

Bylaws
First Congregational Church of Dunbarton, New Hampshire
United Church of Christ

ARTICLE I
NAME

The Church shall be called the First Congregational Church of Dunbarton, hereinafter referred to as the Church.

ARTICLE II
MISSION AND POLITY

Section 1 Mission

To live according to God's teachings, believing in the worth of all persons, to build an outreaching, supportive community, to foster individual spiritual growth, and to provide for all ages the experience of Christian values through teaching and example.

Section 2 Polity and Authority Residing Solely in the Church

A. Polity. The Church's government is vested in the body of believers who comprise it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among congregations of the United Church of Christ, and it is in fellowship with all churches which acknowledge Jesus the Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

B. Authority Residing Solely in the Church. Authority to call or dismiss a pastor, approve persons for membership in the Church, terminate membership in the Church except by the member's request, adopt or alter budgets, incur indebtedness, sell Church property, or make capital improvements to the Church property shall rest with the Church alone, such action to be decided upon at a business meeting of the Church called for that purpose under the provisions of Article IV, Section 2C. Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of the Trustees to make emergency repairs to Church property should they deem such action necessary for safety or for protection of property from further damage.

Section 3 Doctrine

The Church receives the Scripture as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in accordance with the Affirmation of Faith as published by the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE III
MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Qualifications

All baptized Christians who are at least fourteen years old and who accept the Church's Covenant, after consultation with the Pastor or Deacons, or with the Church itself, may by expression of intent and by a vote of the Church become members of the Church.

Section 2 Reception

Individuals shall normally be received into membership during a worship service and may be received by 1) Confession of Faith, 2) Letter of Transfer from another Church, or 3) Affirmation of Baptism through the Rite of Confirmation after appropriate instruction.

Section 3 Responsibilities and Rights of Membership

Members shall, to the best of their ability, regularly attend the worship services of the Church, regularly give to its support and to its missions, and share in its work and activities. Members may vote at all business meetings of the Church, hold Church office, chair Church Boards and Committees, and represent the Church within the Associations and Conferences of the United Church of Christ and other related bodies.

Section 4 Termination of Membership

- A. Transfer to Another Church. Any member who desires a letter of dismissal and recommendation to another church is entitled to receive it upon written request.
- B. Resignation. If a member requests to be released from his or her covenant obligations to the Church, after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure the member's continuance in its fellowship, such a request shall be granted, and the individual released from membership.
- C. Termination. In special circumstances, the Church reserves the right, after due notice and hearing and kindly effort at reconciliation, to remove a member from the membership role.

Section 5 Friends of the Church and Inactive Members

- A. Friends of the Church are those individuals not yet members who fulfill all other expectations of membership as noted in Section 3 above. These friends are eligible to serve on boards and committees as noted in Article VIII and have voice without vote at business meetings of the Church.
- B. Inactive members are members who have not fulfilled any of the expectations of membership as noted in Section 3 above, for the last 3 calendar years or more. Inactive members have voice without vote at business meetings of the Church.

ARTICLE IV MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

Section 1 For Worship

- A. Public services of worship shall be held weekly on Sundays with special exceptions. Religious services, except weddings and funerals, shall require approval of the Board of Deacons.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall generally be celebrated upon the first Sunday of each month and at other times as the Board of Deacons may determine.

Section 2 For Business

- A. Annual Meeting. The Church business year shall close December 31. The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held in January after the 15th, at which time the annual reports shall be presented, elections held, the annual budget adopted, and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the bylaws.

