

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
DeKalb, Illinois**

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I. Name

The name of this church will be First Congregational United Church of Christ, DeKalb, Illinois.

ARTICLE II. Object and Mission

This church exists to bind us together as followers of Jesus Christ, to share in the worship of God, and to try to discern God's will in our lives, individually and collectively, especially as that will is revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is to embody God's love for all by living an active faith in service to others.

ARTICLE III. Polity

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head, and finds in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Divine Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline.

The government of this church will be vested in its members, who will exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation granted it by the Secretary of State, Springfield, Illinois.

While this church is subservient to no external authority, it is a part of the United Church of Christ and accepts its sacraments and the obligations of mutual counsel, comity, and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE IV. Doctrine, Faith, and Covenant

Doctrine. This church recognizes the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true expression of our fellowship. All members will have the right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Faith. This church claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. One expression of this faith is:

United Church of Christ Statement of Faith
in the Form of a Doxology

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.

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 you,
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

Covenant. We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God and to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We join together as a covenantal community to celebrate and share our common communion and the reassurance that we are indeed created by God, reconciled in Christ, and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We welcome all into our faith community as brothers and sisters in Christ. We welcome into the full life and ministry of this church people of any race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, economic status, or physical or mental condition.

ARTICLE V. Membership

Section 1. Reception. Persons who wish to become members of this church will communicate their desire to the ordained minister(s) or the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life and, upon affirmative vote by the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life, make public acceptance of the church's doctrine, faith, and covenant, by:

- (a) Confession or reaffirmation of faith; or
- (b) Confirmation of baptismal vows for those having been baptized in infancy; or
- (c) Presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer from other churches.

Section 2. Definitions and Expectations.

- (a) Active members are expected to be faithful in all of the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; and pledge to:
 - (1) Pray for the well-being of our church;
 - (2) Invite the unchurched to come, and warmly welcome all who visit;
 - (3) Nourish their spiritual lives by attending faithfully, and becoming part of this community;
 - (4) Further the ministry of the church by contributing to its financial support and its benevolences, and share in its organized work.
- (b) If a member whose address has long been unknown, or who, for a period of two years, in spite of kindly reminders, has not communicated with the church or contributed to its support, his/her name may be transferred to an inactive list by vote of the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life. From the date of such transfer, this person will cease to be reported on the membership roll.
- (c) If, for sufficient reason, a person on the inactive list may desire to be restored to full fellowship, his/her name may be placed again on the membership roll by vote of the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life,.

Section 3. Rights

- (a) Members may hold office and vote in all business transactions of the church.
- (b) Persons not on the membership roll may not vote or hold office.
- (c) All persons in relationship with this congregation, whether or not they are members, are welcome to all the ministrations of the church.

Section 4. Termination. If a member requests to be released from membership in this church, the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life will grant such a request and terminate membership.

ARTICLE VI. Meetings

Section 1. For Worship and Instruction.

- (a) Public services for worship and instruction will be held on Sunday, except when temporarily suspended by vote of the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life.
- (b) The Sacraments:
 - (1) The sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated at such times as the ordained ministers/Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life may determine.
 - (2) The sacrament of baptism of adults and of children will be administered at such times as the ordained minister(s), or, in their absence, the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life, may determine.
- (c) Other worship services may be held as determined by the ordained minister(s) or, in their absence, by the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life.

Section 2. For Business.

- (a) Congregational meetings will be scheduled annually by the Cabinet to conduct the church's business, which will include: to adopt goals and programs of the church; to receive fiscal reports and adopt a budget; to receive annual reports of ministry teams and committees and to elect officers and members of ministry teams and committees.
- (b) A quorum for the transaction of business at all meetings will consist of 5% of the church membership, as reported for the official records of the United Church of Christ. A vote of a majority of the quorum at the meeting will be the action of the church. The only exception to this will be those matters that expressly require a majority vote of the active membership of the church.
- (c) Proxy voting will be permitted at congregational meetings only for those matters that expressly require a majority vote of the active membership of the church. Procedures for proxy voting are defined in the church's By-Laws.
- (d) Special meetings for the transaction of business may be called by the Cabinet, or upon the written request of 5% of the church membership, specifying the object thereof.
- (e) Church members will be given timely notice regarding any congregational meeting.
- (f) Items of business involving the purchase, sale, remodeling, or alteration of church property, in excess of \$10,000, not specifically part of the annual budget, will require a special meeting and must be approved by a simple majority of the church members present and voting.

