

**THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST,
OF GRANBY, CONNECTICUT**
(APPROVED 2/9/2014. EFFECTIVE 7/1/2014.)

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(DRAFT DATED 01/07/2014)

1. Name and Legal Status

- 1.1 Name.** The name of this association is the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Granby, Connecticut, which is referred to as “First Church” or simply as “the Church” in this document.
- 1.2 Legal Status.** First Church is organized as a religious corporation pursuant to Section 33-264a of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- 1.3 Purpose and Covenant.** The purpose of this association is to be a Christian church in Granby, Connecticut. We covenant to be united in the Church for the public worship of God, faith development, membership support and fellowship, and to advance our Mission throughout our community and world. To these purposes we pledge our prayers, our gifts, and our services.
- 1.4 Associations.** First Church is associated with the Farmington Valley Association of the United Church of Christ and the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. To the common aims and work of these associations, the Church pledges its support. Delegates to these bodies shall be elected at the annual Election Meeting and shall be affiliated with the Reaching Out Program Ministry.
- 1.5 Sovereignty.** The government of First Church is vested in its members. They exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject to the Article of Association granted to it by the State of Connecticut.

2. Guiding Principles of First Church

- 2.1 First Church Vision.** Guided and strengthened by God’s presence, Jesus’ life and teachings, and our biblical heritage, we reach out together in love to meet the spiritual and human needs of people of *all* ages and *all* backgrounds.
- 2.2 Open and Affirming Statement.** We, the First Congregational Church of Granby, Connecticut, declare that we are an Open and Affirming congregation, a safe place for all of God’s children. We welcome all individuals and families who desire to share in our community of faith. We affirm the dignity and worth of every person, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, mental or physical ability or sexual orientation. We offer all sacraments and rites to all who enter our circle of faith. We celebrate the gifts that each person brings to First Congregational Church and invite

them to share in all areas of its service, leadership, activities, responsibilities and privileges.

We strive to function faithfully in response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ's principles of love and justice, grace and mercy. We believe there are no outsiders in a community that is observant of God's will. Led by Jesus' spirit, through our words and actions, we will work toward breaking down the barriers of prejudice.

As an Open and Affirming church, we join our sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ and all other persons who are committed to the struggle for justice, love and inclusiveness, with the example of Jesus Christ as our guide.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34)

- 2.3 Mission Statement.** We are servants of God, celebrating God's Spirit of love and forgiveness as taught by Jesus Christ. Invigorated and energized by that Spirit, we teach, live, and share the Christian faith. We dedicate ourselves to making faith a priority in our lives.

By God's grace, we will be an attentive church. We commit ourselves anew to listen for God's word in Holy Scripture, in our rich heritage, in faithful witness, and in the fresh winds of the Holy Spirit so that we might discover God's way for *us*.

By God's grace, we will be a welcoming church. We commit ourselves to be a church for all people. Through Christ we celebrate, affirm, and embrace the rich diversity of God's good creation.

By God's grace, we will be a responsive church. We commit ourselves to be a church of justice, mercy and peace, so lives may be renewed, spirits revived, and communities transformed.

By God's grace, we will be a supportive church. We commit ourselves to strengthen the body of Christ through renewed resolve and mutual support for our common ministries.

- 2.4. Call to Action.** We are called to transform people to do God's work.

3. Membership

- 3.1 General.** Membership in the Church is open to any person who has received a Christian baptism, who is sympathetic with the purposes and methods of the Church, and who has fulfilled the requirements of membership.

