

**CONSTITUTION**  
**of**  
**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL**  
**Burlington, Massachusetts**  
**Voted May 1991, Amended 1996, 1997, 2009**  
**This Version Amended and Approved February 3, 2013**

**Article I - Name**

The name of this church is The United Church of Christ, Congregational, in Burlington, Massachusetts, a corporation registered with, and under the laws of, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Article II - Purpose**

As a church, we are followers of Jesus Christ bound together to worship God, to respond to the Holy Spirit in the complexity of human life and to hear God's call to discipleship

- by being accountable and nurturing accountability to God in our lives and in the lives of our children:
- by holding precious our human and natural resources that both may be treated responsibly and respectfully:
- by joining in dialogue and partnership with all people of this planet who seek peace, justice and reconciliation.

We gather for worship, study, planning and mission to celebrate the life, teachings, death and living presence of Jesus Christ which frees us to love boldly and to serve gladly as God would want us to do.

We believe that God calls us to love unconditionally, following the example of Jesus Christ. Recognizing that all people are equal in the sight of God, we seek to be an inclusive and respectful community for persons of every color, age, sexual orientation, gender, ability, and economic means. In our calling to express the love and welcome of Christ, we affirm the dignity and worth of every person, and declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation. We strive to respond to the needs of our town and world with practical deeds of love. We welcome individuals and families of every configuration into the full life and ministry of this church, including all sacraments and rites of the church.

## COVENANT

I acknowledge the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as my God, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior.

Relying on the Holy Spirit for strength and accepting the Lord Jesus as my guide, I promise to strive to imitate His example, living in communion with God and in fellowship with His people.

I promise to seek the peace and growth of this church; and, according to my ability, to contribute of my substance to the support of its work, to be present at the communion, to attend its stated meetings, to share its work, and to cultivate brotherly love toward all people.

### **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 guidance in matters of faith and discipline.

The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of full and final control in all its affairs. While this church holds to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all external ecclesiastical control, it accepts the obligations of mutual counsel, comity and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ.

### **Article IV - Doctrine**

Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ:

I 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 unto you. Amen.

### **Article V - Membership**

This church will welcome into its fellowship any person of eighth grade age or older who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and who intends to follow Him. These persons shall be admitted to active membership by one of the following means:

1. Confession of faith;
2. Presentation of a letter of transfer from another church;
3. Re-affirmation of faith, if a letter is not available;
4. Election of dual membership;
5. Confirmation

and by acceptance of the covenant of the church publicly, if reasonably possible.

Prospective members shall be encouraged to attend an orientation on church membership with the Pastor, representative of the Boards, church officers and other interested church members. Prospective youth members shall be encouraged to participate in a confirmation class. New members shall normally be received at a regular worship service, but, if necessary, may be received by the Pastor with any Deacons acting in behalf of the church. Dual members with another church shall have all rights, privileges, and responsibilities of regular members.

Membership may be terminated on request of the member by one of the following means:

1. By the granting of a letter of transfer to another Christian Church;
2. By separation with a certificate of church membership, if joining a body not in fellowship with this church;
3. By release from membership if, after conference and deliberation, the member is insistent in his desire for such release.

Only active members may vote on transactions of the church.

Evidence of active membership shall be the love and care demonstrated by each member to the fulfillment of the Covenant of this church.

Members who do not meet the active membership criteria shall be placed into inactive status or removed from the church rolls upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons and approval of the Parish Council by the end of each calendar year.

#### **Article VI - Officers of the Church**

The officers of this church shall be a Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer. These officers shall be members of the church, of legal age or older. The Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer shall be nominated and elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for a term of one year each. Other offices, such as Assistant Treasurer(s) and Financial Secretary, and Assistant Clerks may be filled by appointment of the Parish Council as needed. Only active members of the church shall be considered for elective office.

