

The By-Laws of Church of Christ Congregational Norfolk, CT

A Member of the United Church of Christ,
The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ
and Litchfield North Association of the United Church of Christ

Article I - Name

The name of this church is the Church of Christ, Congregational, of Norfolk, Connecticut.

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this church is to create and sustain a fellowship of the followers of Jesus Christ, to worship God and to take the life, teachings, crucifixion and living presence of Jesus Christ as the way to make God's will dominant in our lives, both individually and collectively.

Article III - Polity

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head and finds guidance in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted through the Divine Spirit by reason, faith and conscience.

The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all of its affairs, subject in legal matters to its Articles of Incorporation granted it by the State of Connecticut. The church accepts the obligation of mutual council, communion and cooperation involved in the free association with the United Church of Christ churches and pledges itself to share their common aims and work.

Article IV - Doctrine

This church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient guide of faith and practice, and holds that living in accord with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. While each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the word of God according to the dictates of individual conscience, the members accept the following statement of faith and covenant:

Faith: We believe in God the Creator, infinite in wisdom, goodness and love; in Jesus Christ, sent to us by God, who for our salvation lived and died and rose again to eternal life; and in the Holy Spirit, which reveals all of this to us, renewing, comforting and inspiring our souls.

Covenant: We are united in striving to know and follow the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel, exalting in the worship of the one, true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, and the reign of peace among all people. Under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we work and pray for the transformation of the world to the ways of God, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

The Church of Christ will create and maintain a mission statement and list of goals in order to focus the energies of the church on issues of importance to all; changes to the goals can be made upon the recommendation of an ad-hoc committee reporting to the Church Council; church wide forums for discussion and consideration, dissemination of the findings through church publications and a majority vote for adoption at a church meeting. The entire document will be reviewed every five years by an ad-hoc committee that will make recommendations to the church based on an evaluation of the accomplishment of the mission and goals.

Article V - Membership

The ultimate authority of this church rests with its members. Consequently, any reference made to the "church," "congregation at a worship service," or "membership," refers to the members specified below. The congregation at a worship may include non-members: (a) if temporary visitors, they will be welcomed by the church; (b) if visitors of the community, they will be encouraged to pursue church membership.

Persons desiring to become members of this church shall meet with the pastor and a representative(s) from the Diaconate. During this meeting the pastor and the committee will share with the individual(s) seeking membership, this church's faith and covenant, the responsibilities of membership and, when appropriate, the meaning of Christian baptism.

Membership in this church is open to all baptized Christians who have been received in any one of the following ways:

- (a) On letter of transmission from another church.
- (b) By reaffirmation of faith.
- (c) On confession of faith and baptism. A full member will not hold full membership in another community of faith.

(1) Reception - The names of those who are to be received into membership are announced by the Deacons in church on the Sunday preceding their reception. New members are received at the next communion service or at another time. Any unable to attend in public may be received by the Deacons acting on behalf of the church.

Members of the church are asked to attend services when they are able, support the church in a manner financially commensurate with their ability to do so, and participate in the work as conducted by the various committees.

(2) Associate Membership - The church receives into associate membership those who wish to be part of the church fellowship, but who are unable to fulfill the normal responsibilities of a member due to geographic location, membership in another religious body, or other circumstances. All the rights of membership are theirs except the right to be a Deacon, Officer, (Moderator, Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Collector) or serving on the Nominating Committee, acceptance and dismissal of Minister(s), amendments to the by-laws and church polity. They may terminate membership by a letter addressed to the Clerk or Pastor of the church.

(3) Termination of Membership - Members may leave the church under the following circumstances:

(a) Transfer to another church: Upon request, and by the vote of the church, a member may receive a letter of recommendation to another church, or a certificate of standing to another religious body, valid for one year from its date. Membership terminates upon notice of acceptance into another church or religious body.

(b) Change of faith: Following a request, in writing, to be released from covenant obligation by a member, the church patiently endeavors to secure continuance in its fellowship; failing in such an effort, the church grants the request and terminates the membership.

