

**CONSTITUTION OF**  
**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
IN JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN  
*With edits as of November Consistory meeting*

**Article I - NAME**

The name of this church is the FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST in Janesville, Wisconsin.

**Article II - GOVERNMENT AND IDENTITY**

The government of this church is vested solely in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs. In conformity to the constitution of the United Church of Christ (Article IV, Paragraph 21) this church is independent of all other ecclesiastical bodies and is responsible to no other authority than that of Jesus Christ. We voluntarily work in cooperation with the United Church of Christ in all its levels of organization.

We are a historic downtown church in the city of Janesville that covenants to:

- gather as a worshipping congregation with a growing faith, grounded in God, shaped and inspired by Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- promote freedom of expression that reflects our varied cultures and strives to create a safe place where diversity is expressed and honored.
- be an Open and Affirming and Immigrant Welcoming congregation, encouraging all people to fully participate in the life and ministry of the church.
- join others in caring for the wider community and share in the ongoing struggle for truth, wholeness, justice, and peace.

**Article III - FAITH**

While maintaining the necessity of every individual to shape his or her own creed in the light of direct personal experience, we accept, as representing a general expression of our convictions, the Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

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 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.

## Article IV - MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1. DEFINITION

Members are people who have followed the procedures established by the Consistory for joining First Congregational UCC.

### Section 2. QUALIFICATIONS

- A. A member is a person, age 18 or over, who makes an affirmation of faith and commits to participate in the full life of the congregation.
- B. Any adult aged 18 and over may join the congregation by one of four methods:
  1. By Affirmation of Faith (for those becoming Christians for the first time). Baptism is a prerequisite.
  2. By Covenant of Faith (for previously baptized Christians who, for the first time as adults, are joining a Christian congregation).
  3. By Re-Affirmation of Faith (for those whose previous membership in a Christian congregation has lapsed).
  4. By Certificate of Transfer (from another congregation to ours).
- C. Persons under age 18 who are baptized and have affirmed their baptism in the rite of Confirmation are members of the congregation.

### Section 3. RIGHTS

Members may speak and act in all business matters, sharing in the government of the church.

- A. The power to vote shall be limited to members.
- B. The Consistory may report annually to the denomination the number of members.

### Section 4. DUTIES

Members are expected to:

- A. strive to be faithful to Jesus Christ;
- B. participate faithfully in the worship and programs of the congregation and help to provide leadership;
- C. give systematically and proportionately out of both time and income;
- D. seek to recruit other people to the life of Christ's community, the church; and
- E. work to enrich the total welfare of the church.

### Section 5. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Dismissal is of two kinds:

- A. Voluntary. Any member may request in writing a letter of transfer to another church or they may request that their name be removed from the membership roll.
- B. Involuntary. Any member who has been absent from the life of the church for a period of one year, and has not communicated with it, may be moved to an Inactive List. This procedure would take place only after the church has made an attempt to draw them back into the life of the church and made inquiries of the members as to their concerns or wishes.
  1. "Life of the church" is defined as committing to at least one of the following three responsibilities during the year: attending several worship services, participating in the ministry of the church, or making a financial contribution to the church.
  2. Members who are students or who are incapacitated as deemed by the pastor and/or Parish Care are exempt and will remain as active members. Inactive members are not counted in the membership total and do not speak, act, or vote in the business and government of the church.
  3. The Membership Ministry shall review the membership roll every year.

## Article V - THE PASTOR(S)

### Section 1. CALL OF THE PASTOR

Whenever the congregation shall desire to call a Pastor, a Pastoral Search Committee shall be elected for this purpose, consisting of eight church members plus two alternates, including four members at large and four members of the ministries. The four members at large and two alternates shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the congregation. The four members from the ministries shall be elected by the Consistory. The Pastoral Search Committee shall carefully ascertain the qualifications of candidates and shall present only one candidate at a time for the church's consideration and only when the Pastoral Search Committee is substantially in agreement.

If an Associate Pastor is to be called, it shall be in the same manner as the call of the Pastor.

The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the committee without vote. If an Assistant Pastor is to be employed, it shall be accomplished by members of the Consistory with the Pastor acting as an ex-officio member of the Consistory without vote.

The agreement with the Pastor will be developed by the Pastoral Search Committee, reviewed by the Finance Ministry, and endorsed by the Consistory for presentation to the congregation. The Pastor or an Associate Pastor shall be called by written ballot at a specially called meeting of the congregation. The agreement shall include the length of term (if not indefinite) and the terms of compensation and any additional benefits or payments, all of which shall be stated in the agreement to be signed by the Pastor called, and by the Clerk or President of the Consistory upon authorization by the congregation. Thereafter, matters relating to compensation shall be recommended by the Finance Ministry and approved by the Consistory.

### Section 2. DUTIES

The Pastor shall be the administrative officer of the church, the head of the church staff, and shall have the principal responsibility for conduct of the services for the church, celebration of sacraments and general pastoral care. The Pastor may delegate to an Associate or Assistant Pastor such responsibilities and duties as they may deem appropriate and necessary, subject to the approval of the Consistory. The Associate or Assistant Pastor shall assume such responsibilities as may be delegated to them by the Pastor subject to the approval of the Consistory.

In the event that the Pastor is in any way incapacitated from performing their normal duties, those responsibilities shall be assumed by the President until proper delegation may be made to the Associate Pastor, the Assistant Pastor or other as deemed advisable by the Consistory.

### Section 3. TERMINATION OF MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIP.

The ministerial relationship may be terminated by expiration of the period for which called, upon 60-day notice, by either party, by resignation, or by written ballot vote of the membership of the church present and voting at a special meeting. The Consistory shall

have the authority, by majority vote, to call a special meeting of the congregation for considering the termination of such relationship.

#### Section 4. VOTING.

All actions of this church, either in calling or dismissing a Pastor or Associate or Assistant Pastor shall be by two-thirds vote of the eligible members present and voting.

### Article VI - MEETINGS

#### Section 1. PUBLIC WORSHIP

The Consistