

BYLAWS OF THE FIRST PARISH CHURCH (CONGREGATIONAL)  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
SOMERSWORTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

ARTICLE I

Name

This church shall be called "FIRST PARISH UNITED CHURCH OF Christ(CONGREGATIONAL)," in Somersworth, New Hampshire.

An incorporated body under the laws of the State of New Hampshire, this church will undertake to manage its own business affairs

Article II

Purpose

The avowed purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal, to render loving service toward the whole human family, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

ARTICLE III covenant and

Statement of Faith

The basis for our fellowship is expressed in the covenant of our church.

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of God's kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God and invoking God's blessing solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in Christian love.

And this we do depending upon the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy spirit.

The following Statement of Faith is set forth as a summary of Christian beliefs widely shared in our fellowship:

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

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

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

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

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

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

God calls us into the Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship...to be servants in the service of the whole human family...to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil...to share in Christ's baptism and eat at His table...to join Him in His passion and victory.

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

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

#### ARTICLE IV

##### Policy

We believe in the freedom and the responsibility of the individual soul and the right of private judgment. The government of this church shall be vested in its members and it shall be independent of all ecclesiastical control. We cherish the fellowship of the churches, united in district, state, national and international bodies, for counsel and cooperation in matters of common concern. We gladly acknowledge our membership in the Carroll-Strafford Association of the United Church of Christ and in the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ.

While affirming the liberty of our church and the validity of our ministry, we hold to the unity and universality of the Church of Christ and will unite with all its branches in hearty cooperation, and will earnestly seek, so far as in us lies, that the prayer of our Lord for His disciples may be answered, "That they may all be one."

ARTICLE V  
Membership

- A. Qualifications: Our membership shall consist of persons who:
1. Manifest a sincere purpose to lead a Christian life and who assent to the Covenant.
  2. This church is a Christian fellowship and will continue to welcome into its membership all persons of Christian faith, regardless of race, national origin or previous religious experiences.
- B. Conditions: The members of this church shall consist of those who have been baptized, been recommended by the Diaconate, and have been received by Confirmation, Confession of Faith, Reaffirmation of Faith or satisfactory letter of transfer from other churches.
- C. Reception: Proposed members shall be received at a regular worship service or at such other time or in such manner as the Diaconate may determine.
- D. Types of Members: There shall be the following categories of members:
1. Active Members are those who to the best of their abilities attend the services of the church; contribute regularly to its financial support and its benevolence; share in its activities; and seek diligently and prayerfully the spiritual welfare of the whole church. Active members may act and vote on all the affairs of the church and may be elected or appointed to serve on the Boards and standing Committees of the church. They may introduce business and speak in favor of or in opposition to any debatable question and are entitled to recognition and the courteous attention of every other member.
  2. Inactive Members are those who have been suspended from the Active List, because of their indifference to the obligations of Active Membership, upon the decision of the Diaconate. Inactive membership is defined as those members who fail to attend the church for worship and/or enter into its activities and/or support the financial program of the church for a period of two (2) years. Inactive members may not act or vote in the affairs of the church. This shall not include absent students, members of the Armed Forces and the infirm, economic hardship situations (at the discretion of the minister) and family situations where home care of invalids or children may effectively prevent compliance with membership requirements.



E. Termination: Membership may be terminated by decision of the Diaconate in any of the following manners:

1. Dismission - Request of a member for letter to another church. Letters of transfer shall be valid for a period of one year. If a letter of Dismission is not used within that period of time the name of the member shall be placed on the Inactive List.
2. Withdrawal - If after due conference and deliberation a member is insistent in a request for withdrawal, their name shall be removed from the Membership List by decision of the Diaconate.
3. Inactivity - Members whose addresses have been long unknown, or who for a period of two (2) years, in spite of kindly reminders, have not communicated with the church, its Pastor, or Clerk, or contributed to its support, because of their indifference, shall be transferred to the Inactive List upon decision of the Diaconate and so notified by letter to the last known address. From the date of such transfer the person shall cease to be reported on the Active Membership List.