- 3.2 Requirements of Membership.** To be accepted into the membership of the Church, an individual must subscribe to and accept the obligations of the Covenant set forth in Section 1.3 above by:
- An affirmation of faith through confirmation; or
 - Presentation of a letter of transfer of membership from another church; or
 - Reaffirmation of faith, if a letter of transfer is not available.
- 3.3 Membership Categories.** Membership may be active or inactive. The specific conditions comprising these categories shall be determined by First Church Governance.
- 3.4 Member Rights.** Members have the following rights.
- Each active member is entitled to vote in person at all Church meetings.
 - Each active member (except the Minister(s)) is eligible for any Church office subject to the provisions of Section 20. Non-members who are active in the life of the Church shall be eligible for any Church office or committee except those offices that are included in First Church Governance.
 - Each active member is entitled to review all Church records after the courtesy of scheduling the review with the appropriate Church officer.
- 3.5 Release of Membership.** Any member who requests a letter of transfer and recommendation to another church will receive it upon written request to the Clerk. Any member who requests to be released of the obligations of the Church will be released, and the membership of such person will be terminated upon receipt by the Clerk of such request in writing.
- 3.6 Loss of Membership.** Members whose addresses are unknown, or who, for a period of two years, have not communicated with the Church, may, upon recommendation of the Clerk and by vote of First Church Governance, be transferred to the inactive category, to be reported to the Church at the next annual Financial Meeting, and their membership may be terminated by vote of the Church at such meeting.

4. Ministers

- 4.1 Calling Ministers.** A Minister will be chosen and called by the Church for an indefinite term whenever a vacancy occurs and a search is approved by First Church Governance. A Minister chosen and called by the Church will be installed by the Farmington Valley Association of the United Church of Christ within one year of commencing work at the Church.
- 4.2 Search Committee.** In the event an office of Minister becomes vacant, First Church Governance will solicit names from the congregation and appoint a Search Committee. The Search Committee's purpose will be to secure and recommend a

candidate to the Church. Its efforts will be assisted by the appropriate UCC conference staff.

- 4.3 Congregational Vote.** A Minister will be called by a two-thirds majority of the Church members present and voting at a Church meeting specifically called for that purpose.
- 4.4 Responsibilities of a Minister.** A Minister will assume all those responsibilities ordinarily associated with the ministry of Christ including, but not limited to, the enlisting of people as followers of Christ, preaching and teaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and caring for the spiritual welfare of the Church. A Minister's specific job responsibilities will be set forth in a job description approved in accordance with Section 3. A Minister will be engaged in the activities of the Church in cooperation with all its Program Ministries.
- 4.5 Performance Assessment.** Performance assessment of a Minister will be conducted by the chair of Governance and the Moderator no less frequently than annually in accordance with policies promulgated by First Church Governance.
- 4.6 Termination of a Minister.** A Minister or the Church may terminate the relationship between each other by either party giving to the other notice of intent in accordance with the employment contract. Notice on the part of the Church may be ordered at any time upon a majority vote of the Church members present and voting at a Church meeting specifically called for that purpose. The employment contract between the Church and Minister(s) will terminate immediately upon loss of ministerial standing.

5. Organizational Structure of First Church

- 5.1 Basis of Organizational Structure.** The guiding principles of First Church (Section 2) determine the Church's organizational structure. The members of First Church form the foundation of its organizational structure. First Church encourages all members to use their spiritual gifts to promote, support and further its ministry.
- 5.2 Activities.** First Church engages in two broad activities:
- **Ministry** - the active, "doing" aspect of the church that produces the internal and outreach results the congregation exists to achieve; and
 - **Governance** – the process of making decisions that define expectations, grant authority, verify performance, and ensure that the voices of members are heard.
- 5.3 Program Ministries.** First Church conducts its ministry through several Program Ministries, each of which is designed to address a specific component of the Church's mission. While each Program Ministry has a specific purpose, all Program Ministries are encouraged to work together to accomplish First Church's mission.

5.3.1 Identification of Program Ministries. The specific First Church Program Ministries are as follows.

- **Worshiping God.** The purpose of this Program Ministry is to create opportunities to celebrate our relationship with God through praise and worship.
- **Developing Our Faith.** The purpose of this Program Ministry is to nurture and deepen faith across all ages.
- **Caring for Each Other.** The purpose of this Program Ministry is to develop a sense of community within the congregation by caring for each other and strengthening bonds of friendship.
- **Reaching Out.** The purpose of this Program Ministry is to mobilize the congregation in ministries beyond the walls of First Church and to invite others to journey with us.
- **Caring for Our Resources.** The purpose of this Program Ministry is to be responsible for the care and custody of the funds and real property of the Church and the functioning of the Church in accordance with the laws of the State of Connecticut.

