

First Congregational Church of Wilmot
United Church of Christ
Incorporated in Wilmot, New Hampshire

By-Laws of the Church

Revised Jan. 24, 1993; Jan. 29, 1995; Nov.5, 2000; Feb.6, 2005; Oct. 25, 2009; Jan. 26, 2014; Jan. 31, 2016; Dec. 4, 2016; Sept. 16, 2018; Jan. 30, 2022.

Preamble: These by-laws are a living document and will be reviewed at least every 3 years by the Church Council to reflect the current ministries and needs of the congregation.

I. Mission

The mission of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to celebrate the Rites and Sacraments; to experience Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal; to provide Christian education; to render loving service; and to strive for righteousness, justice, peace and equal rights for all. The worship service is open to all.

II. Polity

The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all affairs, according to practices of the United Church of Christ.

II. Membership

Members may be received into the church by confession of faith, by letter of transfer from other churches or by re-affirmation of faith. Any member may on request, be granted a Letter of Transfer to a specific church.

Members shall, to the best of their ability, attend services regularly, contribute to the financial support of this church and its benevolences and share in its fellowship and activities and work with God in our community, world, and with others in the congregation to strive for righteousness, justice, peace and equity for all.

Friends are those persons who wish to share in worship, fellowship and service to others. Friends are not eligible to vote at any church meetings or to serve as officers, but may attend and participate in any open meetings and be eligible for membership on a committee as indicated in these by-laws.

IV. Officers

Officers of the church shall be members of the church and shall consist of the Moderator and Clerk. Officers may not serve in other elected positions or as chair of committees while serving as officers.

Moderator shall be elected to serve a 3-year term with a second term allowed. The Moderator, as the lay leader, shall

- serve as chairperson of the Church Council and develop the meeting agenda
- maintain contact with the chairpersons of all committees and the Pastor and will preside at all congregational meetings
- expedite the decisions of the Church Council
- see that the business of the church is carried on in accordance with the By-Laws.

Clerk shall be elected to serve a 3-year term with a second term allowed. The Clerk shall

- maintain a file of all activities of the Church
- prepare the annual report for the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ
- maintain the membership list in conjunction with the Deacons
- attend and record the minutes of all congregational meetings

- shall act as Moderator when necessary.

V. *Other Elected Positions*

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be a member of the church, elected for a 3-year term with a second term allowed. The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the proper receipt, accounting and disbursement of church funds within policies established by the church for adequate financial control. The Treasurer has the following responsibilities:

- Keep accurate records in appropriate financial journals of all monies received and disbursed.
- Reconcile monthly bank statements and correct ledgers as needed.
- Make regular (usually monthly) and annual reports to the church, and to the church's Finance Committee.
- Keep church staff and appropriate committees informed of any trends or changes in fiscal matters.
- Submit accurate financial records for annual audit according to church policy.
- Train an Assistant Treasurer selected by the church.

Assistant Treasurer: The Assistant Treasurer shall be a member of the church, elected for a 3-year term with a second term allowed. The Assistant Treasurer shall

- work in conjunction with the Treasurer
- act as the investment liaison, communicating regularly with the church's financial advisors, reviewing statements, and recommending any investment changes or updates to the Finance Committee.

Collector: The collector shall be a member of the church, elected for a 3-year term with a second term allowed. The Collector is responsible for the following:

- receiving all payments to the church and depositing the same in the Church bank account. A copy of the deposit slip should be made for the Treasurer and forwarded to her/him with the correct account information.
- selecting a second person, unrelated to the Collector and not holding the office of Treasurer, to assist with counting and recording Sunday offerings
- finding a replacement on Sundays when she/he is not present.
- keeping a record of all receipts from individuals and be prepared to submit updates as the year progresses.
- providing at the end of January, a statement of donations for each member or friend of the church as needed.

Delegates: Delegates shall be members of the Church and be elected annually to serve a 3-year term. At least two delegates shall serve to represent the Church at U.C.C. Association and Conference meetings. It is the responsibility of these members to report to the Church Council and/or appropriate committees.

Representatives: Representatives shall be members of the Church and be elected annually. On behalf of the church, the representatives shall serve various agencies, organizations, or outreach programs as requested or required by those groups. It is the responsibility of these representatives to report to the Church Council and/or appropriate committees. **No term limits apply to these members.**

VI. *Church Council*

Voting members of the Council shall be Moderator, Clerk, and one representative from each of the following committees: Finance, Deacon, Trustee, Justice and Witness, Christian Education, Growth and Outreach, Pastor-Parish Relations, Stewardship, Nominating, Music. The Pastor and Music Director will serve in an *ex officio* capacity.

