

Revised Bylaws

Background Information

Reasons for Revision

- Currently the congregation does not operate in a manner consistent with the current bylaws. Though aspects of these bylaws reflect significant changes from the current set, overall the revisions enable the congregation to operate in a manner consistent with its present operation.
- The revision better reflects the current size of the congregation. The current bylaws require more people to serve the church than regularly worship with the congregation. Many of the positions are for committees which are not functioning as laid out in the current bylaws.
- The revision reflects the current sociological context of membership in organizations. Today, people, especially younger people in their twenties and thirties, are less apt to join an organization, whether secular or sacred, than preceding generations. However, they are more than willing to participate. Additionally, some people might want to participate in a church's ministries, but don't believe in any aspect of the Trinity.

Overall Objectives

The bylaws seek to fulfill the following objectives:

- Accommodate the current context of church in the wider community today (see above)
- Reclaim a basic tenet of reformed Protestantism, the priesthood of all believers, by encouraging everyone in the congregation to find and serve in one or more ministries
- Remove structural rigidity to encourage the movement of the Holy Spirit

Significant Changes

- There is no longer a distinction between full members and associate members. Everyone who wishes to participate in the life of this congregation are covenanted members. As covenanted members, they can participate in the various ministries of the church. The congregation in return promises to care for them and walk with them through their lives.
- A subset of covenanted members is voting members. These are covenanted members who wish to have voting privileges to lead the congregation, to affirm decisions made by the congregation, and to enter into agreements with entities outside of the congregation. Voting members choose this status. They become voting members through affirmation of faith, letter of transfer, or baptism and make their commitment in a congregational worship service.
- Ministries replace committees and function as teams. There are five ministries. They have no specific size. Participation on the teams is open-ended in that there are no terms of office. People can serve on more than one ministry team simultaneously. Ministries are the pathway for members to volunteer to serve the congregation.
- The elected officers for the congregation are: Moderator, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Clerk. Other elected offices are: Auditor and two Delegates
- The Cabinet shifts from being a clearinghouse for information to setting direction for the congregation's ministries. It will coordinate the five ministries to work in the same

direction to the same end. Included in the Cabinet's ministry is responsibility to evaluate the ministry of the congregation and the pastor.

Significant Changes from the First Draft

Based upon comments submitted by the initial reading team, this draft incorporated several significant responses:

- Bible quotations were eliminated
- Procedures to terminate covenanted member status administratively were eliminated. Covenanted members can voluntarily, however, withdraw their status.
- Only incapacity to participate in congregational meetings and decisions can terminate voting member status
- The ministry team for Administration, Property, and Finance are now Trustees for Property, Finance, and Administration.
- The role of music in the Music and Worship team have been strengthened and enhanced.

Particularities of the United Church of Christ

As we developed these bylaws, we were attentive to particularities of the United Church of Christ (UCC). Like any organization, the UCC has a polity, also known as the way an organization operates and functions.

UCC polity has its roots in the Protestant Reformation. Fundamentally, all believers are ministers, reflecting the tenet, the priesthood of all believers. When a congregation believes a person has particular gifts and skills for pastoral leadership, he or she is set apart from the membership to lead it.

These bylaws reflect the particularities of the UCC in the following ways:

- The formal title for pastors is Pastor and Teacher. The title reflects the clergy's dual role of caring for the congregation and teaching the faith. They are authorized by the UCC and are ordained. When the pastor and teacher is affirmed by a congregational vote to lead it, he or she is a member of the congregation.
- The authority of the church rests in the congregation. The congregation makes decisions for itself in areas of governance, operation, and finances.
- Each church within the UCC is in covenant with other churches in the UCC. Thus, though seemingly autonomous, local churches are bound by covenant to the denomination and its polity. Locally, a UCC church is part of an association (in this instance the Franklin Association), which is part of a conference (formerly the Massachusetts Conference and by vote of the recent general synod the Southern Conferences of New England), which is part of the United Church of Christ. The association is the United Church of Christ at the local level and has covenantal authority to ensure good order within our local churches, affirm the gifts and graces of lay people for authorized ministry, and to ordain people to authorized ministry.
- These bylaws particularly the article pertaining to Pastor and Teacher, reflect the UCC's polity around authorized ministry. The overarching document is the **Manual on Ministry** published in 2018.