

# 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, June 2023.

## 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 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 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.

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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 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 your 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.

### 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** — The church 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 their 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. Membership shall be terminated only upon a request for transfer initiated by another church, or at the member's own request, or upon their decease.

#### 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, to exercise pastoral care and community leadership, and perform all such duties specified in the *Pastoral Call Agreement*. The Minister shall be, ex officio, a member of the Cabinet, all boards and standing committees.
2. The *Moderator* of the church shall be elected by the congregation annually. 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 oversee and direct the receipt and disbursement of funds under the direction of the Cabinet and shall present financial reports to the Cabinet monthly, and prepare an annual financial report of funds for 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, pledged, or donated to the church, deposit the same promptly, with notification to the Treasurer or designee, and shall keep complete records of each contributor's transactions.

#### SECTION B: 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 to conduct all financial and legal affairs of the church.
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, Trustees, and Pastor/Parish

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- 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 church members.
  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
    - b. annual enlistment for support of the church and its programs and additional fundraising 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 investments and use of endowed funds
    - g. appointment of persons authorized to sign legal documents
  6. The Cabinet shall consider any proposals to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer real property on behalf of the church; accepted proposals shall then require congregational approval by at least two-thirds of voting members participating in a special meeting called for this purpose.
  7. The Cabinet shall approve or reject proposals by any Board or Committee for 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. In order to fill vacancies other than minister, the Cabinet may appoint interim officers, board or committee members to serve until they (or their successors) are nominated and elected at the next meeting of the congregation.
  9. In order to fill a ministerial vacancy, the Cabinet shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee which shall review candidates, conduct interviews, and recommend a new minister for congregational approval.
  10. For the purpose of advising the Cabinet and administering the 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 deem necessary.

## ARTICLE V — BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

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

1. The Board of Deacons shall consist of nine members; three shall be elected each year for a two-year term. A member shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing three successive 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 related to worship, music, and pastoral services. 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 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: **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 successive 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:

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- 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 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 prior approval.
  6. The Board of Christian Education may also create from within or outside its own membership such committees and subcommittees as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

### SECTION C: **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 successive 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 budget for consideration by the Cabinet
  - e. preparing the mission budget 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 related expenses and outlays, including those of all committees formed therein. Any unbudgeted expenditures in excess of \$2,000, either individual or in aggregate, must be presented to the Cabinet for prior approval.
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: 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 successive full terms in office.
2. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for the care and maintenance of church buildings, grounds, furnishings and equipment. Maintenance and use of church property may be delegated by the Board to other church boards or committees for church-related purposes.
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 church property and equipment with prior Cabinet approval for items exceeding the limits stated below:
  - 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 related to the operation and maintenance of the 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 successive 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.
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 Board of Finance shall recommend to the Cabinet prudent investments and shall implement them after Cabinet approval.
5. 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**

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1. The Board of Pastor/Parish Relations shall consist of five members proposed by the pastor. Members are elected to a term of three years and shall be ineligible to serve for one year after completing two successive 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, Covenant of Christ-Led Behavior*; and *Pastoral Call Agreement* 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: **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**

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1. The Annual Meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday 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 Sunday 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, upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee, shall require approval by at least two-thirds of voting members participating in a special meeting called for this purpose.

### SECTION C: CONGREGATION

1. Unless otherwise stated in this constitution, any church-wide commitments must be approved by the congregation. These include substantive alterations 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 fundraising 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 vote of eligible voting members of the Church participating 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

By motion of the Cabinet or any Board, or by petition by five or more members, this Constitution may be amended with the approval of at least two-thirds of voting members participating at the Annual Meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose; proposed amendments must be laid before the church membership for review not less than thirty days before the vote.