judicatory shall be binding upon this Church except by vote of the Church.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the church is granted on application to those who, through faith in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the total ministry of the church and to share its fellowship and obligations.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

The officers of the church shall be the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and the Clerk.

ARTICLE VII - GOVERNANCE

The authority of the government of this church is vested in its membership acting through congregational meetings. The management and administration and oversight of all business and spiritual affairs are delegated by the congregation to the appropriate leadership as delineated in the Bylaws. All elected leaders specified in the Bylaws shall be members of the church.

ARTICLE VIII – CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

SECTION 8.1: Congregational business meetings shall be held at stated intervals, but not less than semi-annually. At the annual congregational meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor, the officers, and by all official leaders and organizations in the church. Audited financial reports shall be submitted for the church and each of its organizations. Election for offices shall be held. The church budget shall also be submitted for action.

SECTION 8.2: Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be communicated to the congregation not less than one week prior to the meeting and shall include the date, time of the meeting, and any substantive agenda items.

ARTICLE IX - PROPERTY

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group, which abides by this constitution, as determined by the Executive Board of the Windham Association of the Connecticut Conference. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of The Windham Association of the Connecticut Conference.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS

SECTION 19.1 – PROCEDURE: These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members voting at a meeting called for that purpose. A proposed amendment to the Bylaws must be presented in writing to the members at the meeting not less than 30 days prior to the meeting called for the purpose of voting on Bylaws changes.

ARTICLE XI - MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 11.1 – RESPONSILIBITIES: The members of this church do covenant together by God’s grace to live lives in a manner consistent with the standards of biblical teaching, including the support of this local ministry in attendance, prayer, Bible study, service, and giving; to live lives in word and deed that are an encouragement to others to know and be like Jesus Christ; to reflect in all our relationships the servant love of our Lord; to support the broader mission of Christ through the Windham Association of the United Church of Christ..

SECTION 11.2 - PHILOSOPHY: The Congregational Church of Putnam holds a philosophy of membership, which states that every member should see themselves as a deacon, a trustee, a Christian educator, and an outreach minister. Each member should be concerned with the spiritual well being of others in the church (a deacon), the physical well being of our church buildings and grounds (a trustee), the spiritual formation of people in all age groups (a Christian educator), and the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those outside the church (an outreach minister). 1 Peter 4:10 says, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” Everyone in our church is encouraged to be involved on some level with each of these areas of concern under the leadership of the Church Council or those appointed to leadership by the Church Council or the congregation.

SECTION 11.3 - PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION:

- A. Membership is open to all who have made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ and have been baptized.

- B. Persons desiring to apply for membership shall submit a written application to the Pastor or to the Church Council. Membership classes will normally precede the application.

- C. Before completion of a membership class, applicants shall give testimony of their personal faith in Jesus Christ. Upon completion of this testimony, the pastor shall

submit recommendations of the applications to the Chairperson of the Church Council who shall have these recommendations confirmed by the congregation at a congregational meeting.

- D. Applicants who are voted into membership of the church shall be welcomed at a service of Holy Communion and make public confession of their Christian faith, as outlined in *The Covenant Book of Worship*.

SECTION 11.4 - CHILDREN OF MEMBERS: Children of members of the church and its constituency shall be nurtured under its spiritual care. When they have reached confirmation age, they shall receive instruction from the pastor(s) in the Word of God, Christian doctrine, and the history of the church. Following confirmation, they may apply for church membership as outlined under Section 3 of this article.

SECTION 11.5 - DISCIPLINE:

- A. Hebrews 10:24 encourages us to “consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.” Taking this to heart all church members shall be responsible for encouraging positive behavior and discouraging negative behavior in the church.
- B. In accordance with Galatians 6:1 if a person is “detected in a transgression” every effort should be made to “restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”
- C. According to Matthew 18:15, members should first attempt to talk about the issues with each other.
- D. Then in accordance with Matthew 18:16, if they are not listened to, or if a persons behavior is persistently harmful, or threatening in its own right, then church members should ask one or two members of the Church Council to go with them to talk about the situation.

- E. If a person fails to respond to this type of admonition, then he or she will be asked to meet with the Church Council to discuss the issues with them.
- F. If this member fails to meet with the Church Council, or continues to behave inappropriately or to teach things which are in opposition to Christianity then the Church Council shall recommend that this person be dismissed from membership. A two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting is required for such action.

- G. A member who has been properly dismissed from the church, or who has withdrawn membership, has lost all rights and privileges of membership in the church.

SECTION 11.6 – TRANSFER OF MEMBERS: Any member desiring to transfer or withdraw from membership shall make such a request in writing to the Pastor or Church Council. Letters of Transfer shall be issued by the Pastor or a representative of the Church Council. New members transferring into our church shall be encouraged to request letters of transfer from their former churches.

