

**THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF**  
**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**PELHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**ARTICLE I - NAME**

This church shall be called The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Pelham, New Hampshire, incorporated in 1939 under the laws of the State of New Hampshire.

**ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

The purpose of the church shall be to worship God, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the sacraments, to realize Christian fellowship and unity in this church and the church universal, to render loving service toward humankind, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

**ARTICLE III - POLITY**

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its Head and finds in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Holy Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience, its guide in matters of faith and discipline.

This church is governed by its covenant members who, acting as a covenanted body, control all its affairs. It accepts the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ, and pledges itself to share its common aims and work.

We cherish the fellowship of the churches, united in district, state, and common concern, and gladly acknowledge our membership in the Hillsborough Association of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ.

**ARTICLE IV - COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIPS**

**Faith Covenant**

We hold the following statements of Faith not as a test of faith, but as an expression of the spirit in which this church interprets the word of God.

We confess our faith in God, our Heavenly Father, and our reverent love for Jesus Christ our Savior, and our willingness to be guided by the Holy Spirit. We promise, as members of this church, to walk together as Christians, obedient to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and to submit to the government and discipline of this church until we are regularly dismissed therefrom.

We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and the right of private judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control.

This we do for the glory of God, for the good of our people, and for our mutual growth in Christian grace: seeking to do all in faith, fellowship, and service, in the Spirit of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the Form of a Doxology**

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. Amen.

**Church Covenant:**

We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and Will of God. It is our purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of this church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshiping God, and striving for truth, justice and peace. As did our ancestors, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the Realm of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.

**Open and Affirming**

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Pelham, New Hampshire is an Open and Affirming church.

## **ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP**

### **1. Qualification**

Membership in the First Congregational Church of Pelham UCC shall be open to any person who has been baptized and has made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in the following manner(s);

- a. Confession of Faith and Baptism (if not previously baptized)
- b. Re-Affirmation of Faith – if an inactive member of another Christian church
- c. Letter of Transfer – if an active member in good standing from another Christian church
- d. Rite of Confirmation

### **2. Reception**

All persons desiring to become covenant members shall be received during a Sunday communion worship service following an orientation class conducted by the Pastor in conjunction with the Diaconate.

### **3. Responsibilities**

All covenant members of the church are expected to:

- a. Be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life
- b. Attend the services of worship of the church
- c. Give regularly to the financial support of the church and its interests at home and abroad
- d. Share in its organized work

#### 4. **Rights**

- a. **Active covenant member:** An active covenant member of the First Congregational Church of Pelham, United Church of Christ shall be a voting member of the corporation with full privileges. An active covenant member is expected to communicate and/or make a financial contribution toward the support of the church at least once a year.
- b. **Inactive covenant member:** An inactive covenant member shall be any person who neglects to communicate at least once a year and/or make a financial contribution toward the support of the church for two consecutive years. Such persons shall be transferred to the Inactive Member List, shall be a non-voting member and shall no longer be reported as active or counted in the statistics of the church. An inactive covenant member shall be notified of his/her inactive status and will become an active covenant member again with communication and/or financial contribution towards the support of the church.

#### 5. **Dismissal**

A covenant member of the First Congregational Church of Pelham, United Church of Christ is dismissed from membership by:

- a. Death
- b. By Letter of Transfer granted upon request to join another church fellowship.

## **ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS**

All officers shall be covenant members of the church.

### **1. Pastor:**

- a. The Pastor shall have charge of the spiritual welfare of the church and shall seek to enlist persons as followers of Christ, preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments and Rites, have under his/her care the services of public worship, give pastoral guidance and oversight, and administer the activities of the church in cooperation with the various boards and committees. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees and shall render a written report at the annual meeting of his/her work during the year.
- b. The Pastor shall have standing as an ordained minister or be preparing for ordination with the Hillsborough Association of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ.
- c. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the church council shall appoint a search committee consisting of at least seven (7) covenant church members.
- d. The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite time by a two-thirds majority vote of the church members present and voting at a special meeting of the church.
- e. The call extended shall specify in writing the Pastor's salary, annuities, and other benefits.
- f. The Pastoral relationship may be dissolved either by the church or by the Pastor by written notice of such intention given at least ninety (90) days in advance. While the term of the Pastor shall be indefinite, the church may at any time, by a two-thirds vote at a meeting called for the purpose, request the Pastor's resignation with the expectation that it will be presented within ninety (90) days. Likewise, the Pastor shall give notice to the church council in case the Pastor wishes to leave of the Pastor's own volition.

