

# Constitution of South Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Newport, New Hampshire, Inc.

Adopted January 1968. Revised January 1976, 1981, 1985, 1987, January and June 1989, May and June 1992, January 1993, January 1995, May 1999, January 2002, January 2012.

## ARTICLE I — NAME

This church shall be called the South Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Newport, New Hampshire, Incorporated.

## ARTICLE II — CHARACTER

### SECTION A: **FREEDOM**

1. The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of full and final control in all its affairs. We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul, and the right of private judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control. We cherish the fellowship of the churches united in associations, conferences, national instrumentalities, agencies and assemblies for cooperation in matters of common concern.

### SECTION B: **FELLOWSHIP**

1. This church also acknowledges and accepts the equally important obligation of mutual consent, courtesy and cooperation involved in the fellowship of the United Church of Christ and pledges itself to safeguard and to share its common aims and work. We declare our fellowship further with all churches that seek to promote the kingdom of God on earth.

### SECTION C: **FAITH AND COVENANTS**

1. Declaring our steadfast allegiance to the faith which our fathers confessed, which from age to age has found its expression in the historic creeds of the church universal and of our communion, and affirming our loyalty to the basic principles of our representative democracy, we hereby set forth the things most surely believed among us concerning faith, polity and fellowship:

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 image, and sets before him the ways 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 the 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 upon 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 in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him 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.

## **ARTICLE III — MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION A: QUALIFICATIONS**

1. This church will welcome any who love God and who propose to live according to the spirit and principles of Jesus Christ, and who are at least twelve years of age.

### **SECTION B: CONDITIONS — Its membership shall consist of:**

1. All who are members in good and regular standing at the time of the adoption of this Constitution.
2. Those who present satisfactory Letters of Transfer from other churches, or confess their Christian faith and receive baptism, when not previously baptized, and have been examined and accepted by vote of the Board of Deacons and publicly assent to the Covenant of this church.

### **SECTION C: DUTIES**

1. Members are expected to be faithful to all duties essential to the Christian life; to attend the services of the church regularly; to give to its support and its benevolences systematically; to share in its organized work; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the church and the winning of others to Christ.

### **SECTION D: RIGHTS**

1. Members in good standing may act and vote in all business meetings of the church, except that in matters of property interests, only those of legal voting age may vote.

### **SECTION E: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

1. A member in good standing may, on his request and by vote of the Board of Deacons, be granted a Letter of Transfer to another church.
2. Members whose addresses are unknown or who for a period of two years, in spite of kindly reminders, have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support, may be transferred to the Inactive List upon the recommendation of the Board of Deacons. From the date of such transfer, such people shall cease to be reported on the active membership roll.
3. The membership of no person shall otherwise be terminated except by a request for a Letter of Transfer from another church or at the member's own request.

### **SECTION F: ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

1. Anyone who wishes to retain membership in another Christian church may, upon approval of the Board of Deacons, become an Associate member of South Congregational Church, with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of members.

## ARTICLE IV — ADMINISTRATION

SECTION A: **OFFICERS** — All officers shall be members or associate members of South Congregational Church.

1. The *Minister* shall be responsible for the spiritual nurture of the congregation. The Minister is called by the church to preach and teach, to administer the rites and sacraments of the church, to work with the people of the congregation so that the church may perform its mission effectively, to exercise pastoral care and community leadership. The Minister shall be, ex officio, a member of the Cabinet, all boards and standing committees. The pastoral relation may be dissolved by either the Minister or the church on three months' written notice of such intention.
2. The *Moderator* of the church shall be elected by the congregation for a one-year term. The Moderator shall serve as chairman of the Cabinet and preside at all regular and special church meetings. The Moderator shall designate an alternate from the membership of the Cabinet to serve when absent. No one shall serve in this office for more than three consecutive years, nor serve as an officer of the church or as a chairperson of any other board or committee.
3. The *Clerk* shall be elected by the congregation annually and shall keep a complete record of all business meetings of the church and the Cabinet. The Clerk shall give legal notice of all meetings when such notice is necessary, and insure that all minutes are filed at the church office.
4. The *Treasurer* shall be elected by the congregation annually and shall receive and disburse all funds of the congregation under the direction of the Cabinet and shall present financial reports to the Cabinet monthly, and an annual financial report of all funds to the congregation at the Annual Meeting of the church. The Treasurer shall also serve as Chairperson of the Board of Finance.
5. The *Financial Secretary* shall be elected by the congregation annually and shall be responsible to the Cabinet. The Financial Secretary shall receive money due or pledged to the church, deposit the same promptly, with notification to the Treasurer, and his or her designee, and shall keep complete records of each contributor's transactions.
6. The *Auditor* shall be elected by the congregation annually and shall audit the accounts of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary, and present a report to the church Cabinet each year.