Deleted: transfer

SECTION 11.7 – RECORDING: The names of those joining and terminating membership shall be reported to the congregational meeting following action, and duly recorded at the end of each year in the written annual report by the church Clerk.

ARTICLE XII – THE CHURCH COUNCIL

SECTION 12.1 – QUALIFICATIONS: Members of the Church Council shall be members in good standing who are active in the support of the total ministry of the church.

SECTION 12.2 – COMPOSITION: The Church Council shall be comprised of the five officers of the church and Co-Coordinator as detailed in SECTION 12.7 C below. The Church Council shall be comprised of not less than 9 nor more than 15 Church Council members, one of whom shall be the Pastor (ex officio). The composition of the Church Council and the Council members

serving in these positions shall be approved by a majority vote each year after new members are elected to their positions.

SECTION 12.3 – ELECTIONS: New Church Council members shall be elected to their positions by a majority vote of those members voting at a meeting of the congregation called for that purpose.

SECTION 12.4 – TERM OF OFFICE: Church Council members shall be elected for a term of at least 2 consecutive years in the same position and shall not serve on the Church Council for more than six consecutive years. The terms of the Church Council members should be staggered so that a balanced number of Church Council members are being elected each year.

SECTION 12.5 – VACANCIES: Church Council members may resign from their position by giving written notice to the Church Council or the congregation. A Church Council member can also be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of congregational members voting at a meeting called for that purpose. Vacancies created by resignation or removal shall be filled by a vote of the membership in the same manner as set forth in Section 3 above.

SECTION 12.6 – QUARUM: A majority of Church Council members shall constitute a quorum.

SECTION 12.7 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL:

- A. The Church Council shall be responsible for building, maintaining and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the local body and for directing and overseeing all ministries and business affairs of the church.

- B. The Church Council shall act as the trustees of the church and its assets. They shall designate those members and any other members of the church who shall be authorized to sign legal documents on behalf of the church.

C. Each Church Council Member elected to the Church Council shall serve within a specific position on the Church Council.

1. **Chair** - The Chair shall preside at all business meetings of the church and of the Church Council. The chair shall confer with the senior pastor in preparing the agenda for such meetings, and shall utilize the counsel that the pastor can give by virtue of his or her training, experience, and calling. The chair shall also be responsible for leadership of the church services in the absence of the pastor.
2. **Vice-Chair** - The Vice-Chair shall assume the duties of the chair in the chair's absence, and assist in the Chair's duties. The vice-chair shall also be the chair of the Stewardship and Vision Committee. This Committee shall consist of two or three other members appointed by the Church Council, one of whom could be the Treasurer.
3. **Clerk** - The Clerk shall keep and preserve the minutes of all business meetings of the church and of the Church Council, and shall conduct and preserve all official correspondence as shall be delegated and shall be responsible for the official seal and documents of the church.
4. **Treasurer** - The Treasurer shall be responsible for overseeing the work of the Financial Secretary and the Collector. The Treasurer shall also coordinate their reports and give up-to-date financial reports at Church Council and congregational meetings.
5. **Diaconate Co-Coordinator(s)** - The Diaconate Coordinator(s) shall assist with details related to worship services and member care. This person shall make sure the sanctuary is prepared for worship each Sunday and for serving Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month and other appointed times. This person is also responsible for coordinating, supporting, and

encouraging all members participating in ministries related to worship and member care.

6. **Christian Education Co-Coordinator(s)** - The Christian Education Coordinator(s) shall be the liaison between the Church Council and those providing the leadership for our Christian Education programs. This person will work closely with the Sunday School Superintendent and all other leaders involved with Christian Education. They shall encourage all members to support and participate in our Christian Education ministries.

7. **Trustee Co-Coordinator(s)** - The Trustee Coordinator(s) shall be responsible for overseeing the care of church buildings and grounds. This person will work closely with those willing to volunteer their time and talents, and with those we hire to help take care of our buildings and grounds. This person shall encourage all members to help take care of the facilities God has entrusted to us.

8. **Outreach Co-Coordinator(s)** - The Outreach Coordinator(s) is responsible for encouraging and sustaining our involvement in outreach ministries. This person shall provide the organizational leadership needed to lift up opportunities for our members to be involved with outreach programs and events in our communities and nearby urban settings.

9. **(As Needed) Other Coordinators** - Other coordinators are at-large members of the Church who shall help with leadership in special projects or new initiatives that do not fit into any of the above categories. New positions can be created or a special projects coordinator could be elected. However the size of the Church Council shall not exceed fifteen people including the pastor who is an ex-officio member.