2. **Moderator:**

- a. There shall be a moderator, elected at the annual meeting for the term of one year, who shall preside over all corporate meetings of the church. In the moderator's absence the church shall elect a moderator pro-tem who will preside over its meeting(s).
- b. The moderator shall preside over church council meetings.

3. **Clerk:**

A clerk shall be elected at the annual meeting for the term of one year.

- a. The clerk shall keep the written minutes of all business meetings of the church.
- b. The clerk shall keep a register of members with dates of admission, transfer, together with a record of baptisms, marriages and deaths.
- c. The clerk may notify all officers, members, committees and delegates of their election or appointment. The clerk shall preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings as indicated by the by-laws.
- d. The aforementioned duties of the clerk shall be consistent with current policies.

4. **Treasurer:**

- a. The treasurer, who shall be adequately bonded at the expense of the church, shall be elected at the annual meeting for the term of one year.
- b. The treasurer shall have charge of all monies received by the church from whatever source and shall keep full and accurate account of all receipts and disbursements in books and records belonging to the church.
- c. The treasurer shall have charge of all monies in the name and to the credit of the church in such depositories as may be designated by the Board of Trustees.
- d. The treasurer shall sign and make in the name of the church checks upon written order by the board of trustees and shall pay out and dispose of the same, subject to the provisions of these by-laws.
- e. The treasurer shall render to the church at the annual financial meeting an account of the financial condition of the church.
- f. The treasurer is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

5. **Financial Secretary:**

- a. The financial secretary, and an assistant, shall be elected at the annual meeting for the term of one year.
- b. The financial secretary shall receive all offerings and keep an accurate and confidential account of all pledges. These monies shall be deposited in the bank and reported to the treasurer at least once a month.
- c. The financial secretary and the assistant shall be adequately bonded at the expense of the church.

## **ARTICLE VII - BOARDS OF THE CHURCH**

### **1. The Church Council:**

The Church Council shall carry out the business and mission of the church between congregational meetings, represent the church and act on behalf of its members.

- a. The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor(s), Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, chairs or designated representatives from the Diaconate, Board of Trustees, Christian Education, Mission, Stewardship, Pastor Parish, Music, Nominating and Audit Committees, and the Women's Fellowship.
- b. The Church Council shall be informed of all the interests of the church in its various departments of ministry and organization, hearing reports from said Boards and Committees. The Church Council cannot veto the decisions of the standing Committees and Boards elected by the church but shall act as an Advisory board of consultation and direction upon all plans and programs in the best interests of the church. The Church Council shall not have the authority to make any financial decisions on behalf of the church.
- c. The Church Council shall exercise the authority to fill any vacancy to any office, due to any member of any committee who is unable to fulfill his/her term of office with the recommendation of the Nominating Committee.
- d. The Church Council shall be responsible for the planning and conducting of the Old Home Day activities as per current policy.
- e. The Church Council shall meet bi-monthly, but may be called together at any time by the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk or any three (3) of its members.

## 2. **The Diaconate:**

- a. The Diaconate shall consist of twelve (12) members, four (4) elected each year, to serve a period of three (3) years. No one shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without a lapse of one (1) year. The Diaconate will meet once a month.
- b. One (1) Youth member may be elected in addition to the twelve (12) members to serve a one (1) year term. A Youth member may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- c. It shall be the duty of the Diaconate to cooperate with the Pastor in providing for public worship and in ministering to the spiritual interests of the church and community, in caring for the poor, the sick, the needy, the sorrowing, the indifferent and the stranger.
- d. The Diaconate shall assist in the preparation and celebration of the Sacraments.
- e. The Diaconate shall receive all requests for admission to church membership and assist the Pastor in arranging suitable reception of new members, introducing them into the life of the congregation. The Diaconate shall oversee the Confirmation Class and assist the Pastor as needed.
- f. The Diaconate shall review the membership list annually along with the Pastor, Clerk and Financial Secretary to assure an accurate membership roll and encourage all to participate more fully in the life of the church. The Diaconate shall submit names deemed to be in inactive member status to the Church Council annually. The Diaconate shall submit names requesting a return to Active Covenant member status to the Church Council upon such requests.
- g. The Diaconate shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in the absence of the Pastor. The Diaconate shall be responsible for appointing an interim minister.
- h. The Diaconate shall be responsible for an annual performance review of the Pastor in conjunction with current policy.
- i. The Diaconate shall be responsible for providing greeters, ushers and suitable floral arrangements for worship services as per current policy.