F. Restoration: Persons on the Inactive List may be returned to the Active List upon decision of the Diaconate.

#### ARTICLE VI Organization

All Church responsibilities are to be divided among the officers and committees, each of which is to have jurisdiction within its sphere of concern as directed by the congregation and the by-laws.

The Officers of the Church shall be:

Pastor  
Moderator  
Vice Moderator  
Clerk  
Assistant Treasurer  
Auditor

The Committees of the Church shall be:

Church Council  
Diaconate  
Board of Trustees  
Christian Education Committee  
Mission Committee

Music committee  
 Flower committee  
 Library-Resource Committee  
 Stewardship committee  
 Delegates  
 Memorial Committee  
 Special Committee formed for specific tasks  
 Auxiliary Groups

ARTICLE VII  
Officers

A. Pastor

1. The pastor shall be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the parish: serving as pastor and teacher, providing leadership of public worship, administering the sacraments, and performing such pastoral and administrative duties as are required and opportunities afford.

The pastor shall serve the Christian interests of the church and community, introduce new members into the life of the church and care for the members and friends of the church in need.

2. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all Committees and make a report of the year's work at the Annual Meeting.
3. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a new pastor is to be searched for and recommended by an appointed Search
4. The church may at any time, by a majority vote of church members present at a meeting for this purpose, request the resignation of the pastor with the expectation that it will be presented within ninety (90) days. In a like manner, the pastor shall give ninety (90) days' notice in case he/she wishes to leave of their own volition. This time may be shortened by mutual consent. When a vacancy occurs, it shall be reported to the New Hampshire Conference, whose counsel shall be sought in the pastoral search process.
5. When a new pastor is called, he/she will be expected to become a member of the Church at the first opportunity.

B. Moderator

1. The Moderator will preside over all sessions of the Church, including: Church council Meetings, Annual Meeting and all Special Church Meetings.

2. The Moderator will be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a term of one (1) year and may be re-elected as many times as desired.

C. Vice-Moderator

1. The Vice-Moderator will serve in the absence of the Moderator.
2. The Vice-Moderator will ordinarily be the Pastor.

D. Clerk

1. The Church Clerk will keep a record of all transactions of the Church Council, the Annual Meeting and any other Special Church Meetings that may occur.
2. The Clerk will keep an up-to-date register of church members with dates of their reception or removal. When requested the Clerk shall issue letters of. dismissal on behalf of church members.
3. The Clerk will keep a record of all Baptisms administered by the Church.
4. The Clerk shall give a legal notice of all Annual and Special Meetings of the Church.
5. The Clerk will be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a term of one (1) year and may be re-elected as many times as desired.

E. Treasurer

1. The Treasurer shall collect and receive all the income and revenues of the Church. He/she shall be responsible to draw checks for all financial obligations of the \*Church as authorized by the Board of Trustees out of those regular or special funds that are under his/her control."
2. The Treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. He/she shall be expected at the meeting of the Committee, and at the regular monthly meeting of the Church Council and be prepared to present a financial statement of the month just past.
3. The Treasurer shall have the custody and safekeeping of all corporate documents of the Church. These shall be delivered out of his/her custody only by order of the Board of Trustees.
4. The Church shall execute a surety bond on the Treasurer's behalf in an amount to cover negotiable assets.

5. At the Annual Meeting the Treasurer shall present to the congregation a complete financial report of the past year.
6. The Treasurer shall be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a term of one (1) year, and may be re-elected as many times as desired.

F. Assistant Treasurer

1. For the convenience of the Church and the individual, the Assistant Treasurer shall keep a record of all stewardship giving. He/she shall deposit in the name of the Church all funds of the Church in such bank or banks approved by the Board of Trustees.
2. Other duties of the Assistant Treasurer shall be determined by the needs of the Church Treasurer.
3. The Church shall execute a surety bond on the Assistant Treasurer's behalf in an amount to cover negotiable assets. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a term of one (1) year and may be re-elected as many times as desired.

G. Auditor

1. The Auditor shall verify all accounts of the Church, its committees and Groups, and shall report in writing at each Annual Meeting the results of said audit/s.
2. The Auditor shall be elected for a term of one (1) year and may be re-elected as many times as desired.

