



# Church Constitution

Church of Christ, Congregational  
142 Exchange St., Millis, MA 02054

*February 3, 2019*

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## VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

**Our Vision:** Worship God, serve our neighbors, share God's love

**Our Mission:** We seek to be a Christian community by worshiping God through prayer, music and the proclaimed Word. Following Christ's example, we enthusiastically reach out to everyone with compassion, respect and love so that we may grow in faith and commitment together.

## CONSTITUTION

### ARTICLE I - CORPORATE NAME

1. The corporate name of this church will be the CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL, in Millis, Massachusetts.

### ARTICLE II - OUR FAITH

2. As Congregationalists, we believe in religious freedom and we respect the rights of individuals to discern God's will for their lives. Guided by the Holy Spirit and with the support and counsel of other committed Christians, we share in and support each other's journey of faith.

#### STATEMENTS OF FAITH

3. This church accepts the Statement of Faith adopted by the National Council of Churches on October 25, 1913:

We believe in God, the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness and love: and in Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord and Savior, who for us and our salvation lived and died and rose again, and liveth evermore: and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting, and inspiring the souls of men. We are united in the striving to know the will of God, as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending as did our fathers upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

We also accept the Statement of Faith adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1959, as a working basis of its faith:

We believe in God, the eternal spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to His deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being, creates Man in His own image and sets before him the way of life and death.

He seeks in Holy Love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. He judges men and nations by His righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, He has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to Himself.

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

He calls us into His church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be His servants in the service of men, to proclaim the Gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share Christ's Baptism and eat at His table, to join in His passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust Him, forgiveness of sins and fullness of Grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, His presence in trial and rejoicing and Eternal Life in His Kingdom which has no end. Blessing and Honor, Glory and Power be unto Him. Amen

#### CHURCH COVENANT

4. Our church covenant is our declaration of duties towards God and our fellow believers:

Here in the presence of God we turn from all our sins;  
 We make the faith of Jesus our way and truth and life  
 We crave the Grace of God that was in Christ to save us;  
 We seek the Light of God to guide us all our days;  
 We pray that we may love as Christ also loved;  
 We covenant with God to be disciples of His truth and seekers of His Kingdom;  
 And with this church we covenant;  
 To worship faithfully,  
 To observe its sacraments,  
 To give it both our substance and ourselves,  
 To work and pray for its prosperity,  
 And to walk with all its members in sincerity and love.

#### WORSHIP

5. Services of worship will be held at given hours each Sunday. Other services for worship, inspiration, prayer and study may be held as determined by the Pastor or the Diaconate.

6. The Church of Christ, Congregational, in accordance with the majority of Protestant Christian churches, recognizes two sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion.

a. Baptism: Baptisms will be administered at times determined by the Pastor. Baptism is the rite of entry into the church, symbolic of the death of Jesus Christ, a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace and new life. We recognize the baptism of infants and children, when the parents vow to raise their children in the Christian faith, instruct them in the Word of God, and provide them with the Christian education necessary to prepare them for the Rite of Confirmation. In addition, we recognize believers' baptism, the act by which previously unbaptized adults enter the church. Whether administered to adults or children, baptism in this church will include the historical baptismal formula ("Father, Son and Holy Spirit").

b. Holy Communion: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will ordinarily be celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, also properly called "Eucharist" (which means "Thanksgiving") and "Holy Communion," is the celebration by which we remember the mighty acts of God in Christ, and the act in which we celebrate the real presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. All communion celebrations will include the scriptural words of institution.

## ARTICLE III – MEMBERS AND COMMITTED FRIENDS

### EXPECTATIONS

7. The church expects members and committed friends to live an ever-growing Christian life, to regularly attend the worship services offered by the church, and to generously support the church in terms of their time, money and talents.

### BEHAVIORAL COVENANT

8. We commit to healthy communication and treating each other respectfully by speaking the truth in love, as stated in our church's Behavioral Covenant:

#### *Speaking...*

- We will communicate directly to each other using the first person.
- We will ask questions for clarification in order to confirm that we have understood correctly and ask others to do the same.

#### *the truth...*

- We will be as honest as we can with each other.
- We will share our thoughts, not keep them inside, and invite others to respond.
- We will strive together to understand and speak from factual information, rather than leaping to conclusions based on assumptions or speculation.

