

*First Congregational Church
Constitution & By-Laws
Revised – May 2018*



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PREAMBLE

The First Congregational Church in Worcester, formed by the union of the First Church, Old South, in Worcester and the Tatnuck Congregational Church, in order to express more fully the oneness in Christ of the churches composing it, to make more effective their common witness in Him, and to serve His Kingdom in the world, hereby adopts this Constitution and By-Laws.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The common name of this church shall be: The First Congregational Church in Worcester. The legal name of this church shall be: The First Congregational Church in Worcester, Incorporated.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE AND MISSION

The First Congregational Church in Worcester acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of all people. It acknowledges as brethren in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the community and in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the church in each new generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, in purity of heart before God, and in its witness of the Gospel of Christ.

It is the mission of the First Congregational Church in Worcester to serve as a beacon of Protestantism in Worcester

and especially in the Tatnuck area. The focal point of this work is a rich pastoral and preaching ministry aimed at the special needs of our membership and radiating from that point are balanced programs for all age groups in education and service both within our Church and through ecumenical cooperation with other churches. This mission means an active outreach into the community through social, educational programming and activity.

Following a tradition which is older than the city itself, we believe that these purposes can best be served through an open and truly democratic congregational sharing of ideas and responsibility. We seek an opportunity both to be involved in the planning of our Christian witness and in the carrying out of that witness. Through God's guidance and the participation of our members and our pastor, we can lead this Church to heights of Christian experience and service which we have yet to recognize or to achieve.

ARTICLE III. POLITY

We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual and the right of common judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and the independence of its ecclesiastic control. Its government is vested exclusively in the body of believers that compose it, subject in legal matters to the articles of incorporation. We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to conduct the orderly administration of the affairs of the church and to walk together in Christian love.

ARTICLE IV. COVENANT

We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold

it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending as did our fathers upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

ARTICLE V. FAITH

While honoring the statements and confessions of faith of many generations, we express for ourselves this Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ in doxological form.

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 sin 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.

In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, this Church recognizes two Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper of Holy Communion.

ARTICLE VI. FELLOWSHIP

The First Congregational Church in Worcester affirms the principle of voluntary fellowship among churches; recognizes its responsibility to the larger fellowship in which it stands; acknowledges its obligation of mutual counsel, courtesy, and cooperation resting upon the churches in which freedom-in-fellowship is cherished and in this spirit pledges to share in their common life and purpose.

The First Congregational Church in Worcester shall be in direct fellowship with the Central Association, the Massachusetts Conference, and the General Synod, all of the United Church of Christ; and shall continue in such direct fellowship with the successors of these bodies in the United Church of Christ.

It shall also maintain a cooperative spirit and fellowship with the Worcester County Ecumenical Council, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of

Christ in the United States and the World Council of Churches.

ARTICLE VII. MEMBERSHIP

Persons may become members of this Church upon confession of faith, reaffirmation of faith or upon presentation of letters of transfer from other churches, and who have been baptized and have assented to the Covenant of this Church.

The names of candidates for church membership shall be submitted by the Minister to the Board of Deacons and approved by the Board of Deacons before being presented to the Church for reception into membership.

Section 1. Duties of Members

All members of this Church are expected to be faithful to the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life and to attend, insofar as is possible, the services of the Church and to share in its organized activities. They shall be expected to give regularly to the support of the Church and its missions. In support of Article IX of this Constitution and By-Laws, all members are considered deacons and trustees of the church. It is expected that insofar as able, members will joyfully join with the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees and the Board of Christian Education to perform various tasks when called upon.

Any member who fails to comply with the above requirements for a period of two years and who, after earnest endeavor by the Deacons, still fails to take any part in the church program, may at the discretion of the Board of Deacons and with due notice have his or her names removed from the list of active church members and placed in the inactive file with no vote allowed.

A member whose name has been placed on the inactive list may have his or her name restored to the active list when he or she shall again assume a share in the activities of the Church and its support.

Section 2. Letters of Transfer

Letters of transfer to other churches will be granted at the request of members in good standing by the Clerk.

Section 3. Questions Concerning Church Membership

All questions concerning church membership shall be brought before the Board of Deacons for consideration and action.

ARTICLE VIII CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

All persons who are members of the First Congregational Church in Worcester are members of the Church Fellowship. Their mission is to share theological reflections, develop closer relationships and promote mission activities.