- B. Other Business Meetings. Other business meetings may be called by the Church Council, Pastor, Moderator, a board by majority vote, or any five active members.
- C. Call to Business Meetings. The call to all business meetings, with the exception of meetings called for the purposes noted in paragraph D, shall be issued by the Clerk. The call shall be posted and read from the pulpit by the Pastor, or in the Pastor's absence, by the Moderator, Vice-moderator, or clerk, on the two Sundays preceding the meeting date. The specific purposes of the meeting shall be included in the call.
- D. Meetings may be called without prior notice for the purpose of acting upon the reception of members or upon the appointment of delegates, but not upon other business.
- E. Quorum. Ten (10) members or 10% of the membership, whichever is greater, shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE V PASTOR

Section 1 The Call

A minister, herein referred to as the Pastor, shall be called by the Church to be its Pastor and Teacher. The terms of the call shall be clearly stated in the written covenant between the Church and the minister.

Section 2 Duties

The Pastor shall:

- A. with the assistance of the Board of Deacons be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation;
- B. have general oversight of all public worship services, and preach the Word and administer the Sacraments;
- C. be an ex-officio member without vote of the Church Council and of all church boards and committees, and have general oversight of their proceedings;
- D. especially call on the ill and home-bound and be generally available to preside at weddings and funerals of the families of the community;
- E. participate in community organizations and activities as appropriate, and minister as needed to community residents who do not have a relationship with a church;
- F. along with church delegates and others as appropriate, represent the Church at gatherings of the Merrimack Association and New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ; and
- G. make a report to each meeting of the Church Council, and a written report to the Annual Meeting.

Section 3 Selection

- A. Whenever a vacancy occurs, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a minimum of five Church members to serve on a Pastoral Search Committee, which shall be elected at a business meeting of the Church called for that specific purpose.
- B. The Pastoral Search Committee will select a candidate to recommend to the Church membership. Upon a two-thirds vote at a business meeting, called for that purpose, the candidate will be called by the Church.

Section 4 Resignation or Dismissal

Should the Pastor decide to render his or her resignation, he or she may do so at any time provided such notice is given as stated in the Call of the Pastor. The Church may dismiss a pastor upon two-third vote of the Church at a business meeting called specifically for the purpose of such a vote. The Church shall give such notice of the Pastor's dismissal as is stated in the Call of the Pastor.

ARTICLE VI OFFICERS

Section 1 General

Officers shall be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for three years except as noted and their term of office shall begin at the close of the meeting at which they are elected. The Church Council may appoint an individual to fill any office that becomes vacant, such appointment to be until the next Annual Meeting. No member shall hold more than one office at a time, and no officer except the Treasurer and the Clerk shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive full three-year terms in the same office. Individuals need to be members to hold office.

Section 2 Officers

- A. Moderator. The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the Church and of the Church Council and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church or Church Council, including making appointments to such committees as the Church or Church Council may establish. The Moderator shall make a written report to the Annual Meeting.
- B. Vice-Moderator. The Vice-Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator in the Moderator's absence.
- C. Clerk. The Clerk shall keep a complete record of:
 - 1) the transactions of all Church Council and business meetings of the Church, which shall be presented at the next meeting for approval;
 - 2) membership in the church to include the names of members with dates of admission and dismissal or death, and publish a list of same in each Annual Report;
 - 3) marriages and baptisms conducted in the church facilities to include names, dates, and other pertinent information as the Church may determine; and
 - 4) all communications and written official reports.

The Clerk shall also:

- 5) notify all officers, members of the Church Council, boards, committees, and delegates of their election or appointment;
- 6) issue letters of dismissal and recommendation;
- 7) give notice of all business meetings where such notice is required by these bylaws; and
- 8) make a written report to the Annual Business Meeting of the Church.

D. Assistant Clerk. The Assistant Clerk shall perform the duties of the Clerk in the Clerk's absence.

E. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall:

- 1) maintain all the financial accounts of the Church, except those of the Community Fund, Youth Group Fund, and certain other funds as determined by the Church;
- 2) receive, acknowledge, and deposit in appropriate Church bank accounts all moneys received by the Church, except for funds exempted in paragraph 1) above;
- 3) issue quarterly reports to persons who have made pledges to the Church;
- 4) disburse moneys as authorized; and
- 5) make a written report to the Annual Meeting, and reports to the Board of Trustees, Church Council, and Pastor as requested.