### SECTION B: **THE CHURCH CABINET**

1. The Church *Cabinet*, between congregational meetings, shall be the primary policy-making body of the church, with execution of such policy left to the boards under the control of the Cabinet. Its function shall be to visualize the entire task of the church, to formulate plans on the general direction of the church's activities and be responsible for all financial and legal affairs of the church, including control of legal documents.
2. The Cabinet shall be comprised of the following, all of whom shall be members or associate members of the church: Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, chairpersons, or designated alternates of the Boards of Christian Education, Christian Outreach, Deacons, Finance, Trustees, and Pastor/Parish Relations; three members-at-large elected by the congregation; and the Minister, ex officio. Of the three at-large members, one shall be elected each year to a three-year term. A member elected at-large shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms of office. These members shall be elected from those not otherwise represented on the cabinet

3. The Cabinet shall not meet less than once every two months. Other meetings may be called by the Moderator, the Minister or by petition of a majority of the Cabinet Members. A majority shall constitute a quorum. Meetings of the Cabinet shall be open to all members of the church.
4. The Cabinet shall provide for the employment of all non-ordained staff, or may delegate authority for the employment of such staff to the appropriate boards.
5. The Cabinet's financial and legal responsibilities shall include:
  - a. acceptance or rejection of the reports of the Treasurer and Auditor
  - b. annual enlistment for support of the church and its programs and additional fund-raising as necessary
  - c. acceptance or rejection of an annual budget as recommended by the Board of Finance and referral of the budget to the Annual Meeting for final approval
  - d. approval or rejection of requests from Boards for unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate
  - e. approval or rejection of recommendation of the Board of Deacons for expenditure of Memorial Funds
  - f. approval or rejection of recommendations of the Board of Finance concerning appointment of a Committee on Endowment and Planned Giving resolution covering investments and use of endowed funds and determination of the appropriate investments for all other church funds
  - g. appointment of persons authorized to sign legal documents
6. The Cabinet shall recommend to the congregation, or reject, proposals by the Board of Trustees to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer real property. All such proposals require a two-thirds vote of the congregation for authorization.
7. The Cabinet shall approve or reject proposals by any Board or Committee for personal property transactions as follows:
  - a. purchase or sales in excess of \$2,000, either individual or aggregate
  - b. leases in excess of three years
  - c. leases requiring annual payments in excess of \$2,000
8. Any vacancies occurring during the year in any office of the church (other than that of Minister), in the Cabinet or on any of the Boards, shall be filled by the Cabinet upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee for the period to the next Mid-Year Meeting, or until their successors are elected.
9. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Minister, the Cabinet shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee which shall interview candidates and make a recommendation to the congregation for filling the office.
10. For the purpose of advising the cabinet in several areas of activity of the church, and administering the various programs and activities of the church, six boards shall be established from the church membership: Christian Education, Christian Outreach, Deacons, Finance, Trustees, and Pastor/Parish Relations.
11. The Cabinet may create or dissolve such other committees as it may from time to time deem necessary.

