

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
of
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
SHELBURNE, MASSACHUSETTS,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this Church shall be The First Congregational Church of Shelburne, Massachusetts, United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this Church is to make real the life of God in the life of humanity by bringing the human spirit into fellowship and communion with the Heavenly Father, revealed to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Church, therefore, unites all persons who wish to share together the task of making the Will of God dominant in the lives of all people, as the Divine Will is set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and revealed to us by His Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE III - POLITY

The government of this Church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. This Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common in the United Church of Christ, and it is in fellowship with all Churches, which acknowledge Jesus Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications

This Church shall welcome into membership all persons who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

Section 2. Admission

1. Persons may unite with this Church subject to approval by the Pastor and the Diaconate, and by affirmation of the Church. Those not previously baptized may receive the sacrament of baptism at the time of reception.
2. Members may be received into this Church by:
 - a. Profession of faith in Christ.
 - b. Letter of transfer from another Church.
 - c. Reaffirmation of faith when a letter of transfer is not available.
3. The Associate membership of this Church shall consist of those who contribute financially to the support of the Church and/or participate in some measure in the life of the Church, and register with the Clerk.

Section 3. Duties

All members shall be loyal to Christian churches everywhere, and particularly to The First Congregational Church of Shelburne, upholding it by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, and their service.

Section 4. Voting Rights

The right to vote shall be extended to all Active and Associate members. Inactive members may not vote.

Section 5. Termination

Members shall be granted letters of transfer or dismissal on request after approval of the Pastor and Diaconate.

Section 6. Restoration

Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored to membership by approval of the Pastor, the Diaconate, and by re-affirmation of the Church.

Section 7. Inactive Membership

A person who has been inactive in this Church for a period of more than two years may be transferred to the inactive list on recommendation of the Diaconate and by vote of the Church at Annual Meeting. This action may be taken, without the consent of the member, only after the Pastor, Diaconate and/or Clerk has attempted to make contact with the member unsuccessfully.

Any person placed on the inactive list may be restored to the active membership by approval of the Pastor and the Diaconate.

ARTICLE V – PASTOR

Section 1. Selection and Term of Service

The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite term of service. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting at an Annual or Special Meeting of the Church shall be necessary to call a Pastor. He or she may be installed or recognized by the Franklin Association of the United Church of Christ.

The term of service is subject to termination by either the Pastor or the Church on notice in writing of at least 30 days. The Pastor's resignation can be accepted by a simple majority of those present and voting at an Annual Meeting or Special Meeting of the Church called for this purpose. Termination by the Church of the Pastor's term of service shall be by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a Special Meeting of the Church called for this purpose.

Section 2. Interim Pastor

Whenever the office of Pastor becomes vacant, the Diaconate shall notify the Area Conference Minister of the United Church of Christ. The Diaconate shall supply the pulpit and take necessary steps to appoint an Interim Pastor who will serve an indefinite term.

Section 3. Pastoral Search

If the office of Pastor becomes vacant the Diaconate will appoint a Pastoral Search Committee of at least five (5) but not more than seven (7) members. This committee should reflect the diversity of the congregation. The Pastoral Search Committee will select a chairperson within thirty (30) days and notify the Clerk. The chairperson will also serve as a member of the Church Leadership Council until the Pastoral vacancy has been filled.

Section 4. Pastoral Duties

The Pastor shall:

1. Have charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation.
2. Preach the Word of God.
3. Have in his or her care the stated service of public worship.
4. Administer the sacraments.
5. Work with the officers, ministries, and committees for the welfare of the Church.
6. Facilitate confirmation and other spiritual education classes.
7. Grow the membership of the Church with the support of the ministries.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS, MINISTRIES, AND APPOINTED ROLES

Section 1. Succession

Any person after having been elected to two (2) consecutive terms in the same role, shall not be eligible for election to such office again until after the lapse of one year. The Clerk and Treasurer, are exempt from the aforementioned term limitation. The intent is to also change those in appointed positions periodically as practicable.

Section 2. Officers

The following officers shall be elected annually from the Active and Associate membership, and their term of office shall run from January 1 through December 31, except where otherwise noted.

1. Moderator: elected to a two year term
2. Clerk: one year term
3. Treasurer one year term

Section 3. Church Leadership Council

The Church Leadership Council will consist of eight (8) members:

1. Pastor
2. Moderator
3. Clerk
4. Treasurer

and includes one (1) representative from and selected by each of the church ministries:

5. Stewardship Representative
6. Properties Representative
7. Mission & Outreach Representative
8. Diaconate Representative

Section 4. Church Ministries

The following persons shall be elected annually to lead and implement the ministries of the Church, and their term shall run from January 1 until December 31, unless otherwise specified. Each ministry shall meet within thirty (30) days after election, choose their representative to the Council, and notify the Clerk of this decision.