ARTICLE IX. ELECTED OFFICERS & BOARD HEADS, GOVERNING BOARDS, APPOINTED AD HOC COMMITTEES & FUNCTIONARIES

Section 1. – Roles

A. Elected Officers (hereinafter called Officers)

(1) The Minister (an unelected officer)

Officers (2) – (5) are also officers of the Corporation:

(2) Moderator (Chair of Church Council)

(3) Vice-Moderator (Vice-Chair of Church Council)

(4) Clerk (Clerk of Church Council)

(5) Treasurer

(6) Assistant Treasurer

B. Elected Board Members

- (1) Chair of Board of Trustees
- (2) Vice-Chair of Board of Trustees
- (3) Board of Trustees Member At Large
- (4) Chair of Board of Deacons
- (5) Vice-Chair of Board of Deacons
- (6) Board of Deacons Member At Large
- (7) Chair Board of Christian Education
- (8) Vice-Chair Board of Christian Education
- (9) Board of Christian Education Member At Large

C. Governing Boards

- (1) Church Council
- (2) Board of Deacons
- (3) Board of Trustees
- (4) Board of Christian Education

D. Appointed Functionaries

Appointed by Board of Trustees ad hoc

- Stewardship Committee
- Finance Committee
- Overseer of House and Grounds
- Auditor
- Bookkeeper

Appointed by Board of Deacons ad hoc

- Missions Committee
- Growth Committee
- Music Committee
- Head Usher

Appointed by the Church Council ad hoc

- Two delegates for the Central Association of Massachusetts
- Two delegates Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ
- One, or more, delegates for the Worcester Area Missionary Society
 - Note: members may serve as delegates to more than one organization
- Pastoral Relations Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Church Historian
- Hospitality
- Webmaster
- Others as may be determined by the consent of the Church Members or the Church Council.

Appointed by Board of Christian Education ad hoc

- Youth Advisory Committee
- Safe Church Committee
- Scholarship Committee

Section 2. Election and Appointments

All elected officers and board members except the minister shall be elected from the active membership of the Church at the Annual Meeting of the Church for a fixed term and shall hold office until their successors are chosen. It is recommended that no member hold an elected position for more than 4 consecutive years to be followed by at least a one-year sabbatical from the position.

Section 3. Terms, Duties and Responsibilities

A. Terms

- (1) The Church program year shall be March 1 until the last day of February of the next year. All officers and board members elected at the annual meeting shall take office on March 1 and shall hold office until the last day of February the next year.
- (2) The Minister shall be called by the Church and shall hold office without limitation of time and shall become a member of this Church as soon as practicable after the acceptance of the call. The minister's term of service may be brought to an end either by the minister's own action or by a two-thirds vote of the Church members voting at a properly called Church meeting. The call extended to a minister shall contain the following clause: "This covenant may be terminated by either party giving the other two months' notice."
- (3) When it becomes necessary to choose a minister for the Church, the Council shall appoint a Search Committee of no fewer than seven members of the Church. The Search Committee after suitable search shall recommend the minister to a meeting of the Church called by the Church Council. The Church shall, at a properly called meeting, then by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting extend the call to the recommended minister.
- (4) Officers, excepting the Minister, shall be elected for a term of one year.
- (5) Members of the Boards of Trustees and Deacons shall be elected for a term of one year.

(6) Functionaries and Committees serve from the date of their appointment for the duration of the task or the fiscal year, whichever is shorter.

B. Duties & Responsibilities

(1) Minister - The minister shall:

- Be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Church and those whom it serves.
- Preach the Word and have in care the stated services of public worship and shall administer the sacraments
- Be pastor and teacher of the Church and its people.
- Is an advisory and ex-officio member (with a vote) of all committees and Boards.
- Be not required, however, to attend all meetings of boards and committees, but the consultation and advice of the minister are pertinent to the coordination of the activities developed through the boards and committees of the Church.
- Be pastor or shepherd of the flock; a member of each family; counselor in spiritual affairs; guardian of the Christian fellowship; friend to the people, old and young; ordained to lead them in worship; to preach the good tidings of the Gospel and to instruct them in the will of God and the service of humanity.

(2) Moderator (Chair of the Church Council) - The Moderator shall be, if possible, without other responsibilities within the church organization. The moderator shall:

- Preside at meetings of the Church and as Chair of the Church Council shall develop an agenda for their meetings.
- In furtherance of a closer coordination and more efficient development and achievement of objectives, be an advisor.