This committee shall

- serve as a decision-making body. Matters requiring financial decisions shall be limited to 3% of the church's budget. Over that amount requires congregational approval.
- review and recommend the budget at the Annual Meeting
- meet as frequently and regularly as deemed necessary. When possible, the time and place shall be announced at least one week prior to a meeting. No votes shall be taken without a quorum of 7 persons being present.

VII. Committees

Committees will meet on a regular basis, giving members advanced notice with the provision that a committee may go into executive session as needed. Minutes will be kept for each meeting, copies to be posted and filed for the records. Committees shall report regularly to the Church Council and also submit a report to the Annual Meeting. All committees shall create and maintain an up-to-date description of their duties.

Terms: All members of the Church Council, committees, and other elected officials will have terms as noted in the specific by-laws governing those positions. Unless otherwise noted in the by-laws, any member elected to a 3-year term, may not stand for that position in a successive term. They may be reelected after being off for one year. If this requirement presents an undo hardship on the members of the church, it may be suspended on an "as needed" basis.

When a new elected committee is created, in the initial year terms of the members will be staggered with a 3-year, a 2-year and a 1-year term.

Finance Committee: This Committee shall consist of a church member who will act as Chairperson and will serve a 3-year term, and the following church members who will each serve a 1-year term: The Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Collector. Duties shall include:

- Responsibility for overseeing the financial management of the church, including investments, income, expenses, and disbursements.
- Overseeing the work of the Treasurer and Collector, developing a close working relationship with both.
- Responsibility for insuring that the books be audited by an independent auditor on a regular basis, i.e., every year or two years.

Trustees: The Trustees shall be members of the church and shall consist of 3 members to serve a 3-year term, one new term beginning each year. The duties shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Oversee the care, cleaning, and maintenance of church property
- Prepare a one-year, a three-year, and five-year financial projection for the church's expenses related to the physical plant and upkeep. This should be updated annually.
- Actively participate with the Finance and Budget Committees to insure future projections are planned and incorporated.
- Enter into contracts on behalf of the church, with Church Council approval.

Deacons: The Deacons will consist of 6 members of the church, each serving a 3-year term, with 2 new members elected every year. A Deacon may serve a second 3-year term. The Deacons, in collaboration with and the guidance of the Pastor, will

- organize and support the spiritual and worship life of the church community.
- Each Deacon will also lead a KIN group to foster fellowship and assist with worship.

Budget Committee: The Budget Committee shall consist of one person from the following committees to serve a one-year term in order to prepare an operating budget to be presented for approval by the Church Council and presented at the Annual Meeting: Trustees, Deacons, Finance, Stewardship, Religious Education, Music, Church Growth and Outreach, Justice and Witness as well as the Pastor.

Justice and Witness: This committee shall consist of 5 people, with 3 people to serve a 3-year term with terms staggered, and a Deacon and a Finance Committee member, each to serve a 1-year term. Duties shall include the following:

- Will serve to initiate, coordinate, and assist the various programs, special collections and activities that relate to justice and witness missions identified by the congregation and the UCC.
- Shall aid and assist the Justice and Witness ad hoc groups as needed.

Church Growth and Outreach: This Committee shall consist of 5 people with 3 people to serve a 3-year term with terms staggered, and a Deacon representative and a representative from the Religious Education Committee, each to serve a 1-year term. Duties to include:

- church growth
- new member development
- hospitality,
- publicity,
- planning and oversight of community events.

Religious Education Committee: This committee shall consist of a Director and 3 people to serve 3-year terms, with terms staggered. The committee, in conjunction with the pastor shall be responsible for planning and conducting both youth and adult religious education programs. The Director will require that all persons working with the children and youth have an up-to-date background check and will keep a file of same.

Music Committee: The music committee supports and maintains an open relationship between the Music Director, the Pastor and members of the congregation. The committee will consist of the Music Director and 3 people to serve 3-year terms with terms staggered. Duties to include:

- in conjunction with the Pastor and Music Director, will conduct an annual evaluation of goals for the coming year and terms of the contract.
- will be responsible for the search, selection, and recommendation of a new Director as required.