## ARTICLE V — BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

### SECTION A: **THE BOARD OF DEACONS**

1. The Board of Deacons shall consist of 9 members. Three shall be elected each year for a two-year term. A member shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for the worship and fellowship life of the church, including:
  - a. the conduct of worship services, arrangement for music, flowers, ushering and receiving the offering, and hospitality
  - b. the Service of Holy Communion
  - c. relations with prospective members, discussion with them of the meaning of the commitment of church membership, and establishment of procedures for the reception of prospective members into membership
  - d. provision for pulpit supply during the minister's absence and during any interim between pastorates not provided by the church
  - e. assistance in caring for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, the indifferent and the stranger
  - f. administration of the Deacon's Fund
  - g. all other programs or services relating to the spiritual life of the church and its members
3. The Board of Deacons shall accept and acknowledge all memorial gifts and turn over all receipts to the Financial Secretary for deposit.
4. The Board of Deacons shall recommend to the Cabinet proposals for the expenditure of Memorial Funds.
5. The Board of Deacons shall recommend to the Board of Finance requests for line items for consideration in the annual budget.
6. The Board of Deacons shall monitor expenditures from Pastoral Services and Music. Any unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate, must be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.
7. The Board of Deacons may create from within or outside its own membership such committees and subcommittees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

### SECTION B: **THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

1. The Board of Christian Education shall consist of nine members. Three shall be elected each year to three-year terms. A member shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Christian Education shall provide and maintain an effective program of Christian Education and shall be concerned with the total education program of the church, which shall include Church School, Youth Ministry, Adult Education, Bible Study and discussion groups, and all similar activities which promote the educational program of the church. It shall be responsible for:
  - a. establishing policy and programs for Christian Education

- b. developing curriculum
  - c. recommending and administering budgets
  - d. enlisting and training workers
  - e. operating the church library
  - f. administering Safer Spaces Policies
3. The Board of Christian Education may appoint administration officers and lay leaders as may be required to carry out its responsibilities and may make recommendations to the Cabinet concerning the employment of paid staff.
  4. The Board of Christian Education shall recommend to the Board of Finance line items for consideration in the annual budget.
  5. The Board of Christian Education may also create from within or outside its own membership such committees and sub committees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.
  6. The Board of Christian Education shall monitor all expenses, including all committees formed therein. Any unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate, must be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.

#### **SECTION C: THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH**

1. The Board of Christian Outreach shall consist of nine members. Three shall be elected each year to three-year terms. A member shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Christian Outreach shall be concerned with providing for the church's mission, both local and worldwide. It shall be responsible for:
  - a. keeping generally informed on and identifying social and moral issues or practices of concern to the Christian church
  - b. developing programs or courses of action which are directed toward those issues or practices
  - c. developing programs or courses of action believed reasonable and necessary to fulfill the church's obligation with respect to benevolent and missionary concerns
  - d. preparing the mission goals for consideration by the Cabinet
  - e. preparing the mission goals for review by the Board of Finance to present with the annual operating budget of the church
  - f. all other programs or services relating to effective programs of Christian outreach
3. The Board of Christian Outreach shall recommend to the Board of Finance line items for consideration in the annual budget.
4. The Board of Christian Outreach shall monitor all expenses, including all committees formed therein. Any unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate, must be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.
5. The Board of Christian Outreach may create from within or outside its own membership such committees or subcommittees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

#### SECTION D: **THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of six members. Two shall be elected each year to three-year terms. A member shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, inventory and use of the place of worship. Maintenance and use of the personal property of the church may be delegated by the Board to appropriate other church boards or committees for their church-related purposes. The Board shall maintain an inventory of all personal property so delegated.
3. The Board of Trustees shall recommend to the Cabinet all proposals to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any real property of the church.
4. The Board of Trustees may buy, sell or lease personal property of the church except that transactions in excess of limits shown below must be presented to the Cabinet for prior approval.
  - a. purchases or sales in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate
  - b. leases in excess of three years
  - c. leases requiring annual payments in excess of \$2,000
5. The Board of Trustees shall recommend to the Board of Finance line items for consideration in the annual budget.
6. The Board of Trustees shall monitor expenditures for Parish Service, Church and Parsonage. Any unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate, must be presented to the Cabinet for prior approval.
7. The Board of Trustees may create from within or outside its own membership such committees or subcommittees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

#### SECTION E: **BOARD OF FINANCE**

1. The Board of Finance shall consist of six members, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, and four members at large. The members at large shall be elected to three-year terms and shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Finance shall be responsible for the oversight of the financial affairs of the church and reporting to the Cabinet. The Board shall meet at least once a quarter.
3. The Board of Finance shall, after considering the budget requests of other boards, prepare the annual budget and recommend it to the Cabinet for approval. The Cabinet shall then recommend the budget to the church membership for approval at the Annual Meeting.
4. The Treasurer shall monitor and review the income and expenses of the church monthly, and shall recommend action to the Cabinet whenever appropriate.
5. The Board of Finance shall recommend to the Cabinet prudent investments and shall implement them after Cabinet approval.
6. The Board of Finance may create from within or outside its membership such committees or subcommittees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