5.3.2 Ministry Teams. The broad goals of a Program Ministry may require the establishment of two or more Ministry Teams, *e.g.*, Deacons and Music within the Worshiping God Program Ministry, Membership Development within the Caring for Each Other Program Ministry. Additionally, a member may be called to a ministry that does not currently exist within First Church. First Church authorizes each Program Ministry to create ad hoc Ministry Teams to address such needs. A Ministry Team may be established for a finite or indefinite period of time, and may have as many participants as necessary to accomplish its purpose.

5.3.3 Program Ministry Coordinators. Each Program Ministry is facilitated by a Program Ministry Coordinator. Members affiliated with a Program Ministry may vote to have two Co-Coordiators instead. Each Program Ministry Coordinator is responsible for:

- Recruiting members for the various activities of the Program Ministry on an as-needed basis;
- Scheduling and facilitating meetings of the Program Ministry as necessary to accomplish its goals, and delivering the minutes of each meeting promptly to the Church Clerk or his/her designee;
- Developing the Program Ministry budget each year with specific goals and monitoring expenses during the year against approved budgets;
- Ensuring that the Program Ministry works toward achievement of its annual goals;
- Approving Ministry Teams as requested and overseeing their operation; and
- Serving as liaison to First Church Governance through the Moderator.

Additionally, the Program Ministry Coordinator for the Program Ministry with which a Ministry Team will be affiliated is responsible for:

- Ensuring, in collaboration with First Church Governance, that the Ministry Team's purpose furthers the mission of First Church;
- Approving the Ministry Team;
- Verifying that the activities of the Ministry Team are supported by the Program Ministry's budget;
- Approving fund-raising activities of the Ministry Team and ensuring that they are consistent with the mission of First Church; and
- Overseeing the Ministry Team's activities to ensure that its purpose and budget remain consistent with the Program Ministry with which it is affiliated.

5.3.4 Ministry Team Leaders. The activities of each Ministry Team will be facilitated by a Ministry Team Leader, who is responsible for:

- Scheduling and facilitating meetings of the Ministry Team as necessary to accomplish its goals, and delivering the minutes of such meetings promptly to the Program Ministry Coordinator of the Program Ministry with which the Ministry Team is affiliated;
- Developing the Ministry Team budget each year in collaboration with the Program Ministry Coordinator of the Program Ministry with which the Ministry Team is affiliated, setting specific goals, and monitoring expenses during the year against approved budgets; and
- Ensuring that the Ministry Team works toward achievement of its annual goals;

5.4 First Church Governance. First Church Governance is responsible for articulating the mission of First Church, evaluating its activities, and ensuring responsible stewardship of resources.

5.4.1 Responsibilities of Governance. Specific responsibilities of First Church Governance are to:

- Create, implement and update a strategic plan that furthers First Church's mission of transformation;
- Develop and implement policies, *i.e.*, authoritative written statements, that govern groups and individual decisions over time.
- Oversee the activities of Program Ministries to ensure adherence to the Church's mission, policies and budget, including feedback into the strategic planning process; and
- Annually review and recommend the budget to the Congregation for the upcoming calendar year for approval, as proposed by the Program Ministries in coordination with the Caring for Our Resources Program Ministry.

5.4.2 Composition of First Church Governance. Governance is composed of the following voting members:

- The Governance Chair, who is responsible for presiding at Governance meetings and establishing procedures for the development of the annual budget, strategic plan and policy statements;
- The Moderator, who is responsible for coordinating the Program Ministries, providing advice on aligning congregational interests with the mission of the Church, and presiding at congregational meetings;
- Four at-large members of the Church who are responsible for articulating the interests of the congregation with respect to the Program Ministries; and
- The Senior Minister (*Ex Officio* with voting privileges).

5.4.3 Governance Meetings. Governance meets at least monthly (except in July or August). All Governance meetings are open to members of First Church unless the meeting is in Executive Session.

5.4.4 Authority of Governance. Governance is, at all times, subordinate to the members of First Church at congregational meetings.

