

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 217
Harford, Pennsylvania 18823-0217

**CONSTITUTION
&
BY-LAWS**



**Revised 1983
Including Amendments through January 2004**

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Constitution

ARTICLE I — NAME

The name of this church shall be First Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, located in the Village of Harford, Township of Harford, County of Susquehanna, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, successor to the Church of Christ in Nine Partners.

ARTICLE II — PURPOSE

The avowed purpose of this congregation shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the Sacraments; to realize Christian Fellowship and unity within this congregation and the Church Universal; to render loving service toward all humanity and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

ARTICLE III — COVENANT

We covenant and resolve, by the grace of God assisting us, to live and walk together as members of Christ's Church, to conform our lives to His teachings, and to willingly accept the full responsibilities and duties of active membership.

We pledge ourselves to regular participation in the worship of God in the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and community and to sincerely endeavor to apply the teachings of Jesus to all human relationships.

ARTICLE IV — FAITH

The articles of faith of this congregation shall be those contained in the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ as well as those contained in the ancient creeds of the Church.

ARTICLE V — MEMBERSHIP

A. BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP

1. Any person who has received Christian Baptism is a member of the Church
2. Baptized persons who are not yet communicant members shall be enrolled as unconfirmed members. Unconfirmed members shall be instructed in the Christian way and the standards of faith and practice of this local congregation.

B. COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

1. A Communicant Member is one who has been received into full communion by public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, through one of the following means:
 - a. The Rite of Confirmation
 - i. Classes should be conducted by Pastor only due to the importance of the matter to be discussed.
 - ii. The 2 year course is to be condensed as Pastor sees fit.
 - iii. Confirmands must be 7th grade or more.
 - iv. Attendance is extremely important and therefore mandatory. Parents must accept some of the responsibility in this matter. Sickness and death in the family are valid excuses for absence.
 - v. Any material missed due to absence must be made up at convenience of Pastor.
 - vi. Classes will run from Thanksgiving to Palm Sunday or as desired by Pastor.
 - vii. Classes will be during Sunday School or at a time designated by Pastor.
 - viii. Eligibility for the right of confirmation is to be determined by the Pastor and approved by the Church Council.
 - b. Confession of Faith (signified by baptism)
 - c. Letter of Transfer

- d. Reaffirmation or reprofession of Faith.
2. It is understood that all who apply for membership as communicant members shall have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.
3. It is presupposed that all members of the congregation shall have received adequate instruction and training in practices and beliefs of this congregation prior to acceptance.

C. DUTIES OF COMMUNICANT MEMBERS

1. Recognizing the nature of the Church as the People of God in mission, of which the local congregation is a part, members of the church should live sober, righteous and godly lives; labor faithfully to bring others to Christ and take an active part in the life and work of this congregation.
2. Active relationship to the church shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:
 - a. Regular attendance at divine worship
 - b. Devout use of the Holy Sacraments and Rite of the Church
 - c. Diligent observance of private devotions
 - d. Prayerfully considered financial and moral support to the church and her benevolent undertakings
 - e. Untiring zeal to bringing the unchurched under her influence
 - f. Regular exercise of the right and duty to voice and vote in all congregational and other meetings
 - g. Faithfully assuming such offices as the congregation may confer
 - h. Parents shall provide (in cooperation with the Board of Religious Education) adequate Christian training for their whole household and shall give due heed to the fulfillment of the Baptismal vows.

D. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

An Associate Membership shall be extended to any person requesting same from the Board of Deacons and approved by the Church Council. This person shall be one

who publicly affirms the responsibilities and duties of membership while in residence.

E. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. The names of deceased members shall be removed from the roll.
2. Persons in good standing shall be entitled to obtain a letter of transfer to another Christian congregation. Said letter shall be granted upon the request of the receiving congregation, with the knowledge of the person making the request.
3. If a member unites with another congregation without receiving a letter of transfer, upon receiving adequate notice thereof, the Board of Deacons shall remove such name from the church roll.
4. A member's name shall be removed from the roll as per his or her own request. This request shall be in writing and delivered to the Board of Deacons. Such action shall be approved by the Church Council.