1. Diaconate: five (5) members, one or two to be elected each year to serve three year terms;
2. Properties : three (3) members, one to be elected each year to serve a three-year term;
3. Stewardship: three (3) members, one to be elected each year to serve three-year terms;
4. Missions & Outreach: three (3) members, one to be elected each year to serve three-year terms.

Section 5. Appointments

The following persons shall be nominated annually by the Moderator, and ratified by the Church Leadership Council, and their one year term shall run from January 1 until December 31 except as noted. Committees shall meet for organization within thirty (30) days of the Annual Meeting, choose their representative to the Council, and notify the Clerk of this decision.

1. Assistant Clerk
2. Assistant Treasurer
3. Pastoral Relations Committee: three (3) members. At the time that a new Pastor is called three (3) members of the Search Committee shall serve as the Pastoral Relations Committee until the end of the calendar year. The Pastor shall be consulted by the Moderator before the slate is invited and named. The term will be three (3) years with one member appointed each year for a three-year term.

4. Communications Committee: two (2) members, one appointed annually to serve a two-year term.
5. Delegates to the Franklin Association and Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ: four (4) members, two to be appointed annually to serve two-year terms.
6. Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Officers: two (2) members, one appointed annually to serve a two-year term.
7. Such other committees or task forces as the Church may from time to time elect.

The following positions shall be appointed annually, and ratified by the Church Leadership Council, for one year terms as described below:

8. Auditors: two (2) persons selected annually by Stewardship
9. Facility Coordinator: one (1) or more persons selected annually by Properties
10. Custodian: one (1) or more persons selected annually by Properties
11. Key Coordinator: two (2) persons selected annually by Properties
12. Musician: one (1) or more persons selected annually by the Diaconate

ARTICLE VII - DUTIES OF OFFICERS, MINISTRIES, AND APPOINTED ROLES

Section 1. Officers

The Moderator shall:

1. Preside at meetings of the Church Leadership Council, the Annual Meeting, and Special Meetings, or shall appoint a moderator pro-tem to preside in his or her absence. If the moderator is unable to appoint a moderator pro-tem, the Clerk shall call the meeting to order, and a Moderator pro-tem shall be chosen by the body assembled to preside at that meeting.
2. Act to sign legal documents on behalf of the Church membership, with prior consent of the Church Leadership Council.
3. Call meetings of the Church Leadership Council.
4. Make appointments as described in Article VI, Section 5.

The Clerk shall:

1. Keep a permanent record of all business transactions of the Church.
2. Keep a permanent record of all Annual Meetings, the minutes of each to be read for approval at the next annual meeting.
3. Keep the minutes of the Church Leadership Council meetings, record in the minutes all votes taken, and post them for the information of the membership, and read them at the following meeting.
4. Record the names of members with the date of joining and the date of dismissal or death.
5. Maintain an updated list of members, addresses, email, and phone numbers.
6. Record all baptisms, marriages, and funerals as reported by the Pastor.
7. Ensure the Annual Report is prepared in advance of the Annual Meeting.
8. Maintain and provide, to those elected and appointed to serve the Church, an updated listing of the duties of their office.

9. Record the dates of election and dates terms expire for officers, committee members and delegates.
10. Issue letters of transfer or dismissal voted on by the Church.
11. Preserve on file all communications and written official reports.
12. Give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary.
13. Notify the Stewardship Ministry of those positions needing to be filled.
14. Complete annual reports requested by the local conference of the United Church of Christ.

The Assistant Clerk shall:

1. Act as Clerk in the absence or incapacity of the Clerk.
2. Assist in the clerical needs of the Church.
3. Perform such other duties as the Clerk may delegate.

The Treasurer shall:

1. Receive and have custody of all funds of the Church and invest and disburse them subject to the direction of the Church Leadership Council.
2. Consult with the Stewardship Ministry on financial matters.
3. Present current financial reports at Church Leadership Council meetings.
4. Present to the Annual Meeting a report of the income and expenses for the preceding year and a report projecting the final income and expenses of the current fiscal year.
5. Serve as an ex-officio member of the Stewardship Ministry.

The Assistant Treasurer shall:

1. Act as Treasurer in the absence or incapacity of the Treasurer.
2. Be authorized to sign checks on behalf of the Church.
3. Assist the Treasurer in collecting money annually pledged for Church expenses.
4. Perform such other duties as the Treasurer may delegate.