#### *In love.*

- We will speak to each other with respect, conscious of both words and body language.
- We will affirm the merit in another person's idea or concern before we note any weaknesses.
- We will listen to understand one another's point of view, but don't necessarily have to agree.
- We will affirm the right of others to think and feel differently, and positively value each member and visitor without judging.

### MEMBERSHIP

9. **Ways to Join:** All baptized persons who accept this Constitution, who manifest a sincere purpose to lead a Christian life, and who assent to the Covenant may become Active Members of this church. Members may join one of three ways: by Confession of Faith, when they are joining a church for the first time; by Re-affirmation of Faith, when their membership in another church has lapsed or become inactive; or by Letter of Transfer, when they are currently members in good standing in another church. In all cases, they will be accepted upon vote of the Diaconate. Persons accepted by the Diaconate will be received at a worship service.

10. **Types of Membership:** Members may be classified as follows:

a. **ACTIVE MEMBERS** are those who, to the best of their ability, attend the services of the church, contribute to its financial support and its good deeds, share in its organized activities, and seek



diligently and prayerfully the spiritual welfare of the whole church. They may vote and hold any offices and committee posts. Such members may act and vote in all the affairs of the church, except as regulated by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**b. INACTIVE MEMBERS** are those who have permanently moved from the area or those who, for a period of one year, in spite of kindly reminders, have not communicated with this church, its Pastor, or Clerk, or have not contributed to its support by choice rather than circumstance. These members may be transferred to the Inactive List by vote of the Diaconate. Persons who have been transferred to the Inactive List may be restored to the Active List by vote of the Diaconate.

**c. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS** are those who, with prayerful consideration, wish to belong to the Church of Christ, Congregational in Millis while retaining membership in another church or denomination. Associate Members enter into the life of this congregation, but are not counted as Active Members in annual reports for the UCC yearbook. They may vote and hold offices and committee posts except those of church moderator or deacon; and may serve as delegates to the Association, Conference or General Synod only if they hold membership in another UCC congregation.

11. **Termination:** Membership may be terminated as follows:

**a. TRANSFER** – A letter of transfer will be issued to another church upon request of a member. That individual's name will be removed from all membership lists. A Diaconate vote is not required.

**b. WITHDRAWAL** – After due conference and deliberation, if a member decides to withdraw their membership then their name will be removed from all membership lists. A Diaconate vote is not required.

**c. INACTIVITY** – If, within a period of two years from the time of transfer to the Inactive List, such persons have not communicated with the church or made an effort to resume an active relationship with the church, they may be permanently removed from membership by vote of the Diaconate.

## ARTICLE IV – POLITY

### AFFILIATION WITH NATIONAL CHURCH

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

### GOVERNMENT

13. This church is an independent ecclesiastical body in matters of doctrine, order and discipline. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all of its affairs, subject to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts relating to ecclesiastical organizations.

## ARTICLE V - OFFICERS

14. An officer is a church member who has responsibility and authority when representing the corporate body of the church. The officers of the church will consist of the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Investment Fund Manager, Collector, and Assistant Collector.

15. The Pastor and Moderator must be Active Members of the church. All other officers will be Active or Associate Members.

16. All officers, except for the Pastor and Investment Fund Manager, will be elected by majority vote of voting members present at the annual meeting or a special congregation business meeting. They will serve for a term of one year or until the next annual meeting, whichever date is later. The Church Council may fill vacancies that occur between annual meetings, with the exception of the Pastor and Investment Fund Manager.

### PASTOR

17. **Duties:** It will be the Pastor's duty to preach the Word; to care for all services of public worship; to administer the sacraments; to promote the spiritual welfare of the church and all those whom it would serve; to exercise the privilege of teacher and counselor in public and private. The Pastor will also have general supervision over the whole organization of the church and will be the executive head of the church as an institution. The Pastor and any Associate or Assistant Pastors will be ex-officio members of all committees, with voice and vote.

18. **Terms & Call:** The Pastor will hold office without limitation of time. The candidate for Pastor will be nominated for call by the Pastoral Search Committee (see paragraph 40). The candidate will be presented to the congregation at a regular worship service, at which time a ballot vote will be taken. The call requires a two-thirds vote of the members of the congregation. The Pastor will become an active member of the church as soon as practicable after settlement, and thereafter will be installed by the Metropolitan Boston Association, United Church of Christ, at the convenience of the church and the Association. Any unordained person called to be the Pastor of this church will seek ordination as soon as possible after accepting the call.