##### **1. Pastor**

The Pastor shall be chosen at a meeting called for that purpose by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting. The Pastor shall serve without limitation of term and may, upon acceptance of the call, automatically become a member of this church. The Pastor may resign at any time in writing delivered to the Parish Council with not less than three month's notice, unless a shorter notice is accepted. The Pastor's resignation may be called for upon a vote of three-fourths of the members of the congregation present and voting at a special meeting called for the purpose of considering such a request, after not less than thirty days notice to the Pastor that such a meeting is to be called. Notice of such a meeting shall be mailed to each member at least two weeks prior to the meeting. If the congregation acts to release the Pastor, a payment of not less than three months salary shall be made from the date of such a vote.

When the Pastor's office becomes vacant for any reason, the Parish Council shall instruct the Nominating Committee to present to the church, at a special meeting duly called for the purpose of electing a Pastoral Search Committee of nine members, a slate of candidates representative of the church membership. Such candidates may concurrently be holding an elective office in the church.

The Pastor shall have charge over the spiritual welfare and development of the church with the assistance of the Deacons. The Pastor shall preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, lead the services of public worship, administer the activities of the church in cooperation with the various officers, boards and committees, and perform such other duties as may appropriately be requested from time to time. The Pastor shall be, ex-officio, a non-voting member of all church bodies.

The Pastor, after consultation with, and with the approval of the Parish Council, may secure such pastoral assistance as is deemed necessary to the good order and efficient functioning of this church.

The Pastor shall be responsible for the administrative supervision of all paid staff and hold monthly staff meetings to assure effective communication and coordination of church programs.

## 2. Moderator

The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the church and the Parish Council. The Moderator's term of office shall expire upon final adjournment of the Annual Meeting which has elected a new Moderator. After serving two full terms of one year each, the Moderator may not be re-elected for a period of one year, not including appointment to fill an unexpired term. A Moderator Pro Tempore shall be elected to serve in the absence of the Moderator. The Moderator shall be empowered to appoint, with the approval of the Parish Council, special committees or delegates to existing committees not otherwise provided for in this Constitution.

The Moderator shall be, ex-officio, a non-voting member of all church bodies.

## 3. Clerk

The Clerk shall keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the church and the Parish Council; keep a register with addresses of the members of the church with dates and manner of their reception into membership and, if applicable, removal, a record of baptisms and marriages; issue letters of transfer; preserve on file all communications and written official reports; give legal notices of all church meetings; acknowledge all letters of transfer from other churches; maintain a current roll of all active and inactive members of the church; and perform such other duties as are prescribed by law or as usually pertain to the office of a clerk or secretary of an assembly.

## 4. Assistant Clerk(s)

The officer(s), if appointed, shall fulfill all duties and responsibilities delegated by the Clerk.

## 5. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive all monies and contributions on behalf of the church, use such depositories as the Board of Finance and Stewardship shall authorize, maintain appropriate accounting records and prepare such financial reports as requested by the Board of Finance and Stewardship and Parish Council.

#### 6. Assistant Treasurer(s)

The officer(s), if appointed, shall fulfill all duties and responsibilities delegated by the treasurer and the Board of Finance and Stewardship.

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer(s) may be required to furnish bond, the expense of which shall be paid by the church.

#### 7. Financial Secretary

This officer, if appointed, shall be responsible for the recording of all receipts of pledged income and special gifts in a proper manner and for maintaining the confidentiality of such information, sharing only with the Chairperson of the Finance & Stewardship Committee. Statements shall be prepared and mailed to pledgers on a timely basis. The Financial Secretary shall be a voting member of the Board of Finance and Stewardship.

### **Article VII - Parish Council**

The Parish Council shall consist of the Pastor, the Moderator as chairperson, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Chairperson of each of the Boards, or a designated representative, and three members elected for a term of three years each from the church at large, one being elected each year at the Annual Meeting. None of the at-large Parish Council members shall be an elected officer or Board member of the church. At-large Parish Council members may serve no more than six consecutive years in the same position, not including appointment to fill an unexpired term, but may return to that position after one year if elected at the following Annual Meeting.