ARTICLE VII. Ordained Ministers

Section 1. Ordained Minister(s).

- (a) After the Search Committee has selected a candidate according to the procedures described in Article VIII, Section 6, the ordained minister(s) will be called by the church for an indefinite period, by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a meeting called for that purpose.
- (b) The ordained minister(s) will:
 - (1) Have control of the pulpit, and be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation, with the assistance of the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life.
 - (2) Have in their care the services of public worship, administer the sacraments, and may preside at the general functions of the church.
 - (3) Supervise the paid staff subject to the direction of the Ministry Team for Finance.
 - (4) Be *ex officio* member(s) of all ministry teams and committees and of all organizations formed within the fellowship of the church.
- (c) The church may choose co- or associate ministers who will be called in the same manner described in Article VIII, Section 6. The particular titles and duties of the additional minister(s) will be designated by the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life with the approval of the congregation.

Section 2. Term of Ordained Minister(s).

- (a) While the term of any ordained minister will be indefinite, it may be terminated by mutual agreement by three months' written notice by the ordained minister(s).
- (b) The term of the ordained minister(s) may also be terminated by a three-fourths majority of the membership present and voting by written ballot at a special meeting. Such meeting will be duly called for that purpose by the Pastor-Parish Committee after thoughtful and prayerful discussion with the Prairie Association. Termination will be effective within three months after such vote.
- (c) In case of loss of ministerial standing on the part of the ordained minister(s), the relationship will cease at once.

Section 3. Interim Minister(s). No interim minister is to be a candidate for permanent call to the church.

ARTICLE VIII. Administration

Section 1. Governing Body.

The governing body of this church will be the membership assembled in church meeting.

Section 2. Church Cabinet.

- (a) The Cabinet will consist of the ordained minister(s), moderator, assistant moderator, the clerk, the financial secretary, the treasurer, and the chairperson of each ministry team and standing committee.
- (b) The Cabinet will meet monthly or when necessary to consider matters relative to the work of the church and will act for the church or make recommendations to the congregation and various ministry teams for action.
- (c) At the request of the Nominating committee, the Cabinet will fill any vacancies on any team or standing committee, which may occur at any time during the year between annual elections.
- (d) The Cabinet will appoint delegates to the U.C.C. Association, Conference, and Synod meetings.

Section 3. Officers. Officers of the church will be chosen at each annual election and may not serve in the same position for more than three consecutive years.

- (a) Moderator. Duties are:
 - (1) To preside at regular and special business meetings and Cabinet sessions;
 - (2) To facilitate communication between administrative personnel and members in dealing with various ideas and suggestions;
 - (3) To be an *ex officio* member of all ministry teams and standing committees.
- (b) Assistant Moderator. Duties are:
 - (1) To assist the moderator;
 - (2) To act for the moderator in his/her absence;
 - (3) To chair the Nominating Committee.
- (c) Clerk. Duties are:
 - (1) To keep minutes of congregational and cabinet meetings;
 - (2) To see that records of membership, baptism, marriage, and death are kept;
 - (3) To see that the membership record is included in the annual reports of this church and of the national church office;
 - (4) To see that timely notice is given for all congregational meetings.

(d) Financial Secretary (or Co-Financial Secretaries). Duties are:

- (1) To see that an orderly record of all personal contributions to the church is kept;
- (2) To see that all monies received are appropriately deposited in the bank accounts of the church;
- (3) Make a report monthly to the Ministry Team for Finance;
- (4) To see that members are provided a timely record of their giving.

(e) Treasurer (or Co-Treasurers). Duties are:

- (1) To oversee the recording of all receipts and disbursements of the church;
- (2) To monitor the expenditures of the church according to the church budget, in cooperation with the Ministry Team for Finance.