ARTICLE VI — GOVERNMENT

A. THE CONGREGATION AND THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

We, the successors to the subscribers of the Charter of this Church, shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and we shall sustain that covenant relationship described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ adopted July 4, 1961, relating to local churches.

1. The government of this congregation is vested in its membership, who shall exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania relating to non-profit organizations.
2. All responsibility for the life, work and mission of the church, shall ultimately rest in the hands of the congregation.
3. Responsibilities for specific and particular areas of endeavor may be delegated by the congregation to duly elected and/or appointed officers and committees as hereinafter set forth. Unless specifically delegated, jurisdiction in any given matter shall remain in the hands of the congregation.
4. There shall be an Annual Congregational Meeting held in the month of January. The date is to be determined at the October Council meeting by the

Treasurer, the Financial Secretary and the Council. Written reports shall be mailed to every member ten days previous to the meeting.

5. At the Annual Congregational Meeting, congregational officers shall be elected for the next year, consisting of; Moderator, Church Clerk, Financial Secretary, Church Treasurer, Historian, Deacons (as required), Trustees (as required), and any such other officers as may be determined.
6. A Nominating Committee shall make nominations for all officers and boards to be elected at the Annual Congregational Meeting. A written report for their proposed slate shall be included with all other reports to the congregation one week prior to the Annual Meeting. Nominations will be accepted from the floor, with the approval of those being nominated.
7. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Church Council, the Pastor, or by a petition to the Moderator, signed by not less than 5 percent of the membership. The Moderator shall call such meetings within three weeks from receipt of the petition and adequate notice of such meeting shall be sent to the membership by the Church Clerk.

B. CHURCH COUNCIL

1. To effectively carry out and administer the work of the congregation in an orderly fashion, the Church Council shall meet monthly for the transaction of such business as may properly come before it.
2. The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, Moderator, Church Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Historian, and the Chairpersons or delegates from each of the following: Board of Trustees, Board of Deacons, Board of Religious Education, Stewardship Committee, Missionary Society, Willing Workers, Choir, Youth Fellowship, and any other organization duly recognized by the congregation.
3. In managing the general affairs of the congregation, the Church Council shall transact the business of the church, make provision for the determining and raising of the current and benevolent budgets of the congregation, make provision for the distribution of funds, maintain a complete and accurate record of its proceedings and all monies received and expenditures of monies for congregational and benevolent purposes. For all un-budgeted expenditures, or any expenditure in excess of the annual budget, the Church Council shall approve such bill before payment.
4. The Church Council shall exercise spiritual supervision of the entire congregation.

5. The Church Council shall have jurisdiction and oversight of the congregation and all its organizations.
6. The Church Council shall appoint such committees and task forces as it may deem necessary for the accomplishment of its work.

C. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1. A Board of Trustees consisting of six members shall be elected from the membership of the congregation, two of whom shall be elected at each Annual Congregational Meeting and serve a term of three years. The Nominating Committee shall seek the best possible persons for the vacancies keeping in mind that diversity is desirable.
2. The Church Treasurer shall serve ex-officio. The Board shall elect its own officers.
3. The Board of Trustees shall have the responsibility for the upkeep and the maintenance of the real property (Church Building, Lecture Hall, Parsonage) of the congregation.
4. The Board of Trustees shall provide adequate insurance coverage for protecting the interests of the membership.
5. The Board of Trustees shall keep records of all business transactions and meetings and report to the Church Council each month and to the membership at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

D. BOARD OF DEACONS

1. A Board of deacons consisting of nine members shall be elected from the membership on the congregation, three of whom shall be elected at each Annual Congregational Meeting and serve a term of three years. The Nominating Committee shall seek the best possible persons for the vacancies keeping in mind that diversity is desirable.
2. The Church Clerk shall serve ex-officio.
3. A vice chairperson shall be elected by the members at the first regular meeting.