F. Assistant Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall perform the duties of the Treasurer in the Treasurer's absence.

G. Auditor. The Auditor shall be elected on a year different from that of the Treasurer. The Auditor shall annually examine all of the financial accounts of the Church and shall present a written report of the findings at each Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VII CHURCH COUNCIL

Section 1 Membership

The Church Council shall consist of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Chairpersons of the four boards (Trustees, Deacons, CE, Missions) and the chairperson of the Stewardship Committee or their designated representative, and two members-at-large elected by the Church for alternating two-year terms. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member without vote. Six voting members of the Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 2 Function and Authority

- A. The Church Council shall act as an executive committee between business meetings of the Church and shall, in cooperation with the Pastor, be responsible for the advancement of the Church's mission and ministry, and for coordination of its planning, goal setting, and activities.
- B. The Church Council may establish committees for specific purposes not otherwise delegated to the boards or other entities and may appoint interim members to fill vacant positions until persons are elected by the Church.
- C. The Church Council's authority shall not extend to those matters which must be acted upon by the Church alone, as stated in Article II, Section 2B. Authority Residing Solely in the Church.

Section 3 Meetings

The Church Council shall meet monthly September through June and may meet as needed during the summer months. A special meeting of the Church Council may be called by the Moderator, Pastor, three members of the Church Council, or by the Church. All meetings of the Church Council shall be open to the presence of other church members, except that the Church Council may, upon majority vote of its members present, go into executive session when dealing with issues of confidentiality.

ARTICLE VIII BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Section 1 General

There shall be four boards, each of which shall have responsibility and oversight for a specific area of endeavor as indicated:

Christian Education	Faith Development
Deacons	Worship and Spiritual Life
Missions	Mission beyond the Local Church
Trustees	Finance and Property

Section 2 Membership

- A. Unless otherwise noted below, each board shall consist of five elected members, two of whom shall be elected at each of two Annual Meetings, and one of whom shall be elected at the third Annual Meeting, for three-year terms.
- B. Each committee shall consist of at least three elected members.
- C. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of each board and committee without vote unless otherwise noted. Each board and committee shall select its own chair and other officers as it deems appropriate. Any board or committee member, except an ex-officio member, who misses three consecutive meetings without valid reason may be removed by two-thirds vote of the Church Council. Both members and friends of the church are eligible to serve on boards and committees. Board and committee chairs must be members and members must comprise a majority position.

Section 3 Responsibility and Authority

- A. Each board shall be responsible to the Church, and to the Church Council between business meetings of the Church. Each board shall issue a written report to the Annual Meeting and shall report at each meeting of the Church Council.
- B. Each board and committee shall have authority to act within its area of endeavor and to spend funds allocated to it in the Annual Budget or other appropriation by the Church as it deems appropriate.
- C. Should the Church Council disagree with any action of a board, it may at any Church Council meeting negate or modify the board's action. Should a board wish to appeal a Church Council decision relating to its action, it may appeal to the Church at any business meeting of the Church. Should the Church disagree with any action of a board, it may, at any properly called business meeting, negate or modify the board's action.

Section 4 Meetings

Each board shall meet monthly September through June and may meet as needed during the summer months. Special meetings may be called by the Chair, any three members, Pastor, or Church Council. Three voting members shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5 Board of Christian Education

- A. The Board shall have general oversight of the Christian Education program of the Church and shall seek to provide educational opportunities for persons of all ages.
- B. In addition to the five elected members, the Board of Christian Education may also include the Church School Superintendent, the Youth Group Advisor, and a member of the Youth Group selected by the Youth Group with concurrence of the Youth Group Advisor, who shall be ex-officio members with vote.
- C. The Board shall have oversight for and, where appropriate, shall select the directors of:
 - 1) the Church School and the selection of curriculum,
 - 2) Sunday morning child care with an educational component as appropriate,
 - 3) the Youth Program,
 - 4) Adult Bible study and/or other adult educational programs, and
 - 5) any other educational programs, such as Vacation Bible School, it may develop.
- D. The Board shall appoint annually one of its members to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Section 6 Board of Deacons

- A. The Board shall, in cooperation with the Pastor, have general oversight of the worship and spiritual life of the Church. The Deacons shall:
 - 1) assist the Pastor in the planning and conduct of regular and special services of worship as needed, and assist in the administration of the sacraments;
 - 2) arrange for supply ministers in the absence of the Pastor, and for interim ministers during periods when the Church has no called Pastor;
 - 3) provide leadership in evangelism and the promotion of Church membership;
 - 4) conduct an annual review of the Church membership and make recommendations as outlined in Article III Membership; and
 - 5) appoint annually one of its members to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- B. Committees of the Board of Deacons
 - 1) Music Committee

A Music Committee shall be a committee of the Board of Deacons and is responsible to it. The Committee shall have general oversight of the music, except selection of hymns, provided for worship and other occasions. The Committee shall select organists and the choir director. The Committee shall consist of at least three members. The Choir will select one member and the Board of Deacons will select two members. All appointments shall be for two-year terms.

2) Flower Committee

A Flower Committee shall be a committee of the Board of Deacons and is responsible to it. The Committee shall have general oversight of flowers in the sanctuary. The Committee shall consist of one or more persons appointed by the Deacons for two-year terms.

Section 7 Board of Missions

The Board of Missions shall have general oversight of the Church's local and wider mission. The Board shall:

- 1) provide the Church with information relating to missions;
- 2) develop and lead the Church in the support of mission activities to assist persons beyond the Church membership, both in the local community and in the world beyond;
- 3) publicize and advocate for the United Church of Christ's Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) basic support;
- 4) publicize and conduct special offerings sponsored by the United Church of Christ, and other mission programs.
- 5) provide for an offering for the Community Fund at each regular celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and at other times it may determine, and use the Fund to assist those in need in the community.

Section 8 Board of Trustees

- A. In addition to the Board's five elected members, the Treasurer shall be an ex-officio member without vote.
- B. The Board shall have general oversight of Church property and finances. The Board shall:
 - 1) receive, supervise, and maintain all capital assets of the Church to include securities, buildings, grounds, furnishings and equipment, except those held by the Board of Deacons;
 - 2) maintain a list of transactions and an inventory of the above items, and report any changes in the Annual Report;
 - 3) have general charge of the Church's finances under the approved budget and general oversight of the payments of moneys authorized in the Church budget;
 - 4) prepare, in consultation with the several church boards and committees having financial requirements, a written Annual Church Budget for review by the December monthly Church Council meeting and for action by the Annual Meeting of the Church;
 - 5) authorize and direct the Treasurer as to payments of money under its control;
 - 6) review insurance policies annually and provide for their updating as needed;
 - 7) arrange for maintenance and janitorial services as needed;
 - 8) make recommendations to the Church for action at a Business Meeting of the Church relating to:
 - a) capital improvements to Church property,
 - b) sale of Church property, or
 - c) borrowing of money from any Church fund, bank, or lending institution, and
 - d) use of church property

Section 9 Committees of the Church Council

- A. Stewardship Committee. The Stewardship Committee shall be a special committee of the Church Council and responsible to it. The Committee will organize and carry out the Annual Stewardship

Campaign and will oversee a Planned Giving initiative for the Church. The Committee will consist of at least three elected members.

- B. Communications Committee. The Communications Committee shall be a special committee of the Church Council and responsible to it. The Committee, under the guidance of the Church Council, shall be responsible for developing and coordinating the external communications of the Church, overseeing an outreach plan, and overseeing public relations activities. The Committee shall consist of at least three individuals. The Communications Chair or a representative shall attend monthly Church Council meetings as an ex-officio member without vote.

