

CONSTITUTION

And

BY-LAWS

*FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN MANSFIELD, CONNECTICUT
(Congregational)
United Church of Christ*

As amended on January 27, 2007

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CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - Name

The name of this church is The First Church of Christ in Mansfield, Connecticut, (Congregational), United Church of Christ, formerly known as the First Congregational Church in Mansfield Center.

ARTICLE II - Purpose

The mission of this church is to proclaim Jesus Christ and his Gospel to all humanity; to build Christian fellowship in the community through worship, religious education and Christian service; and to labor for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of the human community in cooperation with all Christian churches.

ARTICLE III - Faith and Covenant

This church recognizes the Bible as the basis of faith and practice, and holds that we are called to live in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Section 1. Statement of Faith. The following statement of faith is an expression of the spirit in which the church interprets the word of God:

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 to 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.

Section 2. Covenant. The covenant which binds this people together as a local church and to which all its members shall subscribe, is as follows:

We covenant with each other and with God to seek to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and to strive to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us; to study and to teach the faith of the church; to take part in the business of the church; to support the work of the church here and throughout the world with our labor and our gifts according to our means.

We recognize this church as one congregation of the whole Christian Church, and acknowledge that the covenant, which binds us together as a local church, unites us in worship and work with Christians everywhere.

ARTICLE IV - Government

We hold the authority of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control. We cherish the fellowship of the churches, united in district, state and national bodies, for counsel and cooperation in matters of common concern.

While affirming the liberty of our churches, and the validity of our ministry, we hold to the unity and universality of Christ's church. We will unite with all its branches in hearty cooperation, and will earnestly strive to live so that the prayer of our Lord for his disciples may be answered, that all may be one.

The government of this church is, therefore, vested in its members.

This church has joined the United Church of Christ as a Congregational church without break in its historical tradition and without change in its government, and maintains its standing as a local church of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE V - Membership

Section 1. Qualifications. This church will welcome into its membership any baptized person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and who proposes to live according to His laws of love. Membership in this church is accorded to all persons who have confessed their Christian faith; and have in the presence of the church membership assented to the faith and covenant of this church.

Section 2. Privileges. Full privileges and responsibilities are accorded to all members.

Section 3. Responsibilities. Members are expected to be faithful to all duties essential to the Christian life; to attend regularly the services of the church; to share in its organized work and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the church and the winning of others to Christ. All members are entitled to participate in the sacraments and the worship services.

Section 4. Associate Member. An associate member shall be any person who is a member in good standing of any Christian church who also desires to affiliate with the ministry of this church.

An associate member shall have the same rights and responsibilities as a member.

ARTICLE VI - Officers

The officers of this church shall be the chairperson of the Executive Council, the vice-chairperson of the Executive Council, the clerk, the assistant clerk, the treasurer, the assistant treasurer, the collector, and the assistant collector, all of who shall be members of the church. The officers shall be elected at the annual meeting to serve for one year, except the vice-chairperson, who shall be appointed by the Executive Council.

The pastoral staff, upon becoming members of the church, shall be officers in accordance with their contracts.

All officers shall take office immediately following the annual meeting and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected.

ARTICLE VII - Executive Council

The Executive Council shall be the administrative body of this church. It shall consist of the officers of the church, two co-chairpersons of the Board of Deacons, the chairperson of the Board of Faith Formation, the chairperson of the Board of Mission, the chairperson of the Business Committee, the chairperson of the Stewardship Committee, the chairperson of the House Arrangements Committee, the chairperson of the Music committee, and the Director of Faith Formation, if the Director is a member of this church. In addition there shall be one member-at-large who is not otherwise a member of the council who shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. Any chairperson of a board or committee who is a member of the Executive Council and who is unable to attend a council meeting should designate another member of the board or committee to serve in that chairperson's place. Such a member shall have both voice and vote.

The following organizations may elect a non-voting representative who shall be a member of the church: Justice and Peace Ministry, Youth Fellowship and Women's Fellowship.

ARTICLE VIII - Boards and Committees

Section 1. Board of Faith Formation. The Board of Faith Formation shall consist of six church members, two to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms. The board shall elect its own chairperson.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Section 2. Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons shall consist of twelve members, at least five of whom shall be men and five of whom shall be women, four to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms. The board shall elect its own co-chairpersons.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Section 3. Board of Mission. The Board of Mission shall consist of six church members, two to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms. The board shall elect its own chairperson.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Section 4. Business Committee. The Business Committee shall consist of six church members, two to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year. The chairperson shall be one of the members with at least one-year experience serving on the committee.

Section 5. House Arrangements Committee. The House Arrangements Committee shall consist of at least two church members: a chairperson to be elected by the church at the annual meeting, and at least one other member so elected for a term of one year each.

Section 6. Stewardship Committee. The Stewardship Committee shall consist of six church members, two to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms. The committee shall elect its' own chairperson.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Section 7. Music Committee. The Music Committee shall consist of six church members, two to be elected by the church at the annual meeting for three-year terms. The committee shall elect its' own chairperson.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Section 8. Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall consist of six church members: a chairperson to be elected by the church at the annual meeting and five others so elected. Two members shall be selected from the committee of the previous year. Members of this committee must have some knowledge of the duties of the various officers, boards, and committees and should be well acquainted with the membership in order to select persons best qualified for these offices.

Section 9. Pastoral Relations Committee. There shall be a Pastoral Relations Committee for each member of the paid pastoral staff consisting of six members on each committee. There shall be representation of both men and women on each committee. Two persons shall be selected each year for each committee by the Chairperson of the Executive Council and approved by the Executive Council for a three-year term. Selection will be made from recommendations for candidates from the congregation and pastoral staff, and after discussion with the pastoral staff, and representatives of Pastoral Relations Committee, Board of Deacons, and Board of Christian Education. Each committee shall elect its' own chairperson.

When a member has served two full consecutive terms, that member shall be ineligible for re-appointment for one year.

Section 10. Auditors. Two auditors shall be elected by the church at the annual meeting to serve one-year terms.

Section 11. Delegates. Two delegates and two alternates shall be elected by the church at the annual meeting to serve one-year terms.

Section 12. Election Limitations. A church member may hold only one office or chair on a board or committee designated in Articles VI, VII, and VIII Sections 1 through 8 of the Constitution.

ARTICLE IX - Services and Meetings

Section 1. Worship.

(a) Sunday Worship. Services of Worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday except when temporarily suspended by vote of the church or, in an emergency, by the deacons.

(b) The Sacraments. The Sacraments celebrated in this church shall be Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered at the morning service of the first Sunday of each second month, beginning with January, also October and Maundy Thursday, and/or at such times as the Board of Deacons shall recommend.

(c) Other Services. Other services of worship, weddings and funerals, and meetings for inspiration, prayer and study may be held as determined by the pastor or deacons.

Section 2. Business Meetings.

(a) Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of the church shall be held within 30 days of the end of the church fiscal year, the date to be determined by the council on call issued by the clerk or chairperson of the Executive Council, and posted on the church bulletin board at least seven days prior to the day of holding said meeting.

(b) Special Meetings. Special meetings of the church may be called by the pastor or the Executive Council, or may be called by the clerk on written request of seven church members. Announcements of these meetings shall be made during the church service, posted on the bulletin board, or printed in the bulletin at the second Sunday morning service preceding the meeting. Action on transfers may be taken at a special meeting following the Sunday worship service on the day the announcement is made.

(c) Meetings of the Council. The Executive Council shall meet on the third Tuesday of every month except July and August. Special meetings may be called by the pastor, chairperson, clerk, or two members of the council by due notice to all members at a worship or by mail.

ARTICLE X - Amendments

The Constitution may be amended by two-thirds of those present and voting at the annual meeting, a quorum being present, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given in the call of the meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - Quorum

Section 1. Annual and Special Meetings. Fifteen percent of the active members shall constitute a quorum at any annual or special meeting of the church.

Section 2. Executive Council. Eight members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business by the Executive Council.

ARTICLE II - Membership

Section 1. Withdrawal and Dismissal.

(a) Letter of transfer. Any member in good standing may, on the member's request, be granted a letter of transfer to any Christian church, but the particular church shall ordinarily be named in the letter.

(b) Certificate of membership. Any member in good standing may, on the member's request, be dismissed with a certificate of church membership, and have his/her name removed from the roll if he/she wishes to join a body not in fellowship with this church.

(c) Termination on request. Any member in good standing may, because of change of faith or for other reasons not involving unchristian conduct, request to be released from his/her membership obligations. If, after patient endeavor to secure the member's continuance of its fellowship, the church is unsuccessful, it may grant the written request of the member and terminate his/her membership.

(d) Inactive list. Members whose addresses have long been unknown, or who for a period of two years, and after kindly reminders, have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support may, upon recommendation of the deacons and vote of the church, be transferred to the Inactive List and so notified, if possible.

If, after the expiration of a year, the relationship remains unchanged, their names may be dropped from the roll by further vote of the church, and they shall be so notified, if possible.

(e) Termination by exclusion. If a member becomes an offense to the church and continually disregards his/her confession of faith, the church may censure the Member, or suspend or terminate his/her membership, but only after due notice has been given to the member, a hearing before the deacons has been offered the member, and faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment in accordance with the law of Christ. No membership shall be terminated by exclusion at the meeting at which the motion for exclusion is made.

Section 2. Reinstatement. Any person, whose membership has been terminated for any reason, may be restored to membership by vote of the church.

ARTICLE III - Duties

Section 1. Pastoral Staff. The pastoral staff shall preach the word, care for the stated services of public worship, administer the ordinances, and promote the spiritual welfare of the church and those whom it serves.

The pastoral staff shall be ex-officio members of all boards and committees and, if members of the church shall have the right to vote.

The pastoral staff shall make a report of the year's work at the annual meeting.

The pastoral staff responsible for marriages, baptisms, funerals and new members shall regularly report to the clerk all such events.

Either the church or the pastor shall dissolve the pastoral relation by a written notice of such intention three months in advance. No dissolution of relationship of an installed pastoral staff member shall be sought without the approval of the installing association.

Section 2. Director of Faith Formation. The Director of Faith Formation, as a member of the pastoral staff, shall participate in the total ministry of the church with a focus on Christian education. Working with the pastor, Board of Faith Formation, Board of Deacons and Board of Mission, the Director of Faith Formation shall promote Christian education and faith formation of the church family as a whole.

Section 3. Executive Council. The Executive Council, the administrative body of the church, shall have general authority, care and oversight of the interest of the church and its properties. It shall make all contracts and approve all payments of the same. It shall enter upon no contract involving expenditures or investments in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1000) for items not in the budget without the approval of the church. It shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer real property, or personal property in excess of one hundred dollars (\$100) or to borrow money without the specific authority given by vote of the church at a meeting called for that purpose. It shall have the power to receive gifts and bequests, subject to the vote of the church. It shall have the power to appoint such assistants to officers and such committees as it may deem advisable, and upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, it shall have the power to fill vacancies in any office, committee or board until the next annual meeting. It shall have the power to recommend to the church membership for their approval any search committee for any pastoral staff. It shall appoint from its members a vice-chairperson who shall act in the absence of the chairperson. It shall see that all stocks, bonds, chattels or other properties that are given in lieu of a pledge for the annual support of the church are sold. The proceeds shall be used for the on-going support of the programs of the church. It shall make contracts with all salaried employees, and prepare job descriptions for all salaried positions for approval by the church membership.

The Council is authorized to invite one representative of a society or organization sponsored by the church to attend and participate in its meetings, without vote.

It shall direct such boards and committees as require budgeted church funds to submit their budget requests for the ensuing year by October 1.

It shall, at the annual meeting, present or cause to be presented, reports of the principal events and transactions of the year.

Section 4. Chair of the Executive Council. The chairperson of the Executive Council shall conduct the meeting of the Council and shall be the moderator of all meetings of the church. The chairperson shall see that the business of the church is carried out as voted by the Executive Council and church in accordance with the Constitution.

The chairperson shall give notice of election to all persons chosen to any office or function.

Section 5. Clerk. The clerk shall keep a record of all the business transacted by the church. The clerk shall sign credentials of delegates' chosen and letters of dismissal granted by vote of the church, and shall also send notice of such dismissals to the church addressed. The clerk shall record in the register of the church the names of all members, entering the dates and manner of admission or removal, and shall also keep record of all baptisms and weddings. The clerk shall make an annual report. The clerk shall prepare notices of special and annual meetings for posting. In the absence of the clerk, the assistant clerk shall perform the duties of the clerk.

Section 6. Treasurer. The treasurer shall have charge of all church funds and all disbursements following authorization from the Business Committee. The treasurer shall give bond for the faithful discharge of his/her duties and present a complete itemized report of the treasurer's accounts at the annual meeting. The treasurer shall, in conjunction with the Business Committee, prepare the annual budget. In the absence of the treasurer, the assistant treasurer shall perform the duties of the treasurer.

Section 7. Collector. The collector shall record all pledges to the church and credit payments thereon. All funds received by the collector from pledges, plate collections, or other sources for the work of the church shall be deposited to the accounts of the church. The collector shall give bond for the faithful discharge of his/her duties and present a complete itemized report of the collector's accounts at the annual meeting. In the absence of the collector, the assistant collector shall perform the duties of the collector.

Section 8. Board of Faith Formation. The Board of Faith Formation shall be responsible for the planning and administration of Christian education in the church at all age levels. The Board of Faith Formation shall advise in the general management of the church school; and the board, with the Director of Faith Formation, shall plan the curriculum of the school and appoint teachers.

The Board shall also encourage children, youth and adults to have a greater awareness of Christian education in their lives. Faith formation does not end with the completion of Church School; rather it is a lifelong pursuit of understanding and faith. With an emphasis on intergenerational relationships, the Board shall strive to integrate Christian education into the church community.

Section 9. Board of Deacons. The deacons shall cooperate with the pastoral staff in ministering to the spiritual needs of the church and community. They shall keep the pastoral staff informed of the sick, needy and bereaved of the parish and shall assist in welcoming the stranger.

The board shall approve the order of worship, assist in the worship services and arrange special services as needed. It shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in case of the pastor's absence. It shall assist the pastor in the preparation and administration of the ordinances and shall be responsible for the care of the communion ware. Following a meeting of the pastor with applicants for church membership, the board shall discuss with the applicants the meaning and significance of their confession of faith or re-affirmation of faith and the covenant of the church. It shall make an annual survey of the church membership list and shall submit any recommendations for revision to the annual meeting.

Section 10. Board of Mission and Outreach. The Board of Mission shall have the responsibility for the supervision of matters pertaining to the mission of the church and shall prepare the annual mission budget of the church. It shall have the authority to decide upon and recommend to the Executive Council the allocation of mission funds not specified by the church budget.

It shall recommend to the Executive Council the expenditure of such funds as are specified in any bequest or invested funds.

The Board shall have responsibility of stimulating and coordinating mission education and outreach of the church.

Section 11. Business Committee. The Business Committee shall, subject to the direction of the Executive Council, have full charge of all invested funds, endowments, buildings, grounds, salaries, contracts, and secular affairs of the church. It shall authorize all expenditures made by the treasurer before payment of the same.

This committee and the church treasurer shall prepare a proposed annual budget prior to the annual stewardship support drive for presentation to the Executive Council for approval. Copies of this proposed budget should be included in the Stewardship Committee's mailing to the church membership. This proposed budget will be presented to the membership at the annual meeting for adoption.

Section 12. House Arrangements Committee. The House Arrangements committee shall be responsible, subject to the direction of the Executive Council, for scheduling and supervising the use of the facilities of the church.

Section 13. Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall present to the annual meeting a slate of proposed officers, boards and committees (as designated in Articles VI, VII, and VIII of the Constitution) with the exception of the Pastoral Relations Committee, to be voted upon by the church. It shall present to the Executive Council at the first meeting following the annual meeting a list of Council committees and other offices (Kitchen Committee, Fellowship Committee, Visitation Committee, Ushers, Flower Committee, Men's Work Committee, Office Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Historian, Carillon Committee, Memorials Committee) and other committees that the Executive Council might establish.

In order to encourage participation in the church's ministry, the Nominating Committee shall try to have church members serve on no more than one board or committee designated in Articles VI, VII and VIII Sections 1 through 8 of the Constitution.

Section 14. Stewardship Committee. The Stewardship Committee shall be responsible for informing the membership of the meaning and significance of Christian stewardship and for conducting the annual Stewardship Support Drive.

The committee shall contact all church authorities by September 15 regarding their priorities for the ensuing year. It shall review the same and make recommendations to the Executive Council.

Section 15. Music Committee. The Music Committee shall promote the effective use of music in the church services; encourage the recruitment of choir members and guest musicians to provide special music.

It shall interview candidates for the positions of Music/Choir Director and Organist and recommend to the Executive Council the persons best qualified. It shall review salaries for these positions and make recommendation to the Executive Council for any increases. It shall keep informed about the condition of the musical instruments owned by the church and make recommendations for appropriate repairs and maintenance.

Section 16. Pastoral Relations. The Pastoral Relations Committees shall support and maintain an open relationship between the pastoral staff and members of the congregation. The committees shall meet at least four times a year or more frequently when necessary. The committees should listen to individuals or groups in the church regarding the relationship between the pastoral staff and the congregation.

The committees should periodically discuss the relationship between the pastoral staff and the congregation. The committees should work for improved communication, interpretation, and understanding between the congregation and the pastoral staff, including financial matters.

Section 17. Auditors. The auditors shall audit the accounts of the Collector and Treasurer and make a report of the same at the annual meeting.

Section 18. Delegates. The delegates shall represent the church at all denominational meetings at which representation is required. The pastor shall appoint substitutes for delegates on occasions when elected delegates and alternate delegates cannot attend a meeting to represent the church.

ARTICLE IV - Expenditure of Funds

Section 1. Budgeted Funds. All boards, committees and organizations requiring budgeted church funds must submit a budget for the coming year to the Business Committee and the Executive Council to be presented to the membership for approval at the annual meeting.

These boards, committees and organizations must secure approval of the Executive Council for expenditures in excess of their annual budgets, but may make intra-budgetary transfer at their discretion.

Section 2. Unbudgeted Funds. All unbudgeted funds earned from special money raising activities, projects and events will be placed in the overall church budget, in support of the total ministry of the church, unless otherwise voted by the Executive Council or the church membership.

ARTICLE V - Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall be from January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE VI - Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the authority governing all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and these by-laws.

ARTICLE VII - Amendments

Amendments to these by-laws may be made at any duly called church meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present provided notice of proposed amendment has been given in the call of the meeting.