

**Constitution and By-Laws of the
North Branford Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

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**CONSTITUTION
OF THE NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

ARTICLE I: Name

The name of this church shall be The North Branford Congregational Church - United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE II: Mission Statement (adopted April 17, 1988, revised January 28, 1990)

We, the members of this church, are on a faith journey with Jesus Christ, and are ever called to share God's gifts and love through worship, prayer, education, and service to all in our changing world.

ARTICLE III: Covenant (adopted November 20, 1988)

By the Grace of God we have been called into this community of faith to be God's people. Through our faith, belief, and trust in the love and wisdom of God, we covenant to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us; to love our God with all our heart, mind and soul; and to love our neighbors as ourselves. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we give ourselves to this covenant of grace and accept all the costs and joys of discipleship. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we covenant to live all our days according to the Word of God as it is revealed in Scripture, in the lives of others, and within ourselves.

ARTICLE IV: Faith

SECTION 1 - Belief

This Church will welcome into its membership any baptized person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and who proposes to live according to his example and teaching. As the people of this Church, each member has the right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of his/her own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Generally, we believe in:

1. THE TRINITY: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit are one God.
2. GOD: Acting in love, God is ever active in the world.
3. JESUS CHRIST: In Christ, the only head of the church, God has come conquering sin and reconciling the world to Divine Love.
4. THE HOLY SPIRIT: God sent the Holy Spirit as the Eternal One's continuing presence and activity in the world.
5. THE CHURCH: The church consists of a group of people united in Christ through worship, work, and witness.
6. SALVATION: Forgiveness, grace, and eternal life are promised to all who have faith.
7. AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE: The Bible is the ultimate rule of faith and practice.
8. DOCTRINAL FREEDOM: Different covenants and confessions of faith are accepted in different congregations.
9. CHRISTIAN UNITY: All Christians are brothers and sisters, and must help one another.
10. BEARING WITNESS: We must each be disciples, in work and in deed — the strength of our faith.
11. REDEFINING FAITH: Each generation is responsible for re-thinking its beliefs, as God's word unfolds and conditions change.
12. SERVING OTHERS: The mission of the church is to work for justice for all and to establish God's rule in the world.

SECTION 2 - Statement of Faith

We accept as our statement of faith, commonly held among us, the version adopted by the Second Synod of the United Church of Christ at its meeting in Oberlin, Ohio, July 1959, and later adapted by Robert V. Moss as follows:

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus our brother, and to whose deeds we testify:

God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

God calls us into the Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, 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.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

ARTICLE V: Sacraments

In accordance with the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and the practice prevailing among Christians, we recognize two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

SECTION 1 - Baptism

Through the sacrament of baptism we are united to Jesus Christ and given part in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event: the reconciliation of people to God. It shows the death of self and the rising to a life of obedience and praise. It shows also the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on those whom God has chosen. In baptism, God works in us the power of forgiveness and the renewal of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the call to be God's people always.

SECTION 2 - The Lord's Supper

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. You who come to me shall not hunger; you who believe in me shall never thirst." In company with all believers who hunger for spiritual food, we come to the Lord's Table to know the risen Christ in the sharing of the cup and the breaking of the bread. These are gifts from God for the people of God. We take them in remembrance that Christ died for us and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

ARTICLE VI: Polity

This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its Head. Under God's guidance and subject to federal, state, and local laws and ordinances, the government of this Church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, as led by the Holy Spirit.

This Church is a part of the United Church of Christ and shall sustain that relationship as described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ relating to local churches, adopted July 4, 1961.

This Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among member churches of the United Church of Christ. While this church is free and independent, it will hold itself open to fellowship and communion with all Christian churches, and shall seek with other individuals and organizations which profess a faith in a God of Love who is active in the world, that unity which makes us all people of God.

This Church retains the right to disassociate from the UCC by a majority vote of the congregation as described in Article III, Section II of the Bylaws.

**BY-LAWS
OF THE NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

ARTICLE I Polity

1. The Church is congregational in its polity. The governance of the Church is vested in the Congregation, which exercises the right of control in all its affairs. Through these Bylaws and other actions, the Congregation may delegate its authority between meetings of the Congregation to the Leadership Board (the Board). Notwithstanding, only the Congregation can:
 - a) establish ordained ministerial positions,
 - b) call or dismiss an ordained Minister,
 - c) adopt the budget,
 - d) acquire or sell real estate,
 - e) approve a mortgage or other indebtedness,
 - f) amend the Bylaws,
 - g) dissolve the corporation.
2. The Church is associated with the United Church of Christ (UCC) through the Connecticut Conference. The Church cooperates in the work of the UCC and its regional associations and is represented in its councils.