19. **Resignation or Dissolution of Relationship:** The Pastor, by resignation, or the church, by two-thirds vote of members at a special meeting called for that purpose, may dissolve the pastoral relation. Either will give not less than two months written notice. A Pastoral Search Committee will be formed (see paragraph 40).

### MODERATOR

20. The Moderator presides at all legally called congregational business meetings, serves as chairperson of the Church Council, and is an ex-officio member, with voice and vote, of all committees. The Moderator is considered the lay leader of the church, and is responsible for carrying out Church Council decisions and actions through the appropriate officers and committees.

21. A Moderator completing three successive one-year terms must take off at least one year before being elected to the same office.

### CLERK

22. The Clerk will maintain a record of all business meetings of the church; take the minutes of the meeting for the Church Council; maintain the church's membership records in coordination with the Diaconate; give notice of all meetings as required by the rules of the church or by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; is sworn as

required by law; supervises the custody of all valuable records of the church; and prepares the annual reports for the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

#### TREASURER AND ASSISTANT TREASURER

23. The Treasurer has the authority to pay all bills arising from church expenditures within the framework of the annual budget, and may transfer unrestricted funds to the checking account for that purpose. The Treasurer tracks funds on behalf of various church organizations, keeping records and making such reports as the organizations require, and disbursing these funds only at the order of the organizations administering them. The Treasurer prepares such financial reports as the Prudential Committee may determine. The Assistant Treasurer, in the absence of or by the request of the Treasurer, will perform all duties required of the Treasurer.

#### INVESTMENT FUND MANAGER

24. The Prudential Committee will appoint the Investment Fund Manager who, with the approval of the Prudential Committee, has the authority to invest both restricted and unrestricted church funds and make transfers from these accounts to the Church Treasurer as needed. A report of all investments will be included in the Prudential Committee's Annual Report.

#### COLLECTOR AND ASSISTANT COLLECTOR

25. The Collector or Assistant Collector will receive all monies paid or donated to the church; take charge of the offerings and special collections; deposit all money to the appropriate account and provide a weekly report with deposit slips to the Treasurer; keep a record of individual contributions; and is responsible for ensuring that quarterly statements are issued.

## ARTICLE VI – COMMITTEES & OTHER POSITIONS OR ORGANIZATIONS

#### EXPECTATIONS OF ALL CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

26. The church is a united entity and it expects from all its organizations a maximum of cooperation. All organizations will be regarded as integral parts of the church and will receive the general oversight of the church through its Pastor and the Church Council. All organizations will maintain records of activities and finances, and will provide complete accounting when requested.

#### OVERVIEW

27. The standing committees of the church will consist of the Diaconate, Trustees, Prudential, Christian Education, Missions, Welcoming, and Pastoral Relations.

28. **Common Responsibilities:** Each committee will select its own chairperson; prepare meeting minutes; report to the Church Council on a monthly basis; prepare an annual plan at the beginning of each year, in conjunction with guidance set forth by the Church Council; submit an annual report to be reviewed at the annual meeting; recommend an annual operating budget; and manage its operating budget and any purpose-restricted donations. Meetings will generally be held monthly, or as needed.

29. **Participation requirements:** Members of committees may be committed friends or active or associate members of the church, except the Diaconate, which must consist of active members.



30. **Election of Committee Members:** Committee members will be elected by majority vote of the active members present at the annual meeting or special congregational business meeting. Committee members are elected to serve for a term of two years, with an optional third year. After serving for three years, the member is ineligible for re-election to the same committee for one year. Whenever possible, terms of elected members should be staggered in order allow for existing members to mentor new members. The Church Council nominates committee members and may fill vacancies that occur between annual meetings. The members of the Pastoral Relations Committee are an exception to these election procedures (see paragraph 38).