ARTICLE VIII  
Committees

A. The Church Council

1. It shall be the function of the Church council to visualize the entire task of the Church. The council shall meet on a regular basis to hear the report of each Committee's, activities and plans.
2. The Church council shall consist of: The Pastor, all officers and the heads of all active committees as designated in Article VI. All meetings of the council shall be opened to any individual member of the Church.
3. The Church Council shall assume the duties of nominating all Committee appointments for presentation at Annual meeting and filling such vacancies as may occur between Annual Meetings.
4. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the Church Council shall appoint a Search Committee, made up of the four members of



the present Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and at least six more active members of the church to seek and recommend a new pastor.

#### B. The Diaconate

1. The Diaconate shall consist of nine (9) members of the Church. The regular term of office shall be three (3) years, with three (3) new members of the Diaconate being elected at each Annual Meeting. Members of the Diaconate may not serve consecutive terms.
2. The Senior members of the Diaconate shall be those persons presently serving the third year of their terms. They shall represent the Diaconate at Church Council Meetings.
3. The duties of the Diaconate shall include: cooperation with the pastor in meeting the spiritual needs of the congregation and community; assist in the preparation and administration of the Sacraments; be in charge of the "visitors book"; care for the sick, bereaved, poor, the inactive member, and greet the stranger; supervise and regulate the coffee and fellowship time; supervise visits to shut-ins on special occasions; send cards in the event of sickness or death in Church Families; arrange transportation to the church when necessary; and provide greeters at each Church service.
4. The Diaconate shall have jurisdiction over sanctuary activities.
5. The Diaconate shall make a bi-annual survey of the Church roll, determine active and inactive membership status and report results to the Church Clerk.
6. The Diaconate shall pass on all candidates for membership and help in the receiving and assimilating of new members into the congregation.
7. The Diaconate shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in case of a vacancy or in the absence of the pastor.
8. The Diaconate shall report regularly to the Church Council and shall submit a report to the Church at Annual Meeting.

#### C. Board of Trustees

1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of six (6) members of the Church, with two (2) members being elected at each Annual Meeting to serve a three (3) year term.
2. The Board of Trustees shall have two sub-committees, these being Stewardship & Finance and Building & Properties. Each of the two sub-committees shall have three (3) persons. Of the two-people elected at each Annual Meeting, one will serve on each sub-committee. The person serving in the third year

of their term shall Chair that sub-committee. The Board of Trustees shall elect its own Chairman each year.

3. Within the Board of Trustees, the sub-committees will be as follows:

- a. Stewardship & Finance: this sub-committee shall have the general charge of finances and shall authorize and direct the payment of monies under the control of the Board of Trustees. This sub-committee shall also provide for the proper auditing of the Church accounts prior to the Annual Meeting; budgeting procedures that include input from all committees; and will work closely with the stewardship committee; and include periodic reporting of the financial well-being of the Church.
- b. Building & Properties: this sub-committee is responsible for the care and maintenance of all Church property. The Building & Properties sub-committee shall have the authority to contract for needed services upon approval of the Board of Trustees. Normally, this sub-committee will oversee repairs and be pro-active in the upkeep of the building and grounds and contents of the Church itself.
- c. It is recognized that for the well-being of the Church the Board of Trustees will need to meet on a regular basis. Interaction between the Chairmen will be important for each sub-committee to function at its best.

4. The Board of Trustees shall appoint annually a Stewardship for the purpose of communicating the prepared budget and lifting up the focus of making a covenant commitment for the financial support of the Church and conveying the on-going importance of Christian stewardship. An effort will be made to have a representation from a cross-section of Church life.
5. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for all matters concerning the employment of staff personnel and contracted services that may be necessary to perform the administrative and maintenance work of the Church.
6. The Board of Trustees shall encourage and foster in conversation with the other committees of the Church, the long-range planning for facilities, and the financial needs that make the plans a reality.
7. The Board of Trustees shall report regularly to the Church council and submit a report to the Church at Annual Meeting.