Section 4. Ministry Teams. Ministry Teams will consist of three to six core members, with additional *ad hoc* members as needed. Core members will be rotated with one-third elected each year while two-thirds remain for continuity. Ministry teams may meet as often as needed with notice of meetings to be given in a timely manner by the church secretary.

(a) Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life. Duties are:

- (1) To assist the ministers in the organization of the worship service, including the administration of the sacraments, pulpit supply, liturgists, ushers, greeters, and Deacon of the Day;
- (2) To assist in the spiritual and pastoral care of the congregation, including visitation of those who are experiencing times of stress or crisis, physical or mental illness, and those who are shut-ins;
- (3) To oversee the musical program of the church, including interviewing of the staff and selection of scholarship singers, making recommendations for hiring to the Ministry Team for Finance;
- (4) To act on applications for admission to or dismissal from church membership, and maintain an up-to-date membership roster;
- (5) To collect and preserve materials of historical value to the church, and oversee the placement of such documents in the N.I.U. Regional History Center at least once every decade.

(b) Ministry Team for Finance. Duties are:

- (1) To have care/custody and control of the real and personal property of the church, and, when so directed by a duly called special congregational meeting, may mortgage, encumber, sell, and convey such property;
- (2) To direct the financial and business affairs of the church, including management of all funds (operating, memorials, trusts, and all invested funds), review and monitor the external audit and prepare the annual church budget;
- (3) To employ, and monitor the supervision of, all staff members of the church, except

ordained ministers;

- (4) To act as agent of the church in legal matters, to receive and vote all proxies, and to file Articles of Incorporation with the Illinois Secretary of State;
 - (5) To direct the securing of pledges to support the church budget, organize and direct stewardship education for the congregation, and coordinate all special gifting to the church;
 - (6) To direct the OCWM benevolence budget for the church.
- (c) Ministry Team for Education. Duties are:
- (1) To oversee the educational programs/religious instruction for all children, youth and adults of the church within the traditions of the UCC;
 - (2) To locate/train the personnel for these programs;
 - (3) To provide input for the curricula for these programs;
 - (4) To oversee the education budget for all church educational programs;
 - (5) To review requests for and award church-related scholarships.
- (d) Ministry Team for Mission Work and Community Outreach. Duties are:
- (1) To organize and supervise the outreach plans of the church;
 - (2) To oversee and direct the awarding and distribution of benevolence funds;
 - (3) To coordinate participation in outreach events
- (e) Ministry Team for Fellowship - Duties are:
- (1) To oversee the organization of social get-togethers;
 - (2) To coordinate all materials for evangelism and publicity for the church;
 - (3) To coordinate inquirer meetings and reception of new members.

Section 5. Standing Committees.

- (a) Nominating Committee. This committee will consist of the assistant moderator and four (4) members elected to two-year terms, with the assistant moderator acting as chair. Duties are:
 - (1) To secure individuals to serve on all ministry teams, committees, and office positions of the church;
 - (2) To present nominations to the church cabinet for vacancies on ministry teams, committees, and church office positions occurring during the year.
- (b) Pastor-Parish Committee. This committee will consist of four (4) members who will serve staggered two-year terms. The committee will meet at least quarterly. Duties are:
 - (1) To strengthen the relationship between the minister(s) and the congregation;

- (2) To facilitate open communication between ministers and the congregation;
- (3) To identify goals and needs for possible action;
- (4) To provide a written framework in which conflict can be dealt with by all parties in good faith.

Section 6. Search Committee.