#### DIACONATE

31. The Diaconate will not exceed eight members. It is the duty of the Diaconate to cooperate with the Pastor in serving the spiritual interests of the church and community; assist in the preparation and administration of the sacraments; and care for the sick, the poor, the sorrowing, the indifferent and the stranger. The Diaconate will arrange for the temporary supply of the pulpit in the absence of the Pastor. The Diaconate will oversee the music director. Together with the Pastor, the Diaconate will have jurisdiction in the use of the Deacons' Fund. The Diaconate will vote on the reception of members into the church and the transfer, restoration and termination of members, and will make an annual survey for this purpose. It will organize a schedule for carrying out the deacons' duties during worship services, including ushering and greeting.

32. A deacon who has served many years may be elected as Deacon Emeritus, and upon such election are entitled for life to all the privileges of an active member of the Diaconate.

#### TRUSTEE COMMITTEE

33. The Trustee Committee will consist of at least three members. It is responsible for the maintenance of all buildings and grounds of the church. They are also responsible for hiring and overseeing the Sexton.

#### PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

34. The Prudential Committee will consist of at least three members. In addition to the Investment Fund Manager, the Church Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will also be ex-officio members. The committee is responsible for managing church finances, with the exception of purpose-restricted donations and memorial gifts managed by other committees or appointees. This includes undertaking an annual stewardship campaign; managing all investments; the periodic audit of financial records; and the appointment and oversight of an Investment Fund Manager and any other professionals that assist in carrying out these duties. Once granted authority by vote of the church, the Prudential Committee has the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer real property. After consultation with other committees and church officers, the Prudential Committee will prepare and recommend, through the Church Council, a long-term financial plan and annual budget, including the salaries of all paid personnel. The committee's written annual report will include all amounts invested, deposited and earned in each account, and they will lead the discussion of fiscal matters at the annual meeting.

#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

35. The Christian Education Committee will consist of at least three members. The committee is a policy-making and policy-approving body responsible for overseeing the Christian education programs of the church school, the youth groups, and nursery care. The committee supports the youth pastor or minister and approves the programs and policies that the youth pastor or minister recommends and subsequently implements. The youth pastor or minister will supervise the church school superintendent if one is appointed. Any professional staff hired for

education or youth ministry will report to the Christian Education Committee and the Pastor, as appropriate. The youth pastor or minister and church school superintendent will be ex-officio members of the Christian Education Committee.

#### MISSIONS COMMITTEE

36. The Missions Committee will consist of at least three members. It promotes consideration of social issues, as related to Christian principles, in the fields of international, governmental, civic, economic, intercultural, interracial, family and school affairs. The ministry will provide social education and initiate social action, while supervising and coordinating the missionary plans and activities for the church. It will choose the organizations and causes to support with budgetary resources and also oversee the collection and disbursement of special missionary offerings.

#### WELCOMING COMMITTEE

37. The Welcoming Committee will consist of at least three members. The committee's purpose is to promote inclusiveness, hospitality and actions that are "beyond typical" in order to extend a generous welcome to newcomers and guests.

#### PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

38. Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) is a standing committee that provides support for the pastor and seeks to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between the pastor and the congregation. Responsibilities include helping the church and pastor deal with conflict, advocating for continuing education and participation in UCC and ecumenical activities, monitoring the evaluation process and advocating for adequate compensation, assisting in start-up with a new pastor and assisting in termination procedures.

39. The PRC will consist of four to six members. Members may be representatives or officers from other committees of the church. Members are nominated by the pastor, church moderator and chairperson of the Diaconate, who will evaluate the PRC annually and together make any membership changes. Members will be approved by vote of the congregation. When the congregation is starting a new pastoral relationship, members of the Search Committee may be appointed to the PRC during the first year as the new pastor becomes acclimated. When the pastor leaves the congregation, that PRC would cease to function.

40. The PRC is accountable to the congregation. The PRC will meet at least quarterly and will make an annual report to the congregation.

41. Upon the imminence or occurrence of a pastoral vacancy, the church, at a congregational business meeting of which due notice has been given as here provided, will appoint a Pastoral Search Committee of five to ten active members. This committee will, after prayerful evaluation of candidates, present to the church its candidate for the vacant office at a regular worship service. See paragraph 18 for additional information.

#### OTHER CHURCH POSITIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

42. From two to six delegates will be elected to serve for a term of one year to represent the church at meetings of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, other local association ecclesiastical councils, and any other meetings where delegates are required. Delegates must be active church members. They will be nominated by the Church Council and elected at annual meeting for a term of one year.