#### D. Christian Education Committee

1. The Christian Education Committee shall consist of six (6) members, three of whom shall be elected annually to serve two (2) year terms. The Christian Education Committee Chairperson and Treasurer shall be selected internally from the Committee members.



2. The Christian Education committee shall have the supervision and direction of the educational work of the Church.
  - a. It shall have jurisdiction over the Cradle Roll, Nursery, Church School and Vacation Bible School with full power to appoint and remove Teachers.
  - b. It shall be responsible for the direction of the Young People's programs and ministry, and the appointment of Youth Group advisors.
  - c. It shall be responsible for providing educational opportunities for the adults in the Church through an active "group life".
3. The Christian Education Committee may maintain a separate treasury for its own expenses and programming.
4. The Christian Education Committee shall report regularly to the Church Council and shall submit a report to the Church at Annual Meeting.

E. Mission Committee

1. The Mission Committee shall be comprised of those persons with an active interest in the work of the church in the world. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be appointed internally from among the members.
2. The Mission committee shall have the prime responsibility for the education and promotion of benevolence giving for our local, homeland and worldwide ministries.
3. The Mission Committee shall present a suggested budget for benevolence giving at the proper time each year.
4. The Mission committee shall report regularly to the Church council and shall submit a report to the Church at Annual Meeting.

F. Music Committee

1. The Music Committee shall consist of three (3) persons, one of whom shall be elected annually to serve a three (3) year term, The Organist and choir Director shall be ex-officio members of the Committee.
2. The Music committee shall have charge over all matters pertaining to the music of the church. The committee shall work closely with the Pastor, Choir Director and Organist to bring meaningful and integrated music to the life of our Church.

3. In the event of a vacancy in the position of Choir Director or Organist, it shall be the responsibility of the Committee to search for and select a replacement.
- 4 The Music committee shall report regularly to the Church council and shall submit a report to the Church at Annual Meeting.

G. Flower Committee

1. The Flower committee shall arrange to have flowers present on the altar at worship services.
2. The Flower committee shall offer regularly the opportunity for memorial flowers to be given by members of the Church family.
3. The Flower Committee shall supervise all decoration of the Church during special seasons.

H. Library Resource Committee

1. The Library Resource Committee shall have the responsibility of maintaining and enlarging the Church library.

I. Stewardship Committee

1. The Stewardship Committee shall consist of four to six members, appointed by the Board of Trustees and the Pastor.
2. The Stewardship Committee shall have the responsibility of understanding the meaning of Christian Stewardship and conveying that message to the members of the Church family.
3. The Committee shall be responsible for raising the funds necessary to meet the financial needs of the Church.

J. Delegates

1. The appropriate number of delegates (as determined by Conference and Association guidelines) shall represent the Church at Association and Conference meetings. Delegates will be chosen by the Church Council prior to the Annual Meeting to serve a term of one (1) year.
2. It shall be the responsibility of the delegates to share the information and guidance gathered at the attended meetings.

K. Memorial Committee

1. The Memorial Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees, and shall meet with a •Senior Deacon, representative of the Board of Trustees and the Pastor at least two (2) times a year to review the Memorial Funds received and to discuss possible direction for use of such funds.

2. The Memorial Committee shall have responsibility for the reception and care of memorial gifts given to the Church until the time of their designated use.
3. The Memorial committee shall report regularly to the Board of Trustees and submit a report to the Church at the Annual Meeting.