4. The Board of Deacons shall cooperate with the Pastor in matters of worship, church membership and the general spiritual interests of the church and community.
5. The Board of Deacons shall assist the Pastor in administering the Sacrament of Holy Communion and prepare the elements for the service of Holy Communion.
6. It shall be the duty of the Board of Deacons to supervise and arrange for flowers at all church services; to provide for greeters, ushers, and acolytes for all services; to befriend and visit the sick, shut-ins and newcomers to the community.
7. The Board of Deacons shall report regularly to the Church Council and annually to the membership at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

E. STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

A Stewardship Committee consisting of nine members, three of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting and serve a term of three years. At least one woman to be elected each year. The Church Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be added to these nine members and have full voting privileges. Stewardship Committee has the responsibility to prepare the budget, the annual fund drive and consideration of all forms of stewardship. The Stewardship Committee is responsible for annually reviewing all investments and reporting to Council.

F. SERVICE

Members of the Boards of Deacons and Trustees shall serve only two three-year terms in that capacity. They shall then take a sabbatical of at least two years before serving in any similar office. Deacons may not serve on the Board of Trustees, or conversely, simultaneously.

G. AUDITORS

1. Two auditors shall be elected by the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting to serve until the next annual meeting.
2. It shall be the duty of the Auditors, annually, at the close of the fiscal year, to audit the books of all financial officers of the congregation and to report their results to the annual meeting. Their report need not appear with the other reports sent to the membership and may come to those at the meeting itself.

H. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. The congregation shall have a Nominating Committee consisting of the Moderator, the Church Clerk, and four members who shall be elected by the congregation from among the membership of the congregation, two of whom shall be elected each year and serve a term of two years.
2. The Nominating Committee shall make nominations to fill all vacancies for each Annual Congregational Meeting and also shall nominate to the Church Council any persons to fill vacancies occurring in any office, board, or standing committee of the congregation during the year, with such appointment to be effective until the next annual meeting.

ARTICLE VII — THE PASTOR

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the Search Committee, appointed by the Church Council, to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of Pastor.
- B. As soon as a pastoral vacancy occurs, it shall be reported to the Conference Executive.
- C. In filling a vacancy or in securing supply ministers for the period of vacancy, the Search Committee shall seek counsel of the Conference Executive. They shall request the Executive to secure relevant information about any minister whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy.
- D. The Search Committee shall present to the congregation the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. A favorable vote of the congregation constitutes a call. A favorable vote consists of a majority of the ballots cast in favor of the candidate.
- E. In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the agreement of the congregation to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Minister's Health Insurance Program, and other terms agreed between the candidate and the committee and approved by Church Council. The minister, the congregation and the conference shall each receive a copy of the call.
- F. When a minister accepts a call to this congregation, the Church Council shall join with the minister in requesting the conference to arrange for a service of installation.
- G. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, sixty (60) days notice shall be given by either party, unless by mutual agreement the period is shortened.

- H. When either party decides to terminate the relationship, the termination shall be by action of the Church Council. Notice of such termination shall be then given to the entire congregation and then sent by the Church Clerk to the Conference Executive for appropriate action.
- I. Discipline of the Pastor shall be in conformity with the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.
- J. The Pastor shall become a member of the congregation upon his or her installation as the Pastor.
- K. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and boards of this congregation.
- L. The Pastor shall report regularly to the Church Council and shall submit a report of the work and activities of the congregation to the membership for the Annual Congregational Meeting.