43. In addition to the above-mentioned committees, our church welcomes the creation of additional positions or organizations that may better serve our ministries.

## ARTICLE VII – CHURCH COUNCIL

44. The Church Council consists of the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, the chairpersons or permanent delegates of all standing committees, and two at-large church members. The Moderator serves as chairperson. In the Moderator's absence, the chairperson of the Diaconate will preside at Church Council meetings.

45. The Church Council is responsible for engaging in planning the objectives and goals for the current and ensuing year; coordinating and administering long-range policies and programs authorized by the church at annual or special meetings; assigning projects to officers or committees; nominating officers and committee members; receiving, discussing and making recommendations on reports from officers and committees; appointing ad hoc committees for special tasks; approving and assisting in the presentation of the annual budget; and planning and conducting the annual meeting and any special congregational business meetings. If any vacancy occurs in the committee or officer structure, save that of the Pastor and PRC, the Church Council may fill the vacancy.

## ARTICLE VIII - CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

46. **Annual Meeting:** The purpose of the annual meeting is to provide a regularly scheduled forum to conduct church business requiring the attention of the congregation. The annual meeting will ordinarily be held on the fourth Sunday of January. The primary agenda items are normally to review and approve the church's annual report, comprised of the written reports of all officers and committees; the church's annual budget and other fiscal data; and the candidates for officers and committees. Other church business may also be conducted with appropriate advance notice, as outlined below.

47. **Special congregational business meetings:** Special meetings may be called by the Church Council or upon the written request of fifteen members of the church, who will specify in writing the nature of the business to be transacted. Such meetings will be called when issues require the attention of the congregation outside of the annual meeting timeline, such as when dissolving a pastoral relationship or appointing a Search Committee.

48. **Notification:** Voting members will be provided the following information:

a. Meeting notices will be posted by the Church Clerk near the principle church entrances and included in church publications at least seven days prior to the annual meeting or any special congregational business meeting. The notice will include the time, place, and the type of business to be conducted. Further, the notice will also be mailed or emailed to all voting members when the agenda includes actions that may affect pastoral relations; the sale, mortgage or lease of the church and its land; or the purchase or lease of any additional property.

b. The Church Council will provide the slate of nominees for vacant church positions in writing at least fourteen days prior to the annual meeting.

c. Any amendment to this Constitution will be provided in writing at least fourteen days prior to the annual meeting or any special congregational business meeting.

49. **Voting Requirements:** A majority voice vote of all members present will usually be decisive. The calling or dismissal of a Pastor will require a two-thirds ballot vote of all voting members present at a special congregational

business meeting, and amending this Constitution will require a three-fourths voice or standing vote, as appropriate, at an annual meeting or special congregational business meeting called for that purpose.

## Article IX - Terms and Definitions

50. **Church Officer:** An officer is a church member who has responsibility and authority when representing the corporate body of the church.

51. **Church Year:** The church year will close on the thirty-first day of December in each year.

52. **Committed friends:** Committed friends are non-members who have attended our church on their journey of Christian faith for at least one year and who live up to the expectations described herein (see Article III).

53. **Ex-Officio:** The term ex-officio means “by reason of office.” In this Constitution, ex-officio means that the person so designated is a member of certain specified committees with voice but no vote, excepting the Moderator and the Pastor, who will be ex-officio members of all committees of the church with voice and vote. No ex-officio members, including the Moderator and the Pastor, will be counted in determining the presence of a quorum in any committee, board or ministry meeting except the Church Council.

54. **Minister:** All persons who carry on the work of the church are ministers, meaning “those who serve.” This church acknowledges that all Christian believers can exercise valid ministries. In order to foster a ministry mindset, terms such as “Minister of ...” or “...Ministry” may be used to designate non-ordained staff or teams.

55. **Pastor:** “Pastor” designates someone who is theologically trained and ordained, called by vote of the church. In this document the term “Pastor” refers to the senior pastor.

56. **Quorum:** A quorum is the minimum number of people needed to conduct or vote on church business.

a. Fifteen percent (15%) of voting members will constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at the annual meeting or any special congregational business meeting of the church.

b. Each committee will define its own quorum. With the exception of Church Council, the Moderator and Pastor will not be counted when determining a quorum.