Section 10 Standing Committees of the Church

- A. Nominating Committee. The Committee shall be responsible for developing a slate of candidates for all elected positions provided for in these bylaws, excepting candidates for the Nominating Committee. The Committee shall maintain job descriptions for all elected positions. The Committee shall consist of three members, elected for three-year terms, one expiring each year.
- B. Pastoral Relations Committee
 - 1) The Committee shall meet with the Pastor at least quarterly to review and discuss concerns of the Pastor and the Church. In order to encourage an open and honest dialogue between the Pastor and the Committee members, all matters discussed at meetings of the Committee shall be kept confidential, unless otherwise agreed to by the Pastor and the Committee members.
 - 2) In the event there is evidence that either the Church or the Pastor is in imminent danger, the Committee may, by two-thirds vote, consult and share information with the Conference Minister, or take whatever other emergency measures it may deem necessary.
 - 3) The Committee shall make a written report to the Annual Meeting of the Church, indicating the frequency of the Committee meetings, and possibly, without violating confidentiality, the general categories of concerns discussed.
 - 4) The Committee shall consist of one Deacon and one member of the Board of Christian Education, chosen by their respective boards, and another member of the Church chosen by the Pastor, all for one-year terms, not to exceed three consecutive terms.

ARTICLE IX DELEGATES

The Church is entitled to official representation in meetings of the Merrimack Association of the United Church of Christ and the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. The number of delegates is determined by the bylaws of those organizations. Delegates to these organizations shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Church, or at another business meeting, to serve one-year terms. Delegates shall make reports to the Church, and a written report to the Annual Meeting. Reasonable expenses for these delegates shall be paid by the Church.

ARTICLE X RESOLUTION OF GRIEVANCES AND OFFENSES

Should any unhappy differences arise between members, the aggrieved members shall follow, in a tender spirit, the rule given by our Lord in the Eighteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Should a member become an offense to the Church by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the issue shall be brought to the Church Council, in executive session, and dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedures section of the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised to ensure the thoroughness and confidentiality of the process. Findings may range from exoneration to termination of membership.

ARTICLE XI PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the conduct of business meetings of the Church in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Church may adopt.

ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any Annual Meeting of the Church or at a meeting of the Church specifically called for that purpose, provided the proposed amendments have been submitted in writing by posting in the church building and by making copies available to the members not less than one month before the time of the proposed action.

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Bylaws amended per vote on April 7, 2019

Article III Membership

Section 5 add: “and Inactive Members” in title

- A. ...friends are eligible to serve on boards and committees...Friends will have a voice without a vote at business meetings of the Church
- B. Inactive members are members who have not fulfilled any of the expectations of membership as noted in Section 3 above, for the last 3 calendar years or more. Inactive members have voice without vote at business meetings of the Church.

Article VI Officers

Section 2 Treasurer 1) change Deacons’ Fund to Community Fund

Article VIII Boards and Committees

Section 3 Board of Christian Education

- B. Add “the Board of Christian Education may also include”

Section 6 Board of Deacons

- A. Remove 3) “provide for an offering for the Deacon’s Fund at each regular celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s supper, and at other times it may determine, and use the Fund to assist those in need in the community;”

Section 7 Board of Missions

- Add 5) provide for an offering for the Community Fund at each regular celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s supper, and at other times it may determine, and use the Fund to assist those in need in the community.

Section 8 Board of Trustees

Add B. 8) d) use of church property

- Remove 9) appoint members to the Stewardship Committee as indicated below and supervise its activities as indicated in these bylaws.

Section 9 Committees of the Church Council

- A. Stewardship Committee - Remove: The Committee, under the guidance and direction of the Church Council, shall be responsible for the coordinating, and providing consultation as needed, for all fund-raising activities of the Church.