

**WEST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
BETHEL, MAINE**

**AMENDED AND RESTATED BYLAWS**

Approved at the Annual Membership Meeting, January 29, 2017.  
These Bylaws replace those previously approved on January 23, 2011

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of the Church shall be West Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Bethel, Maine.

**ARTICLE II: COVENANT:**

We covenant with one another to seek to discern and act on the word and will of God. We are dependent on God for wisdom and guidance to walk together as followers of Jesus Christ. We believe it is the mission of the Church to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world while worshiping God and working for truth, justice, and peace. As did those who came before us, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We commit to open, honest, direct, and loving communication. As we pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God, our life together and our ministry together will be marked by open communication, mutual respect, shared vision, and God's gracious love.

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STATEMENT OF FAITH:**

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.

**ARTICLE III: POLITY:**

The government of this Church is vested in its members, who are part of a "priesthood of all believers." There is no hierarchy that tells local churches what to do and how to behave. Each individual church makes its own decisions in all matters pertaining to its life and ministries. While this Church is beholden to no ecclesiastical authority, it has a covenantal relationship with the United Church of Christ through the Maine Conference and the Oxford County Association, and pledges to share in its common aims and work.

## **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

Our Affirmation: This Church affirms that everyone is a child of God, created in God's image; therefore all persons of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, physical and mental ability, economic status and family structure are welcome to join in the life, membership, and ministry of this Church.

Meaning of Membership: Membership in West Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ means joining with others to share our gifts, talents, time and resources, each according to their ability and life circumstances. In doing this we listen and strive to understand and empathize with each other in both our likeness and our differences. When necessary we forgive each other as God has forgiven us.

A. Rights of Members: Members may vote in legal meetings of the Church, hold elective office, serve on committees, and be appointed to serve the Church as delegates.

B. Types of Membership: There shall be three types of members in this Church: regular, associate, and inactive.

1. Regular Members: Regular Members of this Church are those baptized persons who have been received by (1) declaration of faith, (2) by letter of transfer from another Church, (3) by reaffirmation of faith or (4) by completion of a Church confirmation program. New regular members shall be welcomed at a public worship service. Persons unable to attend in public may be welcomed by a member of the Diaconate and the Pastor acting on behalf of the Church.
2. Associate Members: Associate Members are members of another Church who wish to participate in the life and work of this Church. To become an Associate Member one must reaffirm their faith, accept the Covenant and Statement of Faith of West Parish, and the provisions of these Bylaws. New Associate Members shall be welcomed at a public worship service. Associate Members may request to become Regular Members.
3. Inactive Members: Inactive Members of this Church are those who have been Regular or Associate Members and have indicated, when contacted by the Deacons, that they wish to remain on the Church rolls but are not able to participate in the life and work of the Church, or those who cannot be contacted and have not participated in a year or more.

C. Termination of Membership: It is the responsibility of the Deacons to review the membership rolls on a regular basis and make recommendations to the Church Council about any changes. Before removing anyone from membership, every attempt will be made to locate them to discern their desire to maintain membership.

Membership may be terminated (1) by request of a member who desires a letter of transfer or recommendation to another Church; (2) by request of a member to have their name removed from the membership rolls; (3) at the member's death; or (4) upon a vote of Church members, at the annual meeting, affirming the judgment of the Deacons and the Church Council that a member is no longer active in the Church and has not indicated a wish to remain on the Church rolls.

## **ARTICLE V: MEETINGS**

A. Annual Meeting: The annual business meeting of the church shall be held following the service of worship on the last Sunday in January, weather permitting. The purpose of the meeting is to review and accept the reports of the Pastor(s), officers, chairpersons of boards and committees, and organizational representatives of the church; to elect officers and committee members; to adopt the annual budget; and to transact any other business that may come before the membership. Notice of the annual meeting or any other special meeting shall be read at the worship services on the two Sundays preceding the date of the meeting and shall be posted on the church door for the same period of time.

B. Special Meetings: Special business meetings of the Church shall be called by the clerk at the request of the Pastor(s), the Council or the Diaconate, or upon the written request of five or more members. The time, place and nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call and only such business shall be transacted.

C. Quorum and Votes: At all business meetings of the Church, twelve members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; a lesser number may adjourn the meeting to a later date. Voting shall be by a show of hands unless a written ballot is requested by any member. A simple majority of those members present and constituting a quorum shall determine the action of the Church.

D. Fiscal and Administrative Year: The fiscal year of the Church shall end on December 31. The administrative year shall end on the date of the annual meeting.