(3) Vice-Moderator - The Vice-Moderator shall:

- Assume the duties of the Moderator as outlined above in the absence of the Moderator.
- Assist the Moderator in the performance of his/her duties and perform any other duties as assigned by the Moderator.

(4) Clerk - The Clerk duties include:

- Keeping records of all church meetings and all Church Council Meetings.
- Notifying all officers, board and committee members of their appointment or election and shall see that each newly elected church officer or board chairperson has a copy of this Constitution and By-Laws outlining their duties.
- Issuing letters of transfer of members as directed by the Board of Deacons.
- Review at least once a year the active and inactive membership rolls of the Church, make changes as required and shall report at the Annual Meeting all changes in memberships.
- Keeping a record of all baptisms, weddings, and funeral services performed by the minister.

- Preserving on file all communications and written reports and shall give legal notice of all meetings of the Church where notice is required by the Constitution and By-Laws.
- Shall be a member of the Board of Deacons.

(5) Treasurer - The Treasurer shall:

- Receive and deposit all monies of the Church subject to the direction and control of the Board of Trustees.
- Be a co-signer of all checks drawn on the church's accounts.
- Work closely with the Finance Committee and Bookkeeper in preparing the annual budget.
- Handle all payroll functions.
- Shall be a member of the Board of Trustees.

(6) Assistant Treasurer - The Assistant Treasurer shall:

- Assist the Treasurer in his/her duties.
- Be a co-signer of all checks written on the church's accounts.
- Work closely with the Finance Committee and Bookkeeper in preparing the annual Budget.

(7) Board of Trustees - The Board of Trustees shall consist of the elected members enumerated in Section 1-B (1), (2) & (3) of this Article and ad hoc members as needed to fulfil the responsibilities listed below and including the functionaries enumerated in Section 1-D of this Article. The Board shall:

- Have the care and custody of the property owned by the Church but shall not have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property with value in excess of one thousand (\$1,000) without specific vote of the Church authorizing such action.

- After consultation with the Board of Deacons recommend the salary of the minister, and after consultation with the Music Committee, recommend the salary of other professional personnel in the ministry of music and shall recommend the salaries of any other paid personnel of the Church.
- Coordinate with the Board of Deacons relative to The Covenant with the Minister.
- Appoint and designate the duties and terminate the services of all paid employees of the Church with the exception of the minister and the professional music personnel.
- Prepare the contracts for the Sexton, Housekeeper, Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper.
- Manage and oversee all funds of the Church, including general income, endowment funds, wills, memorials and the like.
- Authorize and direct the Bookkeeper as to payments of monies under their control within the limitations of the approved annual budget. Once a budget is established and approved by the Trustees and Congregation each Board/Committee may authorize the transfer of funds from one-line item in the budget to another line item. No Board/Committee shall incur indebtedness in excess of five percent (5%) of the budget, unless authorized to do so by a vote of the Church.
- Appoint additional co-signers of all checks drawn on the church's accounts as needed.
- Appoint each year, at the meeting following the Annual Meeting, an ad hoc secretary to record the Board's actions.
- Appoint special committees to undertake special functions or projects from time to time.

- All Fund-Raising Activities relating to and in the Church be approved by the Trustees.
- Establish use of facility rates
- Maintain **use of building** and **use of grounds** forms.
- Approve of all building and grounds use by internal and external parties.

(8) Board of Deacons - The Board of Deacons shall consist of the elected members enumerated in Section 1-B (4), (5) & (6) of this Article and ad hoc members as needed to fulfil the responsibilities listed below and including the functionaries enumerated in Section 1-D of this Article. The Board shall:

- Appoint each year, at the meeting following the Annual Meeting, an ad hoc secretary to record the Board's actions.
- Appoint each year a Head Usher to carry out preparations for the Worship Service as directed by the Board.
- Counsel and assist the pastor in the direction of the spiritual life of the Church.
- Determine with the pastor the order of public worship services and special programs and services for seasons of the year.
- Assist the pastor in the preparation and administration of the Sacraments.
- Be responsible for maintaining an adequate pulpit supply in the absence of the minister. Coordinate with the minister to make sure of coverage when the minister is away.
- Be responsible for leading the members of this Church in fulfilling their evangelical mission and by welcoming and assimilating the members and others into the fellowship and worship in the Church.