The Council shall consider the entire task of the church, receive and act on all reports, recommendations and assigned responsibilities on behalf of the congregation occurring between any annual or special meetings of the church, coordinate the general direction of the church's activities, advise and cooperate with the Pastor in the formulation of a well-rounded and relevant program subject to review by the church membership, and delegate responsibility for effective communication to the community at large. It shall have the power to employ, direct activities and discharge such other staff members as it may deem necessary.

The Council shall ensure that all officers, board and committee members are actively involved in fulfilling their responsibilities. Failure to maintain active participation for a period of six months, without satisfactory reason, shall be deemed cause for their removal from office. Any vacancies, other than those specifically mentioned in this Constitution, shall be filled by appointment by the Council for the unexpired term.

The Council shall appoint a committee to review and reconcile all financial records of the church at least biannually (every two years) and report their findings to Parish Council. This review shall include the General Fund, Memorial Funds, Deacon's Fund, Missions Fund, Endowment Fund, Capital Campaign Fund (if any), and any other funds of the church.

## **Article VIII - Boards**

The responsibilities for the general work of the church shall be delegated to the boards: the Board of Deacons, the Board of Mission, the Board of Christian Education, the Board of Youth, the Board of Finance and Stewardship and the Board of Trustees.

The Boards shall be comprised of active members of the church, elected by the congregation at an annual meeting. One third of each Board, or nearly a third as may be appropriate, shall be elected each year. Board members shall normally be elected to three-year terms, or be elected to fill unexpired terms. Each Board member may serve for no more than six (6) consecutive years in the same position, not including appointment to fill an unexpired term, but may return to that position after one year, if elected at the following annual meeting.

The Boards shall plan and organize the areas of their responsibility; update their job descriptions annually; work with the Board of Finance and Stewardship for obtaining volunteers for the various assignments, make recommendations to the Parish Council and provide the supervision and follow-up of the activities that each Board administers. After each annual meeting each Board shall choose its chairperson who shall be a member of the Parish Council. Salaried members may serve on any Board to which they are not directly responsible. If such salaried members are representing a Board on Parish Council, they are allowed to vote on any issue which would not directly affect them as individuals or the Board to which they are directly responsible.

1. The Board of Deacons shall be comprised of a minimum of six members and shall be responsible for all forms of corporate worship of the church, the care of the members and friends of the parish, and the development of fellowship programs for the church. The Board may consider theological matters and matters concerning the spiritual welfare of the congregation, and is charged with the promotion of the spiritual growth of the congregation.

The worship responsibilities shall include assistance to the Pastor in administering the sacraments, providing for temporary supply of the pulpit, supervision of the church's music program, coordination of worship support activities such as greeting, ushering, and lay participation.

The caring programs shall include assistance to the Pastor in the care of shut-ins, and handicapped and disabled, the sick, the bereaved and for others from whom the support of members of the church family would be appropriate through prayer, visits, calls, cards and/or counseling. The Board shall also be responsible for supplying flowers for worship services and providing for the appropriate distribution of the same.

The fellowship programs shall include the development of a strategy for attracting potential new members, the orientation and assimilation of new members, support of other church activities (as requested), the administration of all church communications including the Hilltop Herald and

public relations with the community at large, the development of programs which are primarily designed to better acquaint members with each other.

The Board of Deacons shall administer the Memorial Fund account and make recommendations to Parish Council relative to Memorial Funds. The Deacons are also responsible for the confidential administration of the Deacons' Fund. The Deacons' Fund is accrued through special offertory collections on Communion Sundays. The purpose of the Fund is to provide emergency assistance to people in need both within the Congregation and the wider community.

Members who have served on the Board of Deacons for at least three years shall continue to serve as Deacons at large. The Board of Deacons shall strive to integrate all of the Deacons into appropriate activities of the church. All Deacons at large will be members of the Board of Deacons without vote.

2. The Board of Mission shall be comprised of a minimum of three members and shall be responsible for administering the mission budget voted by the congregation and all activities of church service beyond the parish.

The Board shall have charge and supervision of the investigation, development, and support of local and worldwide mission projects and activities. The Board shall, in consultation with the Parish Council, disburse the available benevolence funds.