#### L. Pastor-Parish Relations

1. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) shall consist of four (4) persons, one of whom shall be elected annually to serve a four (4) year term, not to exceed two (2) consecutive terms. Active church members are nominated by the PPRC, via the Church Council and elected at the Annual Meeting. An effort will be made to have a representation from a cross-section of church life.
2. The PPRC is responsible to confer and counsel with the pastor on all matters relating to conditions which affect the relationship between parish and pastor. The PPRC represents the place in which personal, family, and professional concerns may be raised in a friendly, supportive and confidential atmosphere.
3. Committee members will be free to share fully within the committee, about the relationship between pastor and parish, raising concerns, suggesting possible areas of growth, and being the channel for feedback from the wider Church and community. The committee will be aware of the resources for pastoral and congregational support at the Association, Conference and Denominational levels.
4. The Pastor shall have the freedom to lift in an open and honest fashion relational issues and concerns, the sharing of her/his vision for the church and suggesting possible areas of growth for both the committee and the church at large.
5. The committee members shall encourage mutual communications, and thus, represent a communications link between the congregation and the pastor.
6. The person who is serving in their fourth year on the committee will serve as the Chairperson for the year. The Chairperson facilitates the quarterly meetings, sets the agenda in consultation with the pastor and leads the meeting. The Chairperson will normally report to the Church Council and prepare the Annual Report of the committee for the Annual Meeting.
7. The PPRC does an on-going evaluation of the pastor based on previously set goals and facilitates the setting of future goals. Based on the evaluation process, salary recommendations will be presented to the Board of Trustees

prior to the preparation of the Annual Budget for the next year.

8. Should a pastoral vacancy occur, the PPRC will become members of the Search Committee and continue all duties fulfilling individual terms.

M. Special Committees

1. As dictated in the by-laws, the Church may appoint as needed special, Task committees to serve for a specified purpose or length of time.

N. Auxiliary Groups

1. All organizations connected with the Church, drawing upon our membership and facilities, are regarded as integral parts of the Church. The Church will endeavor to support such efforts and will expect a report from each at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE IX  
Meetings

A. For Worship

1. Public services of worship shall be held every Sunday, and on other occasions as the Church or Diaconate shall determine.
2. Holy Communion shall be celebrated monthly.

B. For Business

1. Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held in the month of January (the date and time to be determined by the Church Council) at which time Annual reports shall be presented, officers and committee members elected, and such other business transacted as may be found necessary or authorized by the by-laws.

The Annual Meeting shall be called by the Clerk and posted at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting date e Notice of the meeting shall also be given during the two worship services prior to the meeting date.

2. Special Meetings

- a. The Pastor shall, when requested by the Church council, call from the pulpit, a special business meeting, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice. The notice shall be given, and printed in the bulletin, on the Sunday at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting date.
- b. Special meetings having to do with the welfare of the Church as a whole shall be called by the Clerk-upon the



written request of at least ten (10) members. The notice, clearly stating the object of the meeting shall be given, and printed in the bulletin, on the Sunday at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting date.

3. Quorum: At the Annual and all special meetings of the Church, the presence of twenty (20) members shall be necessary for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE X

Endowment Policy and Permanent Trustees

A. Endowment Policy

1. The New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be the trustee of all endowment funds of the Church, unless otherwise specified by the donor.
  - a. When an endowment is acquired by legacy, donation or vote of the Church, the Board of Trustees shall see that the principal is invested with the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, being placed in the "First Parish Church of Somersworth, N.H. consolidated Trust Fund. The Conference will be expected to report the status and earnings of the fund on at least an annual basis.
  - b. The Board of Trustees shall file with the Clerk all records concerning the amount, intent and restrictions of each endowment fund.
  - c. The Board of Trustees shall report on the status of the endowment funds at each Annual Meeting.

B. Permanent Trustee

1. Should the First Parish United Church of Christ, (Congregational) in Somersworth, New Hampshire cease to exist or become so depleted that it does not function as an active church in the maintenance of its services of worship and program of activities for a period of three (3) years, the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, representing the United Church of Christ congregations of the state, shall succeed to all rights and titles of the church in its property and funds.
  - a. Under the process of dissolution the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ shall have the right to dispose of the Church's real estate, and to use the proceeds, together with the endowment funds of the Church to form the First Parish Church of Somersworth, NH. Fund. This fund will then be administered by the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, as nearly as possible in keeping with the intent of the donors, for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

ARTICLE XI  
Amendments

These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any Annual Meeting of the Church, or at any Special Meeting called for that purpose, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call.

No change shall be made in Articles II, III, IV, X or XI except at an Annual Meeting and by a two-thirds vote of the members, in full and active standing, present and entitled to vote. Proposed changes to these articles must be placed before the Church, in writing, at a Business Meeting at least one month prior to the meeting date and read from the pulpit on the Sunday previous to the meeting.

By-laws revised: January 1994