- Approve candidates for church membership proposed by the minister and recommend them for reception by the Church. Provide the new member with an informational packet.
- Direct the Clerk to write letters of dismissal or transfer of membership and report fully to the Clerk all action taken in connection with church membership.
- Supervise the benevolent work of the Church for the needy in the community including expending any gifts or contributions for this purpose.
- Appoint special committees to undertake special functions or projects from time to time.

(9) Board of Christian Education - The Board of Christian Education shall consist of the elected members enumerated in Section 1-B (7) & (8) of this Article and ad hoc members as needed to fulfil the responsibilities listed below and including the functionaries enumerated in Section 1-D of this Article. The Board shall:

- Appoint each year, at the meeting following the Annual Meeting, an ad hoc secretary to record the Board's actions.
- Be responsible for the Christian Education Program of the Church which shall include the educational activities of the Church School, the youth ministry, and adult education programs. A Christmas pageant may be sponsored when the number of church school students and other volunteers support a successful presentation.
- Be a policy making and a policy approval body in Christian Education matters.
- Be responsible for CORI checks on all adults working with children.
- Appoint Sunday School teachers as required.

- Appoint supervisors, if needed, of Church School and youth activities such as Youth Advisor.

The following positions and committees are appointed positions. The duties and responsibilities listed are guidelines and may be modified by the appointing Board. The Boards may appoint other individuals and committees as needed.

(10) Stewardship Committee - The Stewardship Committee is appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Committee shall:

- Carry on a program of stewardship during the year to inform and educate members of the Church in support of the church program and the need for their involvement through their time, talent and treasure; and to prepare a program outlining the ways and means of obtaining the necessary funds to meet the financial needs of the Church through fundraisers and the annual canvass for pledges and contributions.

(11) Auditor - An Auditor may be appointed by the Board of Trustees to audit the corporate funds and accounts of the Church. If a member of the congregation, the Auditor cannot be an Officer or Trustee.

(12) Bookkeeper - The bookkeeper is appointed, or employed, by the Board of Trustees. The bookkeeper shall:

- Pay bills contracted by any officer, board or committee member of the church within the established budget with the concurrence of the Treasurer. All expenditures outside of the budget will require prior approval of the Board of Trustees.

- Shall be in charge of maintaining the account ledger, preparing monthly reports for the Board of Trustees and the annual financial statement for the Annual Meeting.

(13) Mission Committee - The Mission Committee is appointed by the Board of Deacons. The committee shall:

- Be responsible for the promotion of the missionary interests of the Church and Church School in its local and foreign program of service to humanity.
- Promote the consideration of social issues, as related to Christian principles in the fields of international affairs, civic, economic, inter-racial, family and school affairs.
- Provide social education and initiate social action for the Church and its organizations.
- Provide the congregation with information about the greater church needs, investigate and evaluate requests for assistance and educate the congregation through speakers and theological reflections.

(14) Growth Committee - The Growth Committee is appointed by the Board of Deacons. The committee shall:

- Seek to draw people from outside the Church to Christian commitment and Church membership.
- Follow up with guests.
- Introduce new members to the congregation through the newsletter
- Coordinate new member orientation and reception.
- Encourage member interest in Church activities.

(15) Music Committee - The Music Committee is appointed by the Board of Deacons. The committee shall:

- Be responsible for the entire ministry of music in conjunction with the minister and Minister of Music, including the selection of professional personnel as needed.
- Promote the use of music in the worship service.
- Consult with and make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for salary for the professional personnel and help prepare the contract.

(16) Pastoral Relations Committee - The Pastoral Relations Committee is appointed by the Council. The committee shall:

- Consult frequently with the pastor to seek resolutions of problems and concerns of the pastor and the church.
- Discretion is essential to the proper functioning of this committee.

(17) Church Council - The Church Council is composed of the following voting members:

- Moderator as Chair
- Vice-Moderator as Vice Chair
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Minister
- Chair of Board of Deacons
- Chair of Board of Trustees
- Chair of Board of Christian Education

Council meetings are open to all active members.

The term of members of the Council:

Regularly elected officers of the Church will, on March 1, assume responsibilities as members of the Church Council . It is the responsibility of the outgoing Chair

to call the first meeting of the new Board. Representatives of appointed committees should be selected at the first meeting of the committee and will be a member of the Council until March 1 of the following year, or until the committee completes its work, whichever comes first.

In the event that a Council member is unable to attend a meeting of the Church Council, the Chair of his or her committee may appoint an alternate who shall have the power to vote at that meeting of the Church Council.