E. Meetings for Worship: Regular services of worship shall be held on Sunday and at such days and times as the Pastor(s) and the Diaconate deem appropriate. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be observed at such times as the Pastor(s) and the Diaconate may determine. After consultation with the Pastor(s), other meetings, inspiration, prayer, study and outreach may be held.

## **ARTICLE VI: PASTOR(S)**

The Pastor(s) shall be called for an indefinite period of time by a majority vote of members present at a legal meeting of the Church called for this purpose. The Church may, by a majority vote at a legal meeting, request a Pastor's resignation within sixty days. Likewise, a Pastor shall give sixty days' notice in case s/he wishes to leave of his/her own volition. Relations between the Pastor(s) and the Church may also be terminated by mutual consent.

The Pastor(s) shall guide and oversee the spiritual welfare of the Church. S/He shall preach and lead worship, preside at Communion and baptisms, teach and interpret the Scriptures, counsel and encourage lay leaders and guide and direct them in their duties, visit members, family and friends of the Church with special attention to those who are sick, despondent, or experiencing loss and/or grief, and serve as administrator for the activities of the Church in cooperation with its officers, boards and committees. S/He shall be a non-voting member of the Council and all Church committees and boards, but will be able to vote as a regular member at the Annual Meeting and other meetings of Church Members.

Pastor(s) shall be called in accordance with rules and procedures established by the Oxford Union Association and the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ.

## **ARTICLE VII: OFFICERS**

The officers of the Church shall be the Moderator, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and the Assistant Treasurer. All officers shall be elected for a term of one year.

A. Moderator: The Moderator shall preside at all legal meetings of the Church and shall convene and preside at all meetings of the Council, acting as chairperson of the Council (or ask another Church member to preside in their absence). The Moderator serves as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Moderator works with the Pastor(s) to ensure the proper functioning of all Committees and Boards.

B. Clerk: The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of all legal meetings of the Church and the Council. The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining a register of members with dates and modes of their reception and removal, a record of baptisms and marriages conducted at the Church, and a record of the deaths of members. The Clerk shall be responsible for the preservation of these records and other pertinent documents. The Clerk shall issue letters of transfer of membership, give notice of all legal meetings of the Church, act as secretary of the Council, and perform such other duties as pertain to the office of Clerk.

C. Financial Secretary: The Financial Secretary shall receive, deposit, and account for the weekly offering and all regular contributions to the Church and shall provide quarterly statements on such contributions to the Stewardship Committee. The Financial Secretary shall also deposit and record any and all other contributions or payments to the Church received by check or cash. This includes but not limited to special offerings, donations for building use, donations made to the Church for other organizations.

D. Assistant Financial Secretary: The Assistant Financial Secretary shall assist the Financial Secretary in counting the weekly offering and shall fulfill the duties of the Financial Secretary in the latter's absence.

E. Treasurer: The Treasurer shall maintain all the financial accounts of the Church. The Treasurer shall record all deposits made by the Financial Secretary. The Treasurer shall receive all invoices and requests for payment coming to the Church and pay such bills in a timely manner. The Treasurer shall record all transactions made in the Dedicated Funds and Clearing Accounts. The Treasurer shall provide financial reports to the Trustees on a regular basis. Within 10 days of the close of the fiscal year, the Treasurer shall submit for financial review all the financial records pertinent to that year. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the storage of the financial records and removing those files that are no longer required to be saved. The Treasurer shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees and shall be a member ex-officio of the Board

F. Assistant Treasurer: In the absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer will exercise all the powers and responsibilities of the Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE VIII: BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

The boards and committees of the Church shall be composed of Church members elected to office at the annual meeting, except as otherwise provided for in these Bylaws. Each board or committee shall elect from its membership a chairperson and such other officers as it may decide it needs. Chairpersons shall be elected for a one-year term and shall serve until replaced or re-elected. No ex-officio member or non-Church member of any board or committee shall be eligible to chair that board or committee.

Each board and committee must have a quorum to transact business: a simple majority of its membership shall constitute a quorum. Except as otherwise provided for in these Bylaws, the boards and committees of the Church shall be the Diaconate, the Trustees, the Stewardship Committee, the Christian Education Committee, the World Service Committee, and the Music Committee.

Members of all boards and committees shall be elected to three-year staggered terms. New members shall be elected as the terms of members expire. No member shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years without a full year intervening during which that member may not serve on that committee or board.