## SECTION F: **BOARD OF PASTOR/PARISH RELATIONS**

1. The Board of Pastor/Parish Relations shall consist of five members. Members are elected to a term of three years and shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two full terms in office.
2. The Board of Pastor/Parish Relations is an advisory Board responsible for promoting the effectiveness of our church's mission through support and maintenance of healthy relationships between the Pastor and the congregation.
3. The Board of Pastor/Parish Relations shall:
  - a. Utilize tools such as the *Statement of Mission, Goals and Objectives; Position Descriptions*; and the *Covenant of Christ-Led Behavior* to remain focused and promote positive relationships.
  - b. Interpret roles, functions and needs of the Pastor to the Cabinet and congregation.
  - c. Promote open communication between the congregation and Pastor.
  - d. Create a safe and healthy environment for mediation in the event of conflicts.

## SECTION G: **THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

1. The Nominating Committee shall consist of six members, two elected each year for three-year terms. A member shall be ineligible to serve one year after serving two successive full terms in office.
2. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Committee to present to the Mid-Year Meeting of the church a slate of officers and Board members, including the Nominating Committee.
3. The Nominating Committee shall also present to the Cabinet nominations to fill vacancies that may occur during the year.
4. The work of the Nominating Committee shall in no way limit the right of any member of the congregation to make nominations from the floor at the Mid-Year Meetings.

## ARTICLE VI — ORGANIZATIONS

This church regards as integral parts of itself all organizations formed for the development of any part of its life and work, and the Cabinet shall have general oversight of all such organizations; all organizations shall make progress reports at the Annual and Mid-Year Meetings.

## ARTICLE VII — MEETINGS

### SECTION A: **WORSHIP**

1. Public Worship shall be held each week on the Lord's Day and at such other times as may seem advisable.
2. The Lord's Supper shall be observed in accordance with a schedule determined by the Board of Deacons.



## SECTION B: BUSINESS

1. The Annual Meeting shall be held on the fourth Thursday in January, or at such other date as the Cabinet shall determine, to transact business and adopt plans for the new year.
2. The Mid-Year Meeting shall be held on the third Thursday in May or at such other date as the Cabinet shall determine, for the purpose of electing officers and board members and to transact other appropriate business.
3. Special meetings of the church may be called by the Minister or the Clerk on the request of the Cabinet or any board, or on the written request of any five members specifying the object thereof, on fifteen days written notice. Such notice shall be read on the two successive Sundays preceding the meeting date.
4. A quorum at any meeting of the church shall consist of the greater of thirty voting members or 10% of the voting membership.
5. A majority vote of the members shall ordinarily be decisive, except as otherwise provided in this Constitution. The calling of a minister, to be done usually upon the recommendation of not less than two-thirds of the Pastoral Search Committee, shall require two-thirds vote of all voting members present at a meeting especially called for this purpose.

## SECTION C: CONGREGATION

1. Unless otherwise stated in this constitution, many Church-wide commitments must be approved by the congregation. These include substantive additions to or changes to Church policies, resolutions and organizational structure. Among these are amendments to this constitution, approval of pastor calls, cabinet memberships, annual budgets, key resolutions governing the management of endowment and memorial funds, and major fund raising programs involving the use of restricted capital reserves and/or long term debt obligations.

## ARTICLE VIII — DISSOLUTION

Any action to dissolve the Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of eligible voting members of the Church present at a meeting called to specifically consider such action. Written notice shall be issued to all members eligible to vote in accordance with this constitution. If the Church at its own option shall cease to exist, all real and personal property will be redistributed in a manner consistent with New Hampshire law at the discretion of the congregation.

## ARTICLE IX — AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may, on the motion of the Cabinet or any Board, or by petition by five members, be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any Annual Meeting of the church, or at a meeting especially called for that purpose, said proposed amendment being inserted in the Call and said proposed change having been laid before the church in writing at a special meeting not less than one month before the meeting where action will take place.