### 3. **The Board of Trustees:**

- a. The Board of Trustees shall consist of seven (7) members to serve a term of three (3) years. A Trustee may be elected for two (2) consecutive three (3) year terms. No one shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without a lapse of one (1) year. No more than four (4) may be elected in any one year.
- b. The Board of Trustees shall have charge of all financial affairs of the church under the direction of the church and subject to regulations as prescribed by the laws of the State of New Hampshire.
- c. The Board of Trustees shall be authorized to spend up to a total of \$4,000 per annum on a non-budgeted item when in the best interests of the church.
- d. The Board of Trustees shall have under its jurisdiction the care and custody of church property and shall see that grounds, buildings and equipment used and owned by the church are properly maintained and insured.
- e. The Board of Trustees shall provide a proper contract for the Pastor.
- f. The Board of Trustees shall meet once a month and shall authorize the Treasurer, by written order, as to the payment of monies under its control.
- g. The Board of Trustees shall prepare an annual budget after taking counsel with appropriate boards. The proposed budget shall be presented to the church for discussion and adoption at the Annual Meeting as per Article IX.
- h. The Board of Trustees shall work in conjunction with the Stewardship Committee on the annual Stewardship Drive.
- i. The Board of Trustees shall make a written report at each Annual Meeting of the church, of its activities and of the condition of the property.
- j. The Board of Trustees shall provide job descriptions for the non-pastoral employees of the church and shall be responsible for an annual performance review in conjunction with current policies.

**4. The Board of Christian Education:**

- a. The Board of Christian Education shall consist of six (6) board members. The Superintendent of Sunday School shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Christian Education. Two (2) members shall be elected annually to serve a three (3) year term. No member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without the lapse of one (1) year.
- b. A Youth Member may be elected in addition to the six (6) members to serve a one (1) year term. A youth member may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- c. The Board of Christian Education and the Sunday School Superintendent shall, in conjunction with the Pastor, advise, coordinate and supervise the religious education programs of the church, including Sunday School, Adult Education, Youth Fellowships and special educational events.
- d. The Board of Christian Education will meet monthly.
- e. The Board of Christian Education shall provide a written report at the Annual Meeting of the church.
- f. The Board of Christian Education shall conduct an annual performance review of the Superintendent of Sunday School.

## **ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES OF THE CHURCH**

### **1. The Music Committee:**

- a. The Music Committee shall consist of the Music Director and representatives of each of the choirs and two (2) members at large elected at the annual meeting. The Music Director shall serve as an ex-officio of the Music Committee.
- b. The Music Committee shall make recommendations which it deems advisable to the Board of Trustees regarding the positions of the Music Director and Organist.
- c. The Music Director shall chair the Music Committee. The Director shall be responsible for the use and maintenance of the musical instruments.
- d. The Music Director shall work with the Pastor to provide suitable music for the church services and arranging for suitable music programs on occasion.

### **2. The Audit Committee:**

- a. Two church auditors shall be elected at the annual meeting, one (1) each year to serve for two (2) years.
- b. The auditors shall examine the accounts of the treasurer and the financial secretary and report thereon annually to the church.

### **3. The Mission Committee**

- a. The Mission Committee shall consist of six (6) members, two elected each year at the Annual Meeting of the church, for a term of three (3) years. No member shall be elected to more than two (2) consecutive terms without a lapse of one (1) year.
- b. One (1) youth member may be elected in addition to the six (6) members to serve a one (1) year term. A youth member may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- c. The Mission Committee shall promote the interests of Christian world missions.
- d. The Mission Committee shall direct mission projects, including Sunday School Mission Education, High School mission trip programs and shall

promote the United Church of Christ's mission program, Our Church's Wider Mission and inform and educate the congregation of special offerings.

- e. The Mission Committee shall direct the use of the missionary giving of the church, excluding any missionary line item.

#### 4. **The Nominating Committee**

- a. The Nominating Committee shall consist of four (4) members proposed by the Church Council, each to serve a term of two (2) years with two (2) members being elected annually. Nominating committee members shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without the lapse of one (1) year.
- b. The designated Chairperson of the Nominating Committee shall call a meeting within 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting of the church.
- c. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for presenting a slate of officers at the Annual Meeting.
- d. When a vacancy occurs in any office, board or committee, the Nominating Committee shall be notified by the Chairperson of said Board or Committee, to appoint a replacement as timely as possible as with current policy.
- e. Once identified by the Nominating Committee, the name of the person being appointed shall be presented to the Church Council for official vote to the position. The replacement member shall assume the term of the person being replaced.
- f. The Board of Trustees shall nominate a Treasurer if a vacancy occurs in that office.