- D. The Church Council shall be responsible for overseeing the preparation and submission of a proposed budget for each fiscal year to the membership for approval. Upon approval of the budget by the membership, the Church Council shall be responsible for seeing that the budget is carried out as approved. The Church Council shall have the authority to appropriately adjust budget items and amounts where ministry objectives necessitate but in no event shall total expenditures exceed the total authorized budget or available funds without prior approval of the membership. Capital expenditures over \$500 shall be approved by the congregation. A Financial Secretary and Collector shall be elected by the congregation. The Treasurer will work with and coordinate the responsibilities of the Financial Secretary and Collector who shall be authorized to receive monies on behalf of the church. The Treasurer shall serve as a member of the Church Council and shall be approved to disburse funds for church purposes in accordance with established policy. The Church Council shall annually appoint auditors to audit the financial records of the church and report such findings to the congregation.
- E. The Church Council shall be responsible for representing the congregation in certain staff relationships including:
1. Annual appraisal of the ministry of the staff, and provide godly counsel or discipline as required.
 2. Annual review and approval of staff compensation and approval of compensation for new staff; approval of other personnel expenses for any staff member or activity, all subject to overall budget approval.
 3. Establishment of personnel policies.
 4. Approval of changes in staff job descriptions and approval of job descriptions for new staff positions.
 5. Maintenance of current job descriptions for all staff members.
 6. Hiring of support staff.
- F. The Church Council shall hear and respond appropriately to concerns of members.

- G. The Church Council shall determine what additional leadership positions and teams are needed to carry out the church's mission and ministries.

ARTICLE XIII - PASTORS

SECTION 13.1 – QUALIFICATIONS: The Pastor shall be an ordained pastor in good standing with the United Church of Christ or be finished with seminary education and licensed with ordination to take place within 24 months of a call. Other pastors shall be or shall be encouraged to become ordained, licensed, or commissioned by the Windham Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ in accordance with their qualifications and duties for pastoral office, staff ministry, or lay ministry. A pastor shall be a member of the church by virtue of the call to serve the church.

SECTION 13.2 – CALL OF PASTOR: The Pastor shall be called at a regular or special congregational business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced two weeks in advance. The Pastor shall be nominated by a pastoral search committee. This committee shall be elected by a congregational business meeting. It shall be representative of the congregation and have five to nine members, including the Church Council Chair. It shall work closely with the Connecticut Conference Area Minister. The Pastor shall be called by a closed ballot at this congregational meeting with a two-thirds vote required for a call. The call shall be for an indefinite period of time with a minimum of six weeks notice required by the church or the Pastor for termination of pastoral duties except as provided in Section 13.7.

SECTION 13.3 – CALL OF OTHER PASTORS: Upon the recommendation of the Church Council other pastors may be called at a congregational meeting by a closed ballot with a two-thirds vote required for the call. The duration of this minister's tenure and the notice required for termination of service shall be set forth in the letter of call.

SECTION 13.4 – COOPERATION: The pastor(s) shall, both in word and action, work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, and other Covenant ministers.

SECTION 13.5 – DUTIES OF THE PASTOR: The Pastor shall preach and teach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, and faithfully carry out pastoral work. The Pastor shall provide counsel, encouragement, and Christian discipline so as to assist in the accomplishment of the objectives of the church.

All staff is responsible to the Pastor. The Pastor shall be responsible for establishing a cooperative relationship with each staff member, and cooperative relationships between all staff members.

The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of the Church Council and of all ministry teams and committees. In these capacities he or she shall strive to establish and accomplish objectives and strategies in conjunction with the mission and purpose of the church.

SECTION 13.6 – OTHER PASTORS: Other pastors shall carry out specific areas of ministry under the direction of the Senior Pastor. They may also be directed by the Church Council to be the leader of or a participant in one or more other ministries.

SECTION 13.7 – CHARGES AGAINST A PASTOR: Charges against a pastor shall be submitted in writing to the Church Council, charging a pastor with indiscretion, immorality, doctrinal error, unethical behavior, or disloyalty. (Matthew 18:15-18). If in the judgment of the Church Council there is substance to the charges, the case shall be referred to the Church and Ministry Committee of the Windham Association, United Church of Christ. The committee shall confer with the Area Minister. These two officers shall confer and determine the order of responsibility in pursuing the matter according to the Rules and Regulations of the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ regarding discipline, prior to further action by the church.

ARTICLE IV – ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND MINISTRY TEAMS

SECTION 14.1 – PURPOSE: Leadership positions and ministry teams shall be formed beyond the work of the Church Council as required to implement the varied ministries of the church.

SECTION 14.2 – ORGANIZATION: Leadership positions and ministry teams shall be created and/or approved of by the Church Council to implement specific ministries. The list of leadership positions and ministry teams shall be determined by the Church Council or the congregation, upon recommendation of the ministry staff, in accord with the church's mission, strategies and objectives, and as consistent with organizational and functional effectiveness.