ARTICLE VIII — FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the congregation shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE IX — CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any duly called congregational meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present, public announcement of the text of the proposed amendment(s) having been made two weeks prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE X — RULES OF ORDER

Robert's Rules of Order, revised, shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and By-Laws.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I — MODERATOR

- A. The Moderator shall preside at all congregational meetings of the congregation.
- B. The Moderator shall prepare an agenda for each congregational meeting and shall post the same in the Narthex of the Church no later than the Sunday previous to such a meeting.
- C. In the absence of the Moderator, the members of the congregation shall elect from their numbers a person to serve in that capacity for that particular meeting only.

ARTICLE II — CHURCH CLERK

- A. It shall be the duty of the Church Clerk to keep an accurate record of all congregational meetings and a record of those attending the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- B. The Church Clerk shall keep a register of the names and addresses of all members of the congregation and a record of their modes of reception into the church and of the removal of their membership from this congregation.
- C. The Church Clerk shall keep a card file index of all church members, with full name and address of each member, the date of admission to the church and any other information deemed necessary for the discharge of this office.
- D. The Church Clerk shall attend to all correspondence relative to the membership of the congregation.
- E. The Church Clerk shall keep a permanent record of all baptisms, all marriages, all funerals conducted by the Pastor of this church and, so far as possible, all such records as concern members of this congregation.
- F. The Church Clerk shall give all necessary legal notices of all church meetings.
- G. In the absence of the Church Clerk, a person shall be elected from the membership to perform all duties of that office for that one meeting only.

ARTICLE III — FINANCIAL SECRETARY

- A. It shall be the duty of the Financial Secretary to receive all funds and contributions to the congregation and keep an accurate accounting of each individual member who subscribes to the budget by an annual pledge.
- B. The Financial Secretary shall prepare an itemized report listing all sources of income for each Church Council meeting.
- C. The Financial Secretary shall submit a report regarding church pledges and all monies received to each Annual Congregational Meeting.
- D. The Financial Secretary shall be bonded in an amount designated by the Church Council.
- E. An Assistant Financial Secretary shall be elected annually to assist the Financial Secretary and act in behalf of the Financial Secretary in the absence of that official.

ARTICLE IV — CHURCH TREASURER

- A. The Church Treasurer shall keep an accurate accounting of all receipts from the Financial Secretary, disburse them according to the approved annual budget of the congregation, and keep a correct account of the same.
- B. The Church Treasurer shall hold in custody all funds of the congregation.
- C. The Church Treasurer shall submit a complete financial statement at the Annual Congregational Meeting and at such other times as may be required to do so by the Church Council.
- D. The Church Treasurer shall handle the accounts of all trust funds and shall furnish a report of all income therefrom at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- E. The Church Treasurer shall be bonded in such an amount as the Church Council shall designate.
- F. The Church Treasurer shall remit all benevolence monies to the Penn Northeast Conference office.
- G. An Assistant Treasurer shall be elected annually to assist the Church Treasurer and assume responsibilities of the office in the absence on the Church Treasurer.

ARTICLE V — BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- A. The Director of Christian Education is responsible for all facets of Christian Education within the Congregation with the exception of the Confirmation Class.
- B. The Director of Christian Education shall chair the Board of Christian Education which shall consist of the Director of Christian Education, a Program Director (to work with the Sunday School), a Youth Director and the teachers.
- C. When a vacancy occurs, the Council shall appoint a 3-member Search Committee who, in consultation with the Pastor, will recommend a person to fill the vacancy.

ARTICLE VI — QUORUM

Twenty (20) communicant members in good standing shall constitute a quorum for all congregational meetings.

ARTICLE VII — AMENDMENT

These By-Laws may be amended in precisely the manner prescribed for amending the Constitution in Article IX thereof.

ARTICLE VII — PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be comprised of five members of the congregation to insure that any relationship issues which might develop for the Pastor or members of the Pastor's family can be addressed in a confidential manner. If such issue is not resolved at this step it may be taken to the Church Council President for resolution. The members of this committee shall serve for five years and one vacancy shall occur each year.