Section 2. Church Ministries

The Church Leadership Council shall:

1. Meet at least six times annually.
2. Be responsible for the spiritual ministries and administrative business of the Church.
3. Receive regular reports of the Pastor's activities.
4. Make financial decisions about invested funds with input from the Stewardship Ministry.
5. Develop and present an annual budget to the membership at Annual Meeting, including the Pastor's financial needs.
6. Supervise the maintenance of adequate policies of insurance on all Church property and liability.
7. Fill vacancies of the officers, ministries, and committees with the recommendation of the Stewardship Ministry.
8. Act for the Church in case of emergency.
9. Hear reports of activities of the Church officers, ministries and committees.
10. Make recommendations for action to the membership when necessary.

The Diaconate shall:

1. Collaborate with the Pastor in preparation and presentation of worship, music, and christian education activities.
2. Provide for and aid in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
3. Approve applicants for Church membership, transfer or dismissal, and report on all membership gains or losses at a public service following.
4. Assist the Pastor in pastoral work, such as referring names of those who are sick or in need of any kind.
5. Assist the Pastor in promoting spiritual interests of the Church.
6. Select people (e.g. ushers, greeters, readers, etc.) to assist in the public worship and support their work.
7. Provide for pulpit supply ministers in the absence of the Pastor, including appointing an Interim Pastor when appropriate.
8. Appoint a Pastoral Search Committee as described in Article V.
9. Place flowers in the Church on the Sunday nearest October 21 in memory of Sarah Prescott Kellogg.
10. Arrange for music for Church services.
11. Coordinate choirs so all may participate regularly in worship.
12. Secure a musician and recommend his or her engagement by the Church.
13. Coordinate with the Properties Ministry concerning the maintenance of the organ and pianos.
14. Coordinate Christian education opportunities for adults, youth, and children (e.g. bible study, prayer groups, confirmation classes, seasonal celebrations).
15. Encourage lay participation in spiritual life activities.
16. Annually select a chairperson and representative to the Church Leadership Council, who may be the same or different people.

The Properties Ministry shall:

1. Secure a custodian and supervise his or her duties.
2. Be responsible for the care and upkeep of the Church buildings, grounds and other property, within the budget.
3. Consult with and gain approval of the Church Leadership Council for unbudgeted expenses.
4. Keep a financial record and report at the Church Leadership Council and Annual Meeting.
5. Select a Facilities Coordinator to coordinate the use and schedule of Church facilities.
6. Select a Key Coordinator to issue and maintain a record of all keys to Church facilities and those persons who have been issued keys according to the organizational guidelines.
7. Annually select a chairperson and representative to the Church Leadership Council, who may be the same or different people.

The Stewardship Ministry shall:

1. Canvass the membership and friends for pledges of funds, time, and talents to meet the annual budget and other needs of the Church.
2. Share the time and talent list with the Church Leadership Council.

3. Present a slate of officers and ministry members to be acted upon at the annual meeting.
4. Recommend nominees to the Church Leadership Council to fill vacancies that occur between annual meetings.
5. Consult with the Treasurer about fiscal matters including the Church's budget and financial investments.
6. Appoint auditors who shall audit the Treasurer's books annually or at any other time when directed by the Church Leadership Council.
7. Annually select a chairperson and representative to the Church Leadership Council, who may be the same or different people.

The Missions and Outreach Ministry shall

1. Organize mission/outreach projects within and outside our community (e.g. community meals, CROP walk, donation drives).
2. Promote and publicize its activities in collaboration with the Communication Committee.
3. Assist the Pastor in calling on the sick, shut ins, and newcomers.
4. Annually select a chairperson and representative to the Church Leadership Council, who may be the same or different people.

Section 3. Moderator's Appointments

The Moderator will nominate people to serve in the following capacities, subject to ratification of the Church Leadership Council (as described in Article VI, Section 5):

1. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall seek to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between the pastor and the members of the congregation.
2. The Communications Committee shall seek ways to share information with members of the congregation and greater community.
3. Delegates to the Franklin Association and Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ shall attend and participate in delegation gatherings, committee meetings, plenary sessions and worship; listen and share with an open spirit; be challenged, comforted and inspired in Christian community.
4. CORI Officers will screen (using the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information system) employees, volunteers, and staff who have the opportunity for unmonitored contact with children, disabled persons, or the elderly. These officers will, at all times, act in accordance with all Massachusetts General Laws that are governed by the state's Executive Office of Public Safety.

ARTICLE VIII - MEETINGS

Section 1. Worship Services

1. Public worship shall be held on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper may be observed on the first Sunday of each month and at such other times as the Pastor and Diaconate shall determine.
2. At any regular Church worship service the Church may, without special notice, act upon:
 - a. reception of members recommended by the Diaconate.
 - b. election of delegates to councils and conferences.