ARTICLE II Membership

SECTION 1 – Qualification, Admission, and Reception

The Church will welcome into its membership any baptized person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and who proposes to live according to his example and teaching. Persons unite with this Congregation upon confession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, or by transfer from another church. Candidates for membership shall be received at a communion service or at some other time as determined by the Minister, and publicly accept the Church covenant.

SECTION 2 – Membership Rights and Responsibilities

A. Members are expected to be faithful to the duties essential to a Christian life and to contribute to the vitality of the Congregation through:

1. Joining with fellow members in regular services of worship and in other devotional activities, residence and health permitting.
2. Serving the Church by participation in its activities and missions, and through the conscientious performance of the duties of office to which the member is elected.
3. Seeking diligently the spiritual welfare of the Church and the winning of others to Christ.
4. Supporting the Church and its benevolent outreach by financial contributions in accordance with conscience and ability and the principles of Christian stewardship.

B. All members are entitled to participate in the sacraments and worship services.

C. Active members may vote on all matters of the church.

SECTION 3 – Transfer, Termination, and Revision of Membership

1. The Church will issue a letter of transfer to a member in good and regular standing who wishes to unite with another church. Requests for transfer should be made to the Clerk. A member may terminate membership in the Congregation by giving written notification to the Clerk.
2. Upon recommendation of the Board, members who have not participated in the vitality of the Congregation for two years, or whose address has been unknown for two years, may be removed from the active membership roll and be considered inactive. If, after an additional year, such persons do not seek reinstatement, their membership may be terminated.
3. Persons whose membership has terminated either by request or action of the Board may request reinstatement by means of a letter to the Clerk.

ARTICLE III Services and Meetings

SECTION 1 – Worship and Sacraments

1. Public services of worship shall be held each Sunday and at other times as determined by the Minister and/or the Board.

2. The Congregation observes two sacraments, Baptism and Communion. Baptism is administered according to procedures established by the Board in consultation with the Minister. The Sacrament of Communion is celebrated at least once each month at a Sunday service and at other times as the Board and/or the Minister may determine. All confessing Christians are welcome at the Lord's Table.

SECTION 2 – Congregational Meetings

1. The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31.
2. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of all congregational meetings except where they may conflict with any provision of these By-Laws.
3. A quorum shall consist of a majority of those present.
4. Notice of the annual meeting and any special meetings of this Church shall be given by announcement during Sunday service at least two Sundays before the meeting, and/or by a first-class mailing posted no later than six days immediately preceding the scheduled meeting day, and shall include the reasons for the meeting.
5. All questions shall be decided by a majority of the members present and voting, except as provided in Article VII and Article VIII herein, or where Robert's Rules of Order specify otherwise. All active members shall be entitled to vote.
6. In the absence of the moderator, and if a *pro tem* has not been assigned, a member shall be elected from the floor to preside.
7. The annual meeting shall be held in December or January at a time to be determined by the Board. The agenda of this meeting shall include:
 - a) Approval of the Ministry and Mission Plan submitted by the Board;
 - b) adoption of a budget,
 - c) election of the Officers,
 - d) election of the at-large members of the Board, and
 - e) other appropriate business announced in the call.
8. Special congregational meetings of this Church shall be called at the request of the Minister, or the Moderator, or at the written request of ten active members.

ARTICLE IV Officers

SECTION 1 – Moderator

The Moderator is elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and may be reelected at the will of the Congregation.

1. The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the Congregation and the Board. Unless an item is being decided by a ballot, the Moderator may vote only to resolve a tie vote.
2. The Moderator shall consult regularly with, advise, and otherwise assist the Minister. As necessary, the Moderator shall convey special concerns and needs of the Minister to the Board and the Congregation.
3. The Moderator shall support and encourage each Board member to work harmoniously to accomplish the Ministry and Mission Plan of the Congregation.
4. If the Moderator is unable to attend a meeting of the Congregation or of the Board, the Moderator shall appoint one of the at-large members of the Board to serve as acting moderator *pro tem*. In the event that the Moderator resigns or is incapacitated, the Leadership Board shall elect a interim Moderator to serve until the next Congregational meeting.