This Board shall also advise the Parish Council and take action as instructed, in matters involving the practical application of Christian principles in community life, economic and social issues.

In addition, this Board shall be responsible for involving the church in denominational, ecumenical, and interfaith representation.

3. The Board of Christian Education shall be comprised of a minimum of five members. This Board, working with the Christian Education Director, shall be responsible for the supervision of all Christian education programs of the church, including the policies, procedures, personnel, teacher training and curriculum of the Church School. The responsibilities also include the administration of the Confirmation classes and other programs as well as the Nursery. The Board shall support the Minister in implementing the adult education programs such as Bible classes, church history classes, discussion groups, and other activities designed to deepen our understanding of the Faith.

4. The Board of Finance and Stewardship shall be comprised of a minimum of three members and the Financial Secretary. This Board shall be responsible for all stewardship activities including the annual stewardship campaign and the time and talent survey of the parish. The Board shall also be responsible for the administration of the church budget, which shall include the preparation of a preliminary budget for review by Parish Council and subsequent submission to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, the monitoring of revenues and expenditures of the church budget as adopted by the congregation, and making recommendations

to the Parish Council for appropriate financial management decisions. This Board shall make recommendations to the Parish Council relative to the raising of revenues. The Chairperson of this Board shall have access, along with the Financial Secretary, to all receipts of pledged income and special gifts and shall maintain the confidentiality of such information.

This Board shall coordinate the activities of the Financial Secretary and the follow-up of pledging. In addition, this Board shall coordinate the activities of the church office, bookkeeping, collectors, auditors, and any Assistant Treasurers. Its relationship to the Endowment Fund Trustees shall be in accordance with the terms of the Endowment Fund Policy adopted by the church on February 1, 2009. It shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real estate without specific authority given by vote of the church.

5. The Board of Trustees shall be comprised of a minimum of three members. This Board shall be responsible for the general business and property management of all church-owned real estate and equipment. Property management responsibilities shall include the general maintenance and emergency repair of all church property and equipment, the administration of all restoration projects, and the implementation of energy conservation measures.

General business responsibilities shall include the administration of the rental of church property and equipment, the recommendation of appropriate insurance coverage and rental policies to the Parish Council, and the keeping of an up-to-date inventory of all church property. Priority for the use of church property shall be give to church activities, which shall be coordinated with the Parish Council.

6. Board of Youth shall be comprised of a minimum of three members and be responsible for supervision of all activities relative to ministry to the youth and young adults of this church. It is responsible for such policies, procedures, personnel, supplies and fiscal needs as are necessary in order to provide for the youth and young adults of this church and for our response to the needs of youth and young adults within the larger community.

#### **Article IX - Other Committees**

These Committees shall be comprised of active members of the church, elected by the congregation at an annual meeting. One third of each Committee, or nearly a third as may be appropriate, shall be elected each year. Committee members shall normally be elected to three-year terms, or be elected to fill unexpired terms. Each Committee member may serve for no more than six (6) consecutive years in the same position, not including appointment to fill an unexpired term, but may return to that position after one year, if elected at the following annual meeting.

1. Nominating Committee shall be comprised of a minimum of three members, who shall be elected by the congregation at annual meeting. This Committee shall submit to the annual

meeting at least one slate of nominees for positions to be voted upon, and shall perform other duties specified in this Constitution, or by direction of the Parish Council.

2. Endowment Fund Trustees shall consist of three members elected by the congregation for three-year terms, not including appointment to fill an unexpired term, with one member elected each year. No member may concurrently be the Church Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Pastor, or Auditor. This committee shall be governed by the Endowment Fund Policy adopted February 1, 2009 and amended May 31, 2009 (attached).

3. Human Resources.

This committee shall consist of a minimum of three members selected by the congregation.

The chief functions of this committee shall be to:

- Facilitate the evaluation process for paid staff of the church, assisting the supervisory board and/or the pastor in compiling and presenting the evaluation.
- Make recommendations relative to the detailed provisions of employment contracts and implementing approved changes of contracts
- Share feedback about the paid staff and volunteers from the parish with appropriate boards and/or the Pastor.
- Discuss and relay input from the paid staff relative to the church and the congregation as a whole.
- Review and recommend changes to benefit plans provided by the church.
- Perform any other functions related to the recruitments, evaluations, and termination of the paid staff.
- Assist the Pastor in his or her responsibility for supervision of paid staff.