(c) Inactivity: Those who, in spite of kindly approaches, have not communicated with the church in three years, may, by a vote of the church, be transferred to a retired list. Their names are then dropped by a vote of the church.

(d) For cause: If a member persistently breaches the covenantal relationship with the church body, the Diaconate, after due notice has been given to that member, a hearing before the Diaconate has been offered and faithful efforts have been made to achieve reconciliation in accordance with the law of Christ, may censure or suspend that member or terminate the membership by a majority of full church members, present and voting, at a duly called church meeting. Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the church at a duly called meeting.

Article VI - Services and Meetings

(1) Worship - Services of worship are held every Sunday. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month and on Maundy Thursday and Palm Sunday. Other services for worship, inspiration, communion, prayer and study may be held as determined by the Diaconate.

(2) Meetings

(a) The Annual Meeting of the church for the election of officers and committee members and the transaction of any other business is the fourth Sunday in June. A Call-to-Meeting shall be given during the worship service the preceding Sunday. A quorum shall consist of no less than twenty (20) members present and eligible to vote. A smaller number may adjourn to a fixed date. The Moderator will preside. In the absence of the Moderator, the Minister or the Clerk will call the meeting to order and a Moderator pro-tempora shall be elected for that meeting. Robert's Rules of Order will guide the conduct of the meeting.

(b) The Annual Budget will be voted on at an All-Church Meeting on the third Sunday in January. A Call-to-Meeting shall be given during the worship service the preceding Sunday. A quorum shall consist of no less than twenty (20) members present and eligible to vote. A smaller number may adjourn to a fixed date. The Moderator will preside. In the absence of the Moderator, the Minister or the Clerk will call the meeting to order and a Moderator pro-tempora shall be elected for that meeting. Robert's Rules of Order will guide the conduct of the meeting.

(3) Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Church Council, on request of the Minister(s), or by twenty-five members of the church by petition, provided that the agenda is given during the regular worship service one week in advance. A quorum shall consist of no less than twenty (20) members present and eligible to vote. A smaller number may adjourn to a fixed date. The Moderator will preside. In the absence of the Moderator, the Minister or the Clerk will call the meeting to order and a Moderator pro-tempora shall be elected for that meeting. Robert's Rules of Order will guide the conduct of the meeting.

Article VII - Officers, Boards and Committees

(1) Minister (which may include Associate and/or Assistant Ministers).

(a) Duties of the Minister - The Minister has charge of the spiritual welfare of the church with the assistance of the Deacons. The Minister helps members of the community find and follow Christ, preaches the Gospel, administers the sacraments, conducts or supervises all services of public worship and administers the activities of the church in cooperation with the various boards and committees.

(b) Call of the Minister - The Minister is recruited and selected by a pastoral search committee appointed by the Church Council for presentation to the congregation and is called by a two-thirds vote of the congregation. Any interim pastor is not eligible as a candidate for the position. When the Minister is chosen and accepts the call, the association to which the church belongs or the churches in the vicinity are invited to sit as an ecclesiastical council to install or recognize the Minister, who becomes a member of the church and the association at the earliest opportunity. The Minister(s) is an ex-officio advisory member of all committees and is a full member with voice and vote of the Church Council.

(c) Termination of Installed Minister

(1) By Resignation - The Minister will give a minimum of sixty days notice. If the Minister and the Council agree, a shorter period of notice is adequate. In case of resignation, the Council will call a special meeting of the church to act on the resignation.

(2) For Cause - In case of proposed dismissal for cause, the Council, upon the recommendation of the Deacons, shall convene a meeting specifically for that purpose. The Minister shall have been given ten days notice by the Church Council in writing of such pending action. The Minister may attend such meeting, represented by counsel, and be given full opportunity for a hearing. The Minister shall then leave the meeting and the Council shall consider appropriate action in executive session. If the majority of the Council members present and voting call for dismissal of the Minister, a special meeting of the church will be held. The church may then by a two-thirds majority of full members present and voting request the resignation of the Minister within sixty days.

(3) Loss of Standing - In the case of loss of ministerial standing in the Litchfield North Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, relations shall cease at once.

(2) Moderator - The Moderator will preside at the Annual Meeting, the Budget meeting, and at any special meeting of the church, and all meetings of the Church Council. In consultation with the Minister, and the Boards and Committees involved, the Moderator will be responsible for drawing up an agenda for each meeting at which (s)he is to preside. In the event of the Moderator's absence the Minister or Clerk may call the meeting to order and a Moderator pro-tempora shall be elected for that meeting.

The Moderator will be familiar with the By-Laws of the church and will work with the Minister(s) to see that all activities are carried out in accordance with them. The Moderator, working with the Minister(s) will assure that the church is represented at association and conference meetings and that ideas are shared between the congregation and these bodies.

The office of the Moderator will be filled at the Annual Meeting. The term of office will be for three (3) years. After two (2) full terms the Moderator is ineligible for re-election for three (3) years.

The Moderator will be a full member with voice and vote on the Church Council. The Moderator will not hold another position as a church officer, and will not be eligible to sit as a voting member of the Deacons, Trustees, Nominating or Music Committees.

The Moderator will assure that all committees convene in a timely manner after the elections of the October Annual Meeting to conduct business and to assure the election of a chairperson(s) for each committee.

(3) Deacons - There are between six and eight Deacons comprised of both men and women. Deacons are elected to one four-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

To be nominated to the Diaconate, a candidate must be a full member of the church, not an employee of the church, nor be a member of the Trustee Committee. The Diaconate shall organize by selecting its own Senior Deacon(s) and such other officers or sub-committees, as it may need.

It is the duty of the Deacons to cooperate with the Minister(s) to deepen the spiritual life of the church and community and they share with the Minister(s) the responsibility for the nature and character of the services of worship. They assist in the preparation and the administration of Christian Baptism and Holy Communion. They aid the Minister(s) by visiting and caring for the needs of the members and friends of the church and community. They act upon requests for acceptance into church membership, letters of transfer of membership and reinstatement of membership. In cooperation with the Clerk, they make an annual survey of the church roll and at the Annual Meeting submit recommendations to the church regarding necessary revisions. They provide for the supply of the pulpit in case of a vacancy, and in the absence of Minister(s), and encourage members to fulfill their duties and obligations.

The Permanent Diaconate shall consist of all members of the church who have served on the Diaconate. They may be called upon for assistance in administration of the sacraments. Upon invitation, members of the Permanent Diaconate may meet with the Diaconate in an advisory capacity.

The Diaconate shall have the responsibility to remain in communication with the Minister(s) regarding the need of the Minister(s) and the needs of the Minister(s) family.

The Deacons reserve the right to sit in executive session when so voted by a majority of members present and voting.

(4) Church Council - The Church Council conducts the work of the church, reports to the congregation and brings to the congregation matters for church-wide consideration. In financial areas, it may alert the church to any proposed expenditure, although those over \$10,000 must be submitted to a vote of the church. The Council members include the Minister, Associate Minister, Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Superintendent of the Sunday School, and Director of Music (ex-officio if not a member of the church). Additional Council members are one representative from each of the following Committees: Christian Education, Nominating, Music, Mission and Benevolence, Fundraising, Hospitality, Historian. (3) Two members are also drawn from the Diaconate, and the Trustees and two members are voted in at-large from the congregation. The at-large members serve one three-year term with an interim of one year before qualifying for re-election. In the event of an office or committee position being vacant, the Council will follow the procedure outlined in number 18, "Committee Vacancies." The Council meets monthly and additionally as required. The first portion of the meeting is reserved for any member of the church who wishes to address the Council.

Additional members may be added to the Council at the discretion of Council members. Such additions will be subject to congregational approval at an annual or special All-Church Meeting.