Should a vacancy occur in the membership of any elected or appointed board or committee prior to the expiration of any term, the Council shall appoint a new member to fill the vacancy until the next Annual Meeting of the Church. The partial year term filled by a member will not be counted towards that member's term limit.

A. Diaconate: The Diaconate shall consist of twelve (12) elected members.

The Diaconate shall assist the Pastor(s) in ministering to the spiritual needs of the Church. They shall prepare and assist in the administration of the sacraments, and shall counsel with the Pastor(s) in determining the time and nature of worship services to be held. They shall see that the sanctuary is properly prepared as a place of worship and perform the duties of greeting, ushering and the ingathering of offerings, recruiting additional help as may be necessary or beneficial from the constituency of the Church. They shall counsel and cooperate with the Pastor(s) in providing lay leadership for worship; in the event of a vacancy or in the temporary absence of the Pastor(s), they shall arrange for the temporary supply of the pulpit.

The Diaconate shall be responsible, with the Pastor(s), for parish visiting and the cultivation of new potential members, inviting them into the fellowship of the Church, and shall further assist the Pastor(s) in any ways which may fall within the general area of their concern. They shall review the Church roll periodically and at the annual meeting submit recommendations to the Church regarding necessary revisions. The Diaconate shall prepare an annual report and budget request.

B. Trustees: The Board of Trustees shall consist of five (5) elected members and the Treasurer as an ex-officio member.

Under the direction of the Church and except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the Board of Trustees shall be responsible for the care and custody of the property of the Church. They shall have the authority to act on and administer all fiduciary gifts and bequests that may be offered to the Church, and shall have charge of all financial and business affairs, including the authority to establish policies and approve fees on the use of Church property, to direct the payment of the Church's bills, to sell, invest and reinvest funds of the Church, and to authorize and empower the Treasurer of the Church to execute and deliver any and all instruments necessary to effect the same. The Trustees shall have authority to engage and dismiss paid staff with the exception of the Pastor(s). The Trustees shall be responsible for the preparation of the annual budget, and for the custody and preservation of all records, documents and other valuable papers relating to the property of the Church. The Trustees shall have no power to buy, mortgage or transfer real estate without specific authority by vote of the Church membership at a legal meeting. In the absence of the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer, the Chairperson of the Trustees shall have the authority to sign checks and withdrawal orders. The Trustees shall prepare an annual report and budget request.

C. Stewardship Committee: The Stewardship Committee shall consist of four elected members. The Stewardship Committee shall be responsible for securing the pledges and gifts necessary to meet the Church's budget and for fund raising activities for special projects, other than missions, that the Church may undertake. The Committee shall maintain records of pledges and gifts and provide annual gifting information to members at their request. The Committee will also work with the current membership of the Church to provide for opportunities for lifetime gift giving programs. The Committee shall prepare an annual report and budget request.

D. Christian Education Committee: The Christian Education Committee shall consist of six (6) elected members, three (3) of whom need not be members of the Church. Non-members may not serve as Chair of the Committee. The Christian Education Coordinator shall be a member ex-officio of the CE Committee.

The Christian Education Committee shall be responsible for the educational work of the Church. It shall envision, design, promote and evaluate educational programs and activities for the Church for all age levels. It shall have the authority to conduct a Church school. To that end, it shall, with the Pastor(s), establish and review the job description for the Christian Education Coordinator, and work with a CE Coordinator Search Committee, if desired, to draft a contract and make a hiring recommendation to the Trustees. The Christian Education Committee shall recruit, train and support Church school teachers and nursery care givers. With the approval of the Trustees, it may hire and oversee a paid nursery care provider. The Committee shall prepare an annual report and budget request.

E. World Service Committee: The World Service Committee shall consist of six (6) elected members, three (3) of whom need not be members of the Church. Non-members may not serve as Chair of the Committee.

The World Service Committee educates and leads the congregation in supporting charitable missions, social justice issues, and community outreach projects. The World Service Committee also sponsors the UCC's wider ministry offerings. To accomplish these goals, the World Service Committee will design and implement mission programs for the congregation of education and service. The Committee shall prepare an annual report and budget request.

F. Music Committee: The Music Committee shall consist of four (4) elected members, three (3) of whom need not be a member of the Church. Non-members may not serve as Chair of the Committee.

In cooperation with the Pastor(s), Diaconate and Trustees, the Committee shall be responsible for the music program of the Church. It shall regularly review and evaluate this program; establish and review musicians' contracts and job descriptions; interview candidates for these positions and make recommendations to the Trustees; support the Church's musicians with encouragement and feedback; recruit and schedule summer special music artists; work on long-range planning; advertise musical events of the Church; maintain a list of available musicians; arrange for repair and tuning of instruments; oversee maintenance of the Church's music library; and prepare an annual report and budget request.

G. Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee functions as an ad-hoc Sub-Committee of the Church Council and shall be made up of four members of the Council, who are, in turn, all Chairs of their respective Committees. The Executive Committee Members include the Moderator, Chair of Trustees, Chair of the Diaconate, and Chair of the Christian Education Committee.

The Executive Committee serves as needed to deal with issues of an urgent nature and to support the Pastor should issues arise that need specific attention. The Committee shall be responsible for the evaluation of the Pastor(s). The Committee meets when called by the Moderator or at the request of one or more Executive Committee members.

## **ARTICLE IX: COUNCIL**

The Council shall consist of the Pastor(s), the officers, the chairpersons or representatives of the boards, committees, and auxiliary organizations of the Church and the delegates. The Internal Auditor, the Historian, and representatives of committees and auxiliary organizations need not be members of the Church. However, voting members of the Council must be members of the Church. The chairperson of any elected board or committee, or of any appointed committee or auxiliary organization, may designate any member of that board, committee or organization to represent it and, except as limited by these Bylaws, vote in the place of that chairperson at any Council meeting.

A quorum shall be required to transact business. A simple majority of the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum. Actions of the Council shall be determined by a vote of the majority of those members present. The Council shall meet at least five (5) times each administrative year. Additional meetings may be called by the Moderator as needed.

Except as limited by these Bylaws, the Council shall act for the Church between legal meetings. It shall be a policy making body and shall be responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Church and coordinating the activities of various Church boards, committees and auxiliary organizations.

The Council shall have the authority to appoint a Pastoral Relations Committee, a Nominating Committee, the Internal Auditor, the Historian, and such other personnel and committees as it may deem necessary.

A. Delegates: The Church shall elect two Delegates, one of whom shall serve on the Council, to represent the Church at regular and special meetings of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ, the Oxford-Union Association, and such other denominational and inter-denominational functions as they may be directed to attend by the Church or the Council. Delegates must be members of the Church. They shall be elected to serve for a term of three years. After serving successive terms, a Delegate shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

B. Nominating Committee: The Council shall appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of four members who shall serve for a term of three years and shall be appointed in such a manner that the term of not more than two members shall expire in any one year. After serving two terms a member shall be ineligible for re-appointment for one year. This Committee shall prepare and submit to the Church at the annual meeting a list of nominations for the annual election. The Committee shall be responsible for recommending candidates for all vacancies of officers, committee and board members that occur between annual meetings and for submitting its recommendations to the Council for approval. The Committee shall perform additional duties as instructed by the Council.

C. Internal Auditor: The Council shall appoint an Internal Auditor annually who shall serve until replaced or re-appointed. The Auditor shall receive and review the accounts of the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, and the Board of Trustees and report to the Church at the annual meeting. The Internal Auditor shall perform and submit any additional financial analysis as may be required by the Church or the Council.

D. Historian: The Council shall appoint a Historian annually who shall serve until replaced or re-appointed. The Historian shall keep a general record of the major events and activities of this Church. Photographs and other memorabilia may be included in the Historian's record. A summary of the general record of the events and activities of each year shall be prepared for the annual report.

E. Pastoral Relations Committee: The Council, in conjunction with the Pastor(s), shall appoint a Pastoral Relations Committee consisting of three members of the Church who shall serve staggered three year terms. Members may serve for two consecutive terms, after which they shall be ineligible for reappointment for one year. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet quarterly with the Pastor(s) to review the ministry of the whole Church, both lay and ordained. The Pastoral Relations Committee is to offer guidance and support to the Pastor(s), maintain communication between Pastor(s) and congregation, and interpret to the congregation the tasks and responsibilities of ordained ministry. The content of all Pastoral Relations Committee meetings and discussions shall be kept confidential.

## **ARTICLE X: AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

All organizations meeting under the auspices of the Church shall be regarded as integral parts of the Church and shall be under its general supervision. Such auxiliary organizations shall elect or appoint a representative to the Council, or seek representation through a sitting member of the Council, to report on and coordinate the organization's activities with those of the elected officers, boards and committees of the Church.

## **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of those Church members present and constituting a quorum at any legal meeting of the Church called for that purpose. The text of any proposed amendment shall be set forth in the notice or call of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE XII: PROCEDURE**

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by these Bylaws.