4. Teaching Parish Committee. The Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) shall consist of at least four members elected by the congregation. Its primary role is to provide support and guidance for the Student Minister, if any.

The Committee is responsible (with the Pastor) to conduct interviews and to choose a suitable candidate, if any, for the Student Minister position. The TPC acts as interpreter for the Church of the various employment guidelines set up by the seminary and is responsible for timely evaluations as required by the seminary. The TPC guides the Student's growth and assists in his/her professional development. The TPC, Pastor/Supervisor and Student work together to provide a supportive learning environment within the church.

5. Pastor-Parish Relations. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall consist of a minimum of three members. This committee shall seek to support and maintain an open and healthy

relationship between the pastor and members of the congregation. The committee serves in two primary ways: as an advisory group to the pastor, and as support for the pastor's leadership. As an advisory group, the committee shares ideas, dreams, hopes, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor. As support for the pastor, the committee interprets roles, functions, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

The committee will have the following functions and responsibilities: understand the pastoral and congregational roles and expectations; provide a communication link between the pastor and congregation; provide an opportunity for the pastor to reflect in confidence about personal concerns, hopes, ambitions, and frustrations; help the church and pastor deal constructively with conflict; assist the pastor in planning for continuing education that will benefit both the pastor and the congregation.

## **Article X – Other Positions**

1. Church Historian shall be appointed by the Parish Council annually with no limitation as to the number of terms of this office. The Historian shall be responsible for the care and safeguarding of all historic documents of the church and the current maintenance of its historical development.

2. Paid Staff. The church shall employ persons to undertake responsibilities designated in contracts approved by the Parish Council. Initial approval of paid staff positions requires a majority vote of the congregation at the Annual or a Special Meeting. Continued approval shall be signified by adoption of the budgeted salary by subsequent Annual Meetings. Program supervision and direction shall be provided by the appropriate Board or the Parish Council as determined by the contract. Administrative supervision shall be provided by the Pastor. Periodic performance, salary, and benefit reviews shall be conducted by Human Resources in consultation with the Pastor and the appropriate Board or the Parish Council. Recommendations for contract revisions shall be submitted to the Parish Council for approval.

## **Article XI - Meetings**

1. Annual Meeting. This meeting of the church shall be held in the month of February at a time to be established each year by the Parish Council. Officers for the ensuing year shall be elected, delegates to the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Metropolitan Boston Association shall be elected and annual reports of the various church officers, boards, committees, and organizations shall be submitted at the meeting. Notices specifying the time of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit and duly posted on the church bulletin board on a Sunday at least seven days immediately preceding each meeting.

2. Special Meetings. Such meetings may be called by the Pastor, Parish Council or written request of five members. Notice shall be given as described in Section 1 of this Article and specify the time and purpose of the meeting.

3. Quorum. Ten percent of the members of the church, as certified by the Clerk, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at Annual or special meetings of the church.

### **Article XII - Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any Annual or special meeting of the church, provided that proper notice for the meeting and the substance of the proposed amendment shall have been given. Such amendments may be proposed by the Pastor, the Parish Council or by written request from five members of the church.

### **Article XIII – Parliamentary Authority**

Roberts Rules of Order shall be the authority on all questions of parliamentary law and procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution.

Amended by vote of the Annual Meeting on February 11, 1996.

Amended by vote of the Annual Meeting on February 9, 1997.

Amended by vote of the Annual Meeting on February 1, 2009.

Amended by vote of the Special Congregational Meeting on May 31, 2009.

Attachment: Endowment Fund Policy, approved by vote of the Annual Meeting on February 1, 2009 (replaces Common Trust Fund plan of 1964), amended by vote of the Special Congregational Meeting on May 31, 2009.

Amended by vote of the Annual Meeting on February 3, 2013.