Stewardship Committee: The Stewardship Committee shall consist of three members of the church to serve a 3-year term, terms to be staggered. The committee is responsible for any stewardship activities held throughout the year.

Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee shall consist of three people to serve a 3-year term, terms to be staggered. This committee will

- present a slate of candidates for officers, any elected positions, and committees for consideration at the Annual Meeting.
- make recommendations to fill special committees.
- In case of a person's resignation or inability to serve during their term, the committee shall make nominations to the Church Council to fill the vacancy until the next annual meeting. The position will then be filled to the end of that person's term.

Pastoral Relations Committee: The Pastoral Relations Committee supports and maintains an open relationship between the pastor and the congregation. The committee will consist of the Pastor and 3 people to serve 3-year terms with terms staggered. The committee will

- in conjunction with the Pastor, conduct an annual evaluation of goals for the coming year and terms of the contract.
- The first Pastoral Relations Committee for an incoming pastor will be Search Committee members. Members to follow will be chosen by the pastor.

VIII. Pastor

The Pastor shall have freedom of the pulpit in matters of faith and ethics according to the teachings of the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit and the traditions of the United Church of Christ.

The Pastor, who shall be an ordained minister, is in charge of all worship services; will plan the ministry and activities with members of the Deacons and will report regularly to the Church Council on the needs and plans of the ministry. The Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees.

The Pastor is responsible for the supervision and oversight of all staff in consultation with appropriate committees. Staff reviews should be conducted every six months with an annual compensation session scheduled on the person's anniversary date.

An evaluation, and a review of the Pastor's contract will be conducted annually with the Chair of the Pastoral Relations Committee, the Chair of Deacons and the Moderator.

Pastoral Vacancy: When there is a permanent pastoral vacancy, the Church Council will form a search committee to complete the process of filling that vacancy utilizing all available resources. All candidates need to have standing and be ordained or licensed by the United Church of Christ or other Christian denominations.

A special church meeting will be called when a suitable candidate is put forward by the search committee and an affirmative vote of two thirds of the members present at this meeting is required for a pastoral call to be issued. The call will include the terms of the relationship between the church and the pastor that both parties have agreed to, and will follow as much as possible the guidelines from the New Hampshire Conference UCC.

The tenure of the pastor shall be indefinite and may be terminated at any time by mutual agreement with 90 days notice from either party. However, this relationship can be terminated at once for cause or if a pastor loses privileges or standing in the UCC or other denomination. Termination must be achieved by a 2/3 vote of church members present at a specially called meeting. In case of a conflict, the appropriate representatives from the UCC will be consulted.

IX. Other Staff

Music Director: The Music Director is responsible for providing music for Sunday morning worship services and other occasional services throughout the year. The Director will also conduct choir rehearsals and any music presented during worship on a schedule agreed upon by him/her, the Pastor, and choir members.

Religious Education Director: The Director, working with the Pastor and the Religious Education Committee, is responsible for:

- providing the church's Sunday School activities throughout the year.
- overseeing all areas of Children and Youth Ministry, to include the schedule, curriculum, and programs.
- soliciting assistance from others to serve as teachers for the lessons or programs.

Additional Staff: Examples of additional staff might include positions such as sexton, church secretary, bookkeeper, communications consultant, etc.

X. Meetings

Annual Meeting: The annual meeting shall be held during the month of January. The purpose of this meeting shall be

- to elect officers and committee members
- act on the annual budget
- transact such other business as may legally come before the meeting.

The Clerk shall provide a copy of the warrant for the annual meeting to members of the church at least two weeks before the day of the meeting. The warrant shall state the day, time and place of the meeting as well as the specific matters of business to be considered.

Special Meetings: Special meeting may be called by the Church Council or at the request of five or more members of the church. Except in case of emergency, a written meeting notice shall be given to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Quorum: One third of members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at the annual or special meetings of the church unless otherwise noted.

XI. *By-Laws*

These by-laws may be amended as approved by a 2/3 vote of the members present and voting at any annual or special meeting. The meeting warrant should state the substance of any proposed changes.

XII. *Robert's Rules of Order*

Robert's Rules shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered in these by-laws.

XIII: *Dissolution:*

In the event that for any reason this church be dissolved, its remaining assets shall revert to the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ.

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UCC Statement of Faith

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

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

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

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

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

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

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