The Council reserves the right to sit in executive session by a majority vote of members present and voting.

(5) Trustees - There are seven Trustees, serving three-year terms. Four Trustees constitute a quorum. The Treasurer and the Minister sit ex-officio, with voice but without vote. The Trustees are charged with the business affairs of the church. This includes properties, buildings, grounds, personnel contracts and salaries, expenses and investments. Expenditures of more than \$5,000 require the approval of the Church Council. The Trustees meet a minimum of six times per year. After six consecutive years, a Trustee is ineligible for re-election for one year. A candidate must be a member of the church, not an employee of the church, or a Deacon. The Trustees reserve the right to sit in executive session by a majority vote of members present and voting

(6) Director of Music - As music is an integral part of worship in this church, the Director of Music provides musical leadership. The Director works with the Minister and the Music Committee to provide music for the service, for weddings and for funerals. The responsibilities include, but are not limited to, playing the organ for church services, rehearsing and directing the Junior and the Senior Choirs, fostering and encouraging musical endeavor and education within the church and formulating a music budget.

(7) Treasurer - The Treasurer performs such duties relative to income, invested funds, and disbursements, as are prescribed by the Church Council. The Treasurer reports to the Council at all regular meetings on the transactions of the office. The Treasurer is elected for a three-year term and may serve two consecutive terms. The Treasurer shall be a full church member and sit ex-officio on the Trustees with voice but without vote.

(8) Assistant Treasurer - The Assistant, in the absence of the Treasurer, performs all the duties of the Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall be a full church member.

(9) Clerk - The Clerk keeps the minutes of the proceedings of the Church Council meeting and church meetings. The Clerk also keeps a register of all the names and addresses of all church members, with the dates and names, and type (Letter of Transfer, confession, etc.) of their reception and removal, and a record of all baptisms, weddings and funerals. The Clerk conducts correspondence for the church regarding letters of transfer, and preserves all communications and reports, and gives legal notice of all meetings. The Clerk is elected for a three-year term and may serve two consecutive terms. The Clerk shall be a full church member.

(10) Assistant Clerk - The Assistant Clerk, in the absence of the Clerk, performs all the duties of the Clerk. The Assistant Clerk shall be a full church member.

(11) Collector - The Collector attends to the distribution of all the offering envelopes and keeps a record of pledges made to the church. The Collector shall be a full church member.

(12) Auditor - The Auditor examines annually, or more often if deemed advisable, all accounts of the church. The Auditor is appointed by the Church Council.

(13) Director of Christian Education - The Director of Christian Education will design, support and coordinate the congregation's educational ministry in cooperation with the Pastor and the Christian Education Committee. The Director will oversee the Church School and all of its programs and keep current on trends in the field of Christian Education. The Director of Christian Education is supervised by the Pastor and the Christian Education Committee.

(14) Nominating Committee - There are six members on the Nominating Committee who prepare a slate, nominating one person for each position to be filled at the Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee is chosen by the previous Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms. Candidates for Deacon require unanimous approval. Nominating Committee members shall be full church members. In the event of a committee vacancy on this or any committee, the Nominating Committee shall follow the procedure outlined in number 18, Committee Vacancies.

(15) Music Committee - There are six members of the Music Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms. The term of office is a maximum of two three-year terms before an interim of one year. The Director of Music is an ex-officio member of the Committee. The Music Committee works in cooperation with the Director of Music in the pursuit of the duties of the Director to support the church's music ministry. In the event of a vacancy for the Director of Music, the Music Committee serves or creates a search Committee and after approval of the Minister presents a suitable candidate to the Church Council. The Committee also conducts an appraisal of the music program

(16) Mission and Benevolence Committee - This Committee researches and recommends to the Trustees organizations worthy of support by the church and the amounts of funds requested. It may also conduct events to raise money for approved organizations. There

are six members of the Mission and Benevolence Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

(17) Christian Education - The Committee determines the Church School and Youth Fellowship policy, selects Church School faculty, promotes education throughout the church and maintains a church library. The Nursery also functions under the direction of this Committee.