5.5. First Church Officers. All members of Governance, with the exception of the Senior Minister, are officers of First Church. The following are also officers of First Church.

5.5.1 Clerk. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the following functions are performed:

- Keeping records of the proceedings of the Church and transferring them, once approved, to the Office Administrator on an annual or more frequent basis;
- Keeping a register of the addresses of the members of the Church, with dates and modes of each member's reception and removal;
- Keeping a record of baptisms, marriages and funerals;
- Issuing letters of transfer when requested by members and directly notifying the Churches concerned;
- Giving legal notice of all Church meetings in accordance with Section 19;
- Maintaining a list of active members and determining the quorum for any meeting of the Congregation;
- Maintaining and posting all members of each Program Ministry and affiliated Program Ministry Teams;
- Conducting all correspondence not otherwise provided for;
- Performing such other duties as are prescribed by law or usually pertain to the office of a clerk of an assembly; and
- Performing such other duties as requested by First Church Governance.

5.5.2 Financial Secretary. The Financial Secretary is responsible for:

- Receiving, counting and recording all contributions and payments on pledges;
- Keeping an accurate account for each member;
- Depositing all moneys in the designated account at the Church's financial institution;
- Delivering receipts for same to the Treasurer;
- Furnishing all pledging members and other donors with statements of their accounts on a schedule to be determined by First Church Governance;
- Responding to requests from individuals for information about their contributions;
- Providing information and advice to First Church Governance;
- Recommending an Assistant Financial Secretary for approval by First Church Governance; and
- Performing such other duties as requested by First Church Governance.

5.5.3 Treasurer. The Treasurer is responsible for:

- Receiving an accounting of deposits from the Financial Secretary;
- Making disbursements of moneys only upon authorization by the Church at a Church meeting, First Church Governance, or at the direction of an authorized individual of a Program Ministry up to the approved budget of that Program Ministry;
- Submitting all legally required financial reports on a timely basis;
- Recommending an Assistant Treasurer and/or a Bookkeeper for approval by First Church Governance;
- Providing information and advice to First Church Governance; and
- Performing such other duties as requested by First Church Governance.

5.6 Standing Committees. First Church has the following standing committees.

5.6.1 The Pastoral Relations Committee is an independent, stand-alone committee that functions as ombudsman for the Congregation. The ombudsman role is to intercede in conflicts between the ministers and members of the congregation by facilitating dialogue before serious conflicts develop. As such, the Pastoral Relations Committee role is not an advocate for either a minister or a member, but helps to develop a civil dialogue among views, searching for solutions that best serve First Church. That search often will require Pastoral Relations to bring a conflict to the attention of a Program Ministry, the Moderator, or Governance.

5.6.2 The Personnel Committee reports to the Chair of First Church Governance, and supports the Senior Minister in managing church staff. All church staff report to the Senior Minister.

5.7 Internal Auditors. Two members of the congregation serve as Internal Auditors. In this role, they are asked to certify to the accuracy, internal control and management of the financial records of the Church and report such findings to the Church at the Annual Financial Meeting.

6. Congregational Meetings

6.1 Scheduled Meetings. There are three scheduled meetings each year.

- **Annual Budget Meeting** to approve the budget for the upcoming year. The annual Budget Meeting is held before December 20.
- **Annual Discernment Meeting** to discuss the Church's activities, how effectively the Church is carrying out its mission, and other issues raised by members of the congregation. Annual financial and Program Ministry reports for the previous year will be reviewed as part of the discussion. The annual Discernment Meeting is held in February or March.
- **Annual Election Meeting** to elect new officers, Program Ministry Coordinators and other leaders as proposed by Governance. Additionally, a ministry plan for the upcoming year is discussed at this meeting. The annual Election Meeting is held in May.

6.2 Additional Congregational Meetings. Additional meetings of the Church may be convened by First Church Governance, the Minister(s), or upon written petition of fifty members of the Church.

6.3 Notice of Congregational Meetings. Notice of Church meetings will be announced:

- At morning worship for the two successive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting; and
- By written notice posted on the Church's website and sent electronically to all members with electronic addresses.