SECTION 14.3 – LEADERSHIP OF MINISTRY TEAMS:

- a. The primary leader of a leadership team shall be approved by the Church Council in consultation with the pastor. The team leader will serve as liaison to the Church Council.
- b. Each ministry team shall organize itself as required to perform its ministry.

SECTION 14.4 – ACCOUNTABILITY: Each leader and ministry team is accountable to the Church Council and the Congregation. Reports should be given about each ministry, and major expenditures or major changes to the ministries shall be approved by the Church Council or the congregation.

ARTICLE XV – NOMINATING COMMITTEE

SECTION 15.1 – COMPOSITION: The nominating committee shall consist of two Church Council members designated by the Church Council, the Pastor, and at least two members at large. The Church Council shall designate one of the committee members to serve as Chair of the nominating committee. A new nominating committee will be formed each year. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum of the nominating committee.

SECTION 15.2 – RESPONSIBILITIES: The nominating committee shall be responsible for nominations to fill the offices of the Church Council and any other positions assigned to it by the Church Council.

SECTION 15.3 – NOMINATING PROCEDURE: One or more candidates for open Church Council positions shall be nominated by the nominating committee. Any member of appropriate character, giftedness, and call may be considered for any open position.

SECTION 15.4 – UNITY: Actions by the nominating committee shall be taken in such manner as to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

ARTICLE XVI – PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

SECTION 16.1 – COMPOSITION: The Pastoral Relations Committee shall consist of a minimum of three people and a maximum of five. The committee shall be made up of volunteers from the church, with one member at large and one to be selected by the pastor.

SECTION 16.2 – RESPONSIBILITIES: The Pastoral Relations Committee is responsible for helping the pastor of the church to have the best possible relationships they can with the congregation. This may include facilitating conversations with congregants and the pastor when there is unresolved conflict. With the exception of the situations described in Section 13.7 of Article XIII, the goal of these discussions shall be reconciliation.

SECTION 16.3 – MEETINGS: The Pastoral Relations Committee should meet when a church member or the pastor requests such a meeting and the Church Council deems it is necessary. Recommendations can be made to the Church Council or the congregation after a meeting, but no official decisions can be made by the Pastoral Relations Committee.

ARTICLE XVII – SPECIAL COMMITTEES

SECTION 17.1 – COMPOSITION: Special Committees can be appointed by the Church Council or the congregation at any constituted business meeting. These committees should be formed around a specific purpose with a specific time frame allotted.

SECTION 17.2 – RESPONSIBILITIES: Special Committees are charged with the task of doing research and making recommendations, not making decisions. The decisions are made by the Church Council or the congregation. These committees should be used as little as possible, but as much as necessary.

SECTION 17.3 – TERM: Special Committees end when their specific purpose has been fulfilled, or when the specific time frame allotted for their work has expired. The Church Council shall decide if it is appropriate to offer an extension of time for their work. If time frames are not allotted, these committees shall be automatically terminated at the next annual meeting unless specifically extended by said annual meeting.

ARTICLE XVIII – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

SECTION 18.1 – REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS: Regularly scheduled meetings shall be held at stated intervals, but no less than semi-annually. The annual meeting shall be held near to the end of the fiscal year. The Church Council shall be responsible for overseeing the preparation and submission of a written annual report to the membership at this meeting.

SECTION 18.2 – SPECIAL MEETINGS: Special meetings may be called by the Church Council or by written request signed by ten percent of the membership.

SECTION 18.3 – NOTIFICATION OF MEETINGS: All meetings shall be announced in writing to the membership of the church at least one week prior to the meeting date.

SECTION 18.4 – PHILOSOPHY OF MEETINGS: The Congregation is the highest authority within congregational church polity. Therefore, the congregation should be seen as a great resource, rather than as a last resort. When a new initiative is being considered the congregation should be consulted for initial approval before a committee is charged with the task of compiling detailed plans. Whenever a proposal is potentially controversial it makes sense for church leaders to bring these proposals before the congregation before a lot of time is spent on planning.

SECTION 18.5 – CONDUCT OF MEETING: The Chair of the Church Council, the Vice-Chair, or any other member designated by the Chair, in his or her absence, shall serve as Chair of any meeting of the membership. All business meetings of the church and of any other committees or organizations shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

SECTION 18.6 – VOTING: Each member, and only members, shall be entitled to cast one vote at any election on any subject at any annual or special meeting of the membership. Such votes must be cast in person. Vote by proxy shall not be allowed. All votes shall be by secret ballot. The Chair of a meeting may call for open balloting where no objection is raised. Once a decision is made at a congregational meeting all members are encouraged to honor each decision.

SECTION 18.7 – QUORUM: Ten percent of the membership shall constitute a quorum for any congregational meeting, with a minimum of 15 members.

SECTION 18.8 – FINAL VOICE: The congregation reserves for itself final authority in any matter of its choice.