Section 2. Annual Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting shall be held during the first full week in December or at the discretion of the Church Leadership Council.
2. A notice of such Annual Meeting:
 - a. Shall be read at the public service on the Lord's Day preceding the day fixed for the meeting.
 - b. Shall be posted upon the church bulletin board.
 - c. Shall be sent to all members, associate members and friends.

Section 3. Special Meetings

1. Special meetings of the Church may be called by the Clerk upon request of the Church Leadership Council or upon the written request of seven (7) members, specifying the object of such a meeting.
2. A notice of such Special Meeting:
 - a. Shall be read at the public service on the Lord's Day preceding the day fixed for the meeting.
 - b. Shall be posted upon the church bulletin board.
 - c. Shall be sent to all members, associate members and friends.

Section 4. Quorum and Elections

1. At all annual and special meetings of the Church, twelve (12) members shall constitute a quorum.
2. At all meetings of the Church Leadership Council, five (5) members shall constitute a quorum.
3. Election of all officers, committees, and delegates shall be by ballot. By unanimous consent, one ballot may be cast by the Clerk.

Section 5. Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order, latest revised edition, shall govern the conduct of all business meetings of the Church.

Section 6. Electronic Meetings

1. When a regular or other properly called meeting of the Church or Council may not be conducted in person, due to health or safety concerns, the meeting may be conducted electronically, if so approved by the Church Leadership Council.
2. Committees/Ministries and other meetings regarding church business may be conducted electronically at the discretion of those members involved.
3. All electronic meetings shall be conducted in a method where all, that are entitled to attend, may attend and communicate through electronic means such as the Internet or by telephone. The meetings shall provide opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members.
4. The Church Leadership Council shall develop protocols for electronic meetings and review and update them, from time to time, as needed. In developing these protocols, the Council shall use its best efforts to provide accessibility for all members as much as possible, including those with disabilities and those who lack access to sophisticated technology tools. The protocols shall not conflict with these bylaws.
5. Any action that could be taken at a regular or properly called meeting may also be taken at an electronic meeting

ARTICLE IX - FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year shall run from January 1 to December 31.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS

Section 1. Amendment

The constitution and bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any Annual Meeting of the Church or at any Special Meeting called for that purpose; the proposed amendment being posted on the church bulletin board together with the call.

Section 2. Revision

Revision of the constitution and bylaws may be undertaken at the request of the Church Leadership Council. The Moderator will appoint a Bylaw Revision Committee of at least three (3) members. The revised constitution and bylaws may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the members present at an Annual or Special Meeting of the Church. The revision shall be posted on the church bulletin board together with the call and distributed to the Church membership at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.

Section 3. Separability

If any article, section, paragraph, sentence, clause, provision, phrase or word of these Bylaws shall be adjudged not valid, the adjudication shall apply only to the material so adjudged and the remainder of the Bylaws shall continue to be binding.

ARTICLE XI - EFFECTIVE DATE

Unless otherwise specified by unanimous vote of the Church, the effective date of these revised bylaws shall be the date of the Annual Meeting next following their adoption. In case of any new officers, ministries or appointed persons created or altered by these bylaws, the term of such officers, ministries or appointed persons shall start effective on January 1 following such adoption. In case of any authority modified by this revision, such modification shall take effect at the Annual Meeting next following the adoption of these revised bylaws.

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Adopted: December 8, 1984; Effective: Annual Meeting 1985

Bylaw Committee: Donald McBride, Chair, Lorain Giles, Maria Kingsley, Edward Moore, Virginia Peck, Elizabeth VanGuilder

Amended: November 28, 1993; Effective: Annual Meeting 1993

Bylaw Amendment Committee: Diantha J. Wholey, Chair, Mary Fiske, Timothy Graves, Donald McBride, Marcia Smith

Amended: December 1, 2002; Effective: Annual Meeting 2002

Bylaw Revision Committee: John E. Taylor, Chair, Joseph J. Judd, James G. Stacy, Judith Truesdell, Diantha Wholey

Amended: December 2, 2007; Effective: Annual Meeting 2008, by Article 4 of the Annual Meeting. Submitted by the Diaconate

Amended: November 16, 2008; Effective: Annual Meeting 2008, by Article 1 of a Special Meeting. Submitted by the Executive Committee and Church Council

Amended: November 27, 2016; Effective: Annual Meeting 2016

Bylaw Revision Committee: Linda Judd, Joseph Judd, William Sencabaugh, Gordon Taylor, Marion Taylor

Amended: November 1, 2020; Effective: Annual Meeting 2020, by Article 1 of a Special Meeting. Submitted by the Executive Committee.

Amended: December 7, 2025; Effective: Annual Meeting 2025, by Article 2 of a Special Meeting.

Bylaw Revision Committee: John E. Taylor, Chair, Joseph J. Judd, Christine Kovalchick, James Merriott, Sylvia M. Smith