Notwithstanding the above, notice of any Church meeting at which either an amendment to the Constitution of the Church or the dissolution of the Church is to be proposed shall be called and held in accordance with Section 4.3, 9 or 10, whichever is applicable.

- 6.4 Voting at Church Meetings.** Unless otherwise specified in this Constitution, a majority of those voting will be sufficient to approve a proposal.
- 6.5 Alternative Voting.** Absentee and/or proxy voting may be approved for specific meetings or all meetings by First Church Governance in light of the topics of concern and current technology for voting.
- 6.6 Quorum.** A quorum is defined as fifty qualified members of the Church or 10% of the current voting members, whichever is less. Determination of a quorum is the responsibility of the Clerk.

7. Elections

- 7.1 Elected Positions and Terms.** The following positions shall be elected by the membership at the annual Election Meeting in the spring:
- Moderator (2-year term);
 - Chair of Governance (2-year term, staggered with Moderator);
 - Four at-large members of Governance (2-year staggered terms);
 - Treasurer (2-year term);
 - Financial Secretary (2-year term, staggered with Treasurer);
 - Clerk (2-year term);
 - Program Ministry Coordinators (1-year terms);
 - Internal Auditors (2- year staggered terms); and
 - Conference Delegates (2-year staggered terms).
- 7.2 Nomination Process.** Nominees for open positions will be presented by the Caring for Each Other Program Ministry at the annual Election Meeting, after consultation between the Caring for Each Other Program Ministry and the other Program Ministries.
- 7.3 Voting.** For each position, the nominee receiving the majority vote by church members shall be elected. Terms will begin on July 1 following the annual Election Meeting.
- 7.4 Vacancies.** First Church Governance has the power to fill each vacancy in unexpired terms of leadership positions until the next congregational meeting, at which time a successor will be elected by Church members to serve the balance of the term.
- 7.5 Inability to Serve.** If an elected member is not able to perform specified duties or if his or her performance prompts issues of concern, the matter will be referred to First Church Governance for a policy decision on how to proceed.
- 7.6 Term Limit.** The term limit for each elected position is two consecutive terms to encourage diversity in church leadership and broad involvement by the membership.

Governance can make an exception in unusual circumstances, but only after clear notification of the congregation of its decision. Notwithstanding the above, Governance can re-appoint the current Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and/or Boookkeeper in its discretion.

8. Fiscal Policy

- 8.1 Budget.** Annual budgets and capital budgets are developed by the Caring for Our Resources Program Ministry in collaboration with Governance and guided by standing policies of First Church. A proposed annual operating budget will be presented by the chair of Caring for Our Resources to the congregation each December for approval before the new fiscal year begins.
- 8.2 Financial Obligations.** Members, Program Ministries, Ministry Teams, First Church Governance and any other person affiliated with First Church will not incur obligations in excess of the sums allotted to each in the budget of the Church, nor raise funds in the name of the Church except by specific authority from First Church Governance. Program Ministry Coordinators shall authorize the Treasurer to pay all bills chargeable to respective accounts, according to procedures to be determined by First Church Governance, and subject to the provisions of this Section.
- 8.3 Allocation of Surplus.** All funds which have not been committed or expended at the end of the fiscal year for which such funds were budgeted shall be applied to any outstanding debts or to purposes determined by the congregation at the applicable Church meeting.
- 8.4 Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of First Church runs from January 1 through December 31.

9. Amendments

The Constitution of the Church shall be amended only by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in any Church meeting designated for such purpose and in accordance with the laws of the State of Connecticut and Section 6.

10. Dissolution

The Church shall be dissolved only by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in any Church meeting designated for such purpose and in accordance with the laws of the State of Connecticut and Section 6.

Upon the dissolution of the Church, the assets of the Church shall be distributed exclusively to such other charitable or religious organizations which, in the judgment of the Church, will most effectively accomplish the general purposes expressed in Section 4.

11. Interpretation

The Church membership attending a Church meeting, in the Congregational tradition, shall be the final interpreter of the intent and meaning of the Constitution.