(1) There are six members of the Christian Education Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

(18) Other Committees

Additional committees may be created by the Church Council, as needed. Committees must have a description of the committee, which should state its purpose, responsibility, number of members, terms of office, and budget requirements. (2)

Hospitality

There are between six and eight members of the Hospitality Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

Fundraising

There are between six and eight members of the Fundraising Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

Stewardship

There are four members of the Stewardship Committee. Members are elected to one four-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

Flower Committee

There are four members of the Flower Committee. Members are elected to one four-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

Church Council At-Large Members

There are three At-Large Members of the Church Council. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. No Chair is required from among the At-Large Members of the Church Council.

Litchfield North Association Delegates

There are three Litchfield North Association Delegates. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. No Chair is required from among the Litchfield North Association Delegates.

CT Conference (UCC) Annual Meeting Delegates

There are three CT Conference (UCC) Annual Meeting Delegates. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. No Chair is required from among the CT Conference (UCC) Annual Meeting Delegates.

Investment Advisory Committee

There are three members of the Investment Advisory Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. One member shall be an appointed Trustee, and the Nominating Committee shall nominate all members. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

Endowment in Action Committee

There are five members of the Endowment in Action Committee. Members are elected to one three-year term; no member may serve more than two consecutive terms in whole or in part before taking one year off. One member shall be a member of the Missions Committee and one member shall be an appointed Trustee, and the Nominating Committee shall nominate all members. The Chairperson is designated by the Committee for a one-year term with a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

(19) Committee Vacancies - Committee vacancies shall be filled by the Church Council using the following guidelines:

- (a) The individual Committee may recommend names to the Nominating Committee.
- (b) The Nominating Committee will submit names to the Church Council.
- (c) The Church Council will elect person(s) to fill the vacant positions to the end of the term of the person vacating that position.

Article VIII

Amendments - These by-laws may be altered, amended or rewritten by a two-thirds vote at any regular or special All-Church Meeting, providing that a notice specifying the time of the meeting and the substance of the proposed amendment shall have been announced from the pulpit or printed in the bulletin on the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting.

Termination - The church and its property are devoted to religious purposes. No officer, director, member or employee shall receive any financial benefit from the church except reasonable compensation for services effecting one or more of its purposes. In the event of the dissolution of the church, the property shall become vested in the Connecticut Conference of the Church of Christ, or its successor. If this is not possible, the members, before dissolution, may designate an organization operating exclusively for religious or charitable purposes to receive the property. In the absence of such a determination, the disposition of the property shall be decided by the Superior Court of the County of Litchfield. ■

Revisions History

1. Article VII, Items 16 and 17 (voted by Church, October 2000).

1. The term of office is a maximum of two three-year terms before an interim of one year.

2. Committees must have a description of the committee, which should state its purpose, responsibility, number of members, terms of office, and budget requirements.

2. Article VII, Item 3 (voted by Church, May 2001). Added the following to “Church Council” - **fundraising, hospitality, historian** (thereby allowing voice and vote).

3. Article IV, Paragraph 4 (voted by Church, June 2006)

“The Church of Christ will create and maintain a mission statement and list of goals in order to focus the energies of the church on issues of importance to all; changes to the goals can be made upon the recommendation of an ad-hoc committee reporting to the Church Council; church wide forums for discussion and consideration, dissemination of the findings through church publications and a majority vote for adoption at a church meeting. The entire document will be reviewed every five years by an ad-hoc committee that will make recommendations to the church based on an evaluation of the accomplishment of the mission and goals.”

4. Article VII, Item 18 (voted by Church, June 2007)

Hospitality - There are **between six and eight members** of the Hospitality Committee.

Fundraising - There are **between six and eight members** of the Fundraising Committee.

5. Article VI, Item 2a

(a) The Annual Meeting of the church for the election of officers and committee members and the transaction of any other business is the fourth Sunday in June. (June 2008)