- (a) When a vacancy occurs in the pulpit, or a need to call a minister is apparent, an *ad hoc* committee of nine people will be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church members at a duly-called special congregational meeting. Duties are:
 - (1) consult with the Association Minister and proceed according to the process prevailing in the United Church of Christ;
 - (2) review the needs of the church and prepare a church profile to be made available to prospective candidates;
 - (3) evaluate the candidates' profiles and produce a short list of candidates to be interviewed;
 - (4) select the final candidate;
 - (5) develop and approve the conditions of the call with the candidate, the church Cabinet, the Ministry Team for Finance, and with the Association Church and Ministry Committee;
 - (6) introduce the candidate to the church at a duly-called special congregational meeting and recommend extending a call to the candidate;
 - (7) assist the candidate and the congregation in the transition process.
- (b) When contemplating calling an additional minister, a search committee will be elected as in (a) above. They will proceed in like manner but with the cooperation of the existing minister(s) who will be *ex officio* members of the committee.

Any interim minister will not be a member of the committee.

ARTICLE IX. Finances

Section 1. Offerings. The church will seek support by contributions of individuals and organizations under the leadership of the Ministry Team for Finance. All monies received will be authorized for expenditure during the budgetary process at a congregational meeting after a full report has been made.

Section 2. Benevolence. The church will participate in local outreach and mission, and in the ministries and offerings of the wider church.

ARTICLE X. Amendments

Section 1. This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those active members present at any regular or special business meeting of the church, provided that timely written notice and pulpit announcement be given of the proposed amendment(s).

BY-LAWS

No. 1. The meetings of this church are open to all and will be conducted in accordance with parliamentary procedure as set forth in the most recent edition of ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER. Matters of polity will be governed by accepted United Church of Christ procedure. When neither moderator nor assistant moderator is present, the members may select a moderator *pro tempore*, which will ordinarily be a past moderator.

No. 2. Elections. The annual election of officers will be at the end of the fiscal year in June unless otherwise provided by action of the church. All elected officers will be active members of the church. Special elections may be held when necessary to fill any vacancies which may occur during the year between annual elections.

No. 3. Each ministry team and standing committee will be convened by the previous chairperson as soon as possible after the annual election of the church and will elect from its number a chairperson and secretary. Minutes will be kept of all proceedings of all ministry teams and standing committees and will be filed in the church office

No. 4. Special committees and officers may be appointed by the church as need may arise; the number of members, length of tenure, and duties and powers of such committees and officers will be set forth by the cabinet at the time of appointment.

No. 5. The church will be incorporated as a religious not-for-profit corporation in compliance with the laws of the State of Illinois, pertaining to such corporations. The Ministry Team for Finance will act in the capacity of agent of this corporation when so formed.

Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it will then be possessed, including any devise, bequest, gift, or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, will be transferred to the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ.

No. 6. The fiscal year of this church will run from January 1 to December 31 of each calendar year.

No. 7. *Ex officio* members of all ministry teams and standing committees will not vote or hold presiding office of that body.

No. 8. Procedures for Proxy Voting.

- a. No later than four (4) weeks preceding the meeting at which the vote is to be taken, the Chairperson of the Ministry Team for Worship and Spiritual Life will file with the Moderator a written list of the active members of the church as of that date, including names and last-known mailing addresses, certifying that it is accurate and complete. The certified list so filed will be the voting list for the meeting. Only those active members shown on the list as of the date of its filing will be eligible for proxy assignment. The voting list will be available for inspection and copying by any active member of the church upon request to the church secretary or the ordained ministers.
- b. No later than three (3) weeks preceding the meeting at which the vote is to be taken, a letter will be mailed to all persons on the voting list, containing the question(s) to be voted upon, clearly and impartially stated. Included in this letter will be procedures for the assignment of proxy to the Ministry Team for Finance.
- c. Once the letters containing the question(s) to be voted upon have been mailed, they must be voted upon as published. No amendments or other changes may be proposed or made, either by letter or from the floor.
- d. Members whose proxy has been assigned will be counted as present at the meeting for purposes of establishing a quorum.

This Constitution will take effect immediately upon its adoption, and by its adoption all former constitutions and by-laws become null and void.

This Constitution was last revised and approved by the congregation of First Congregational UCC, DeKalb, Illinois on **April 22, 2012**.

Committee for Constitutional Revision, 2011-2012
Janice Blickhan, Chair; Tim Blickhan, Carole Boesche,
Rev. Joe Gastiger, Rev. Judy Harris, Marlene Meeter, Pat Suchner