#### 5. **The Pastor Parish Committee**

- a. The Pastor Parish Committee shall consist of six (6) members of the congregation. Two (2) members shall be elected at each annual meeting for a term of three (3) years. No member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without a lapse of one (1) year.
- b. During the first two (2) years of a new pastorate, two (2) members of the Search Committee shall be members of the Pastor Parish Committee.
- c. The Pastor Parish Committee shall act as a liaison between the pastor and the congregation. Its purpose is to provide support to the pastor while

seeking to maintain a healthy and open relationship between the pastor and the congregation. The Committee shall meet regularly, with the pastor present to encourage, care for and listen to the Pastor's concerns and reflections and advocate for the pastor's and the congregation's health and well-being.

- d. The Pastor Parish Committee shall, at all times, ensure the confidentiality of the Pastor Parish Committee meetings.

**6. The Stewardship Committee:**

- a. The Stewardship Committee shall consist of four (4) members; one each from the Diaconate and Trustees and two (2) members at-large from the congregation, with the representative from the Trustees serving as Chair. Members shall be elected at an annual meeting for two (2) years.
- b. The Committee shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees by implementing a Stewardship campaign culminating the first Sunday of November.
- c. The Committee shall meet year-round, developing a program of education for church members, planning Stewardship campaigns promoting spiritual understanding of pledging, tithing and support of the church budget to support the church's ministries, with assistance from the Board of Trustees.
- d. The Committee shall oversee the collection of Pledges to support an appropriate budget set by the Trustees reflecting the monies raised to be presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting.

**7. Delegates**

- a. Delegates shall be elected to serve a term of two (2) years with at least two (2) members being elected annually.
- b. Four (4) delegates shall be elected as provided by the by-laws of the Hillsborough Association, United Church of Christ and the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ.
- c. The Delegates shall elect its own chairperson who shall be responsible for informing the delegates and the church of issues being considered by the larger church and shall make a written report to the church and/or the Church Council, stating actions taken at the Association and Annual Conference meetings.

## **ARTICLE IX - MEETINGS**

A vote of the majority of covenant members present at a meeting shall be the action of this church. A quorum shall consist of twenty-five (25) current covenant members.

### **1. For Worship:**

- a. Public services shall be held each Sunday and at such times as the Diaconate and/or the Pastor shall determine.
- b. The Sacrament of Holy Communion shall be celebrated upon the first Sunday of each month, and/or at such dates as the Diaconate and/or the Pastor shall determine.
- c. The Sacrament of Baptism shall be held at such time determined by the current policy of the church.

### **2. For Business:**

- a. The Annual meeting shall be held during the month of January for the purpose of receiving and acting upon annual activity and financial reports of the officers, boards, committees and organizations of the church, and electing Church officers and boards and transacting any other business which may legally come before the meeting.
- b. Members shall be notified by written notice at least fourteen (14) days prior to any congregational meeting. Such notice shall be given at the public worship services on the two (2) Sundays preceding the day fixed for such meeting. The Clerk shall post a written call for the meeting in a conspicuous location.
- c. Special meetings of the church shall be called by the Clerk, the Pastor, the Church Council via vote, or upon a written request of members of the church equaling ten (10) percent of the current active membership as determined at the beginning of each year at the Annual Meeting, specifying the purpose for such meeting.
- d. No Special Meeting shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given, except that at any of the regular meetings for worship, the church may, without notice, act upon appointment of delegates to councils and conferences, but shall not conduct any other business.

- e. The church shall follow any appropriate parliamentary rules of order at the discretion of the Moderator. By majority vote, alternative rules of order may be adopted.

3. **Extraordinary Actions:**

Notwithstanding any other provisions in these By-laws, to take the actions listed below at an Annual or Special Meeting requires a quorum of fifty (50) Covenant Members and the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Covenant Members present and voting on the issue.

- a. To sell all or any part of church real estate
- b. To purchase any real estate
- c. To lease all or any part of church real estate
- d. To borrow funds secured by a mortgage on all or any part of church real estate
- e. To move church operations to a new location
- f. To change the name of the church
- g. To merge with or be acquired by any other religious organization
- h. To sell personal property of the church having a value in excess of \$2,500.

**ARTICLE X-AMENDMENT**

These by-laws may be amended, altered or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the current active covenant members present and voting at any legal business of the members. Members shall be notified by written notice at least fourteen (14) days prior to any congregational meeting. Such notice shall be given at the public worship services on the two (2) Sundays preceding the day fixed for such meeting. The Clerk shall post a written call for the meeting in visible sight.