The Church Council shall:

- Serve as a coordinating and planning agency for all the interests and activities of the Church and its organizations where plans and programs of all boards, committees, organizations of the Church can be reported.
- Act as the conduit for the exchange of ideas and suggestions, resolution of all dates to prevent conflict in scheduling of activities, sharing of past experiences, recommendation for adjustment and improvement of policies and procedures.
- Adopt an Operating Manual, which shall include all policies/procedures and job descriptions of the Church and its officially recognized boards, committees and organizations.
- Fill, upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee and until the next annual meeting of the Church, all vacancies in the elective offices of the Church with the exception of the minister and professional music personnel.
- Undertake to evaluate all plans and programs with the interests and welfare of the Church as a whole in mind.

- Submit, at the annual meeting, a report of its activities and actions for the year and a comprehensive program involving the chief objectives and goals of the Church to be emphasized in the year ahead.

Meetings:

The Church Council shall meet monthly or upon the call of the Minister, the Moderator or the written request of any three members of the Church. A majority of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum.

(18) Executive Committee - The Executive Committee is composed of the following voting members:

- Moderator as Chair
- Vice-Moderator as Vice Chair
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Minister

The Church Council shall:

- act for the Church Council on all matters not requiring action of the full Council and meetings shall be called by any member thereof.

Section 4: Quorum for the Council and all Boards and Committees

A majority of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum. The quorum of all governing boards and committees shall be a simple majority of that board or committee. Vote to act or not act shall be by a majority of the quorum present.

Section 5: Meeting Requirements

The Church Council will typically meet monthly or upon the call of the Minister, the Moderator or the written request of any three members of the Church. All Boards will typically meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. All Committees should meet on a regular basis for the duration of their task. All meeting dates and times shall be reported to the church office in sufficient time to be included in the Sunday Bulletin prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE X. Church Organization

The Church is a unity. It welcomes the creation of organizations within its membership which shall better serve its purposes and its members. It expects from such organizations a maximum of cooperation. All Boards/Committees are encouraged to read the Behavioral Covenant in unison at their meetings and adopt it as a code of behavior of life within the church. All organizations deriving their principal membership from members of the Church shall be regarded as integral parts of the Church and shall receive the general oversight of the Church through its Minister and the Church Council.

ARTICLE XI. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE XII. Meetings of the Congregation

Section 1: The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held during the month of February. At this meeting there shall be full opportunity for any business or discussion, including reports

of officers, boards and committees, which may properly come before the Church. The Annual Report, a compilation of all submitted reports and the proposed annual budget, shall be available to the members at least one week prior to the date of the Annual Meeting. The business shall include:

- The presentation by the Treasurer of the financial position of the Church for the preceding fiscal year.
- The presentation by the Board of Trustees of the proposed budget for the current year.
- Action on the adoption of the budget.
- The election of officers and board members for the ensuing year.

Section 2: Special Meetings

Special Meetings of the Church shall be called by the Clerk at the request of the minister, by a majority of the Church Council, or upon written request of twenty-five active members of the Church. In each case the reason for calling the meeting shall be specified.

Section 3: The Call

The Annual Meeting of the Church and all special business meetings of the Church shall be called by the Clerk. The notice of the call for such meetings of the Church shall be read at the regular service of worship on the Sunday before the date of the meeting. At least eight days before the date of such meetings, the Clerk shall cause the call for any meeting of the Church, including the items in the warrant, to appear in the official publication of the Church or in a written communication addressed to all active members of the Church. No action shall be taken affecting the pastoral relation or sale, mortgage, or lease of the real property of the Church, or the purchasing or leasing of any additional property at any church meeting, unless a copy of the warrant

shall have been mailed in the church publication or by separate letter to the last known address of all active members eligible to vote, at least eight days before the time of the meeting.

Section 4: Voting and Procedure

All active members of the Church who are present at a meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote upon any question before such meeting. A majority vote shall control except as otherwise provided. In any question of procedure at business meetings of the Church, unless other explicit procedures are provided in this Constitution and by-laws, Robert's Rules of Order shall be considered as authoritative and be followed.

Section 5: Quorum

At all business meetings of the Church, 15% of the active membership list as established for January 1 of each calendar year shall constitute a quorum, but in the absence of a quorum those present may vote to adjourn to a fixed date.

ARTICLE XIII. Amendments

The Constitution and By-laws may be amended by a vote of a least two-thirds of these members who are present and voting at any regular or special meeting, provided that the substance of the proposed amendment is stated in the call for the meeting.