SECTION 2 – Clerk

The Clerk shall be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and may be reelected at the will of the Congregation.

1. The Clerk shall record and maintain minutes of all meetings of the Congregation and the Board. These minutes shall be made available to the Congregation in a timely manner following each meeting.
2. The Clerk shall give notice of all meetings of the Congregation and of the Board as required by these Bylaws, Article II.
3. The Clerk shall keep a current roll of members of the Congregation. This record shall include the dates of reception, resignation, or dismissal of members; and the dates of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and deaths.
4. The Clerk shall conduct all correspondence and perform such other duties as may be assigned to this position by the Board.

SECTION 3 – Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and may be reelected at the will of the Congregation.

1. The Treasurer shall be responsible for paying all approved bills, keeping accurate records of the same, and filing required reports with Federal, State, or Church-related organizations. In the event that the Treasurer is not available for bill payment or bookkeeping services, the Board may appoint a person or bookkeeping service to undertake this work. The Treasurer shall receive, review, and report the records of these transactions to the Board.
2. The Treasurer shall submit quarterly year-to-date and year-to-year comparison financial reports to the Board and shall publish an annual financial report prior to the Annual Meeting of the Congregation.

SECTION 4 – Business Manager

The Business Manager shall be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and may be reelected at the will of the Congregation.

1. The Business Manager shall manage and negotiate all agreements, contracts and insurance policies for the Congregation with the approval of the Leadership Board.
2. The Business Manager shall monitor and manage the performance of the endowment and investment funds and recommend changes to the Board.

SECTION 5 – Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Leadership Board to perform the following duties

1. Receive all payments of all pledges.
2. Receive all regular and special offerings.
3. Keep an accurate account for each subscriber.
4. Receive all moneys from special fund-raisers.
5. Receive all memorial donations, make record, and give receipt of same.
6. Deposit all moneys collected within one week of their receipt and give account to the Treasurer.
7. Furnish all those who have made pledges with quarterly statements of their accounts.

ARTICLE V Leadership Board

SECTION 1 – Purpose and Authority

The Leadership Board (the Board) provides guidance and oversight for the ministries, activities, and property of the Church. The Board provides guidance, counsel, and support for the Minister. It is responsible to the Congregation and functions only within the authority granted to it by the Congregation.

SECTION 2 – Membership

1. The Board shall consist of Moderator, Treasurer, Business Manager, Recording Secretary, Worship Team Leader, four at-large members elected by the Congregation, and the Minister, *ex officio* without vote.
2. All members shall be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and may be reelected at the will of the Congregation.
3. A vacancy in an elected position of the Board may be filled by the Board until the next annual meeting of the Congregation.
4. An officer or at-large member may be removed by the Congregation at any meeting at which such action is announced in the call to the meeting.

SECTION 3 – Duties

1. Prepare a Ministry and Mission Plan for the Congregation and present it to the Congregation for adoption at the annual meeting
2. Prepare, for approval by the Congregation, an annual budget that sustains the Ministry and Mission Plan
3. Enter into contracts and conduct business and legal affairs on behalf of the Congregation
4. Serve as trustees for the real estate and financial assets of the Congregation
5. Establish such Mission Teams, or other agencies needed to fulfill the Ministry and Mission Plan and to communicate with, and support, these entities
6. Annually, the Leadership Board shall appoint a nominating committee to secure nominees for vacant officer and at-large Board seats. The nominating committee shall consist of not fewer than three Congregation members who are not current members of the Board, except that one retiring Board member may serve on the committee.
7. Appoint Church officers other than the elected officers specified in Article IV
8. Hire and supervise non-ordained staff members
9. Evaluate the Minister in accordance with Article VII
10. In the event of a ministerial vacancy, nominate a Ministerial Search Committee and present said committee to the Congregation for approval;
11. Establish policies for the Church and ensure appropriate compliance with such policies;
12. Appoint delegates to represent the Congregation in meetings of the UCC, including its regional instrumentalities, and such other organizations with which the Congregation is affiliated. Delegates are authorized to vote or abstain from voting according to their individual conscience on all matters arising in such organizations;
13. Perform such other duties required for the well-being of the Congregation and not prohibited to the Board.

SECTION 4 – Meetings

The Board shall meet at least six times annually. The time and place shall be fixed by the Moderator. The Congregation shall be informed of all meetings of the Board at least seven days in advance of the meeting. In the event of an emergency requiring immediate action, the Moderator or the Minister may call a meeting without this advance notice. In this event, the Congregation shall be notified of the meeting and its action(s) within seven days following the emergency session. Except for executive sessions in which confidential personal or contractual business is being considered, all meetings of the Board are open to members of the Congregation.

SECTION 5 – Quorum

Five voting members of the Board, including at least two Officers, constitute a quorum for all of its business. Decisions of the Board shall be determined by a simple majority of those present.

SECTION 6 – Prohibitions

1. The Board shall not buy or sell Church property without authorization of the Congregation.
2. The Board shall not hire or dismiss any Ordained Minister without authorization of the Congregation.
3. The Board shall not override any recorded decision of the Congregation made in a duly called meeting thereof.

ARTICLE VI Mission Teams

Except for those duties and activities delegated to the Board, the programs and ministries of the Congregation are carried out by the members and other persons associated with the Congregation through voluntary, self-selecting Mission Teams. These Teams are established through, and recognized by, the Board. Mission Teams are expected to communicate their activities and needs to the Board and the Congregation through occasional reports and other informative means. Mission Teams requiring budget support shall be asked to submit budget requests to the Board as it prepares the annual Ministry and Mission Plan.

ARTICLE VII Ordained Ministers

SECTION 1 – Call

1. The Congregation shall call Ministers to be its pastoral, spiritual, and educational leaders. Ministers also shall share in necessary administration of the Church. Called Ministers shall be ordained and have current standing in the UCC. Upon accepting a call from the Congregation, Ministers shall become a member of the Congregation and a member of the New Haven East Consociation, and shall be duly installed in office by an Ecclesiastical Council.
2. A Minister is only called by a two-thirds vote of the Congregation affirming a nomination from the Board. The relationship between the Congregation and a Minister is formed in a covenant that pledges
 - a) mutual support between the Congregation and the Minister,
 - b) the Minister to execute the goals and objectives of the Congregation, and
 - c) the Congregation to support and compensate the Minister.
3. A written and signed Call conveys these pledges and commitments and further specifies the terms and conditions under which a Minister serves, and the compensation and other considerations provided by the Congregation.

SECTION 2 – Evaluation

On a schedule established by the Board, but at least biennially, the Board shall evaluate the Minister's performance with reference to the Ministry and Mission Plan and the policies of the Congregation.

SECTION 3 – Resignation

1. A Minister may resign voluntarily by giving a sixty-day notice, in writing, to the Board.
2. The Congregation may request a Minister's resignation with the expectation that it will be effective within sixty days. The request for resignation shall be effected only by a two thirds vote of the Congregation at a meeting called by the Board for that purpose. If a Minister loses standing in the UCC, the Call shall be terminated immediately.

SECTION 4 – Vacancy

When a Ministerial vacancy occurs, the Board shall call a special meeting of the Congregation to approve a Ministerial Search Committee of not fewer than seven members of the Congregation. The Ministerial Search Committee shall recommend a candidate to the Congregation through the Board at a meeting called by the Board for that purpose. A two-thirds affirmative vote of the Congregation shall be required to call a Minister.

ARTICLE VIII Change of By-Laws

SECTION 1 - Amendments

- A. The Constitution and By-Laws may be altered, amended, repealed, or added to by vote of two-thirds of active members present and voting at any annual or special congregational meeting.
1. The Call for the meeting shall be in accordance with the rules outlined in Article III.
 2. The Call shall contain the substance of the proposed change.

Upon adoption of this Constitution and By-Laws, all previous Standing Rules are hereby repealed.

ARTICLE IX Dissolution

This Church and its property shall be forever devoted to religious purposes. No Officer, Member, or Employee thereof shall receive any pecuniary profit from this Church except reasonable compensation for services rendered. In the event of the dissolution of this Church, its property shall become vested in, and its functions as trustee shall be assumed by, such church or other institution which is organized, and the membership of this Church shall designate, at a meeting called before said dissolution, or, in the absence of such determination, as a court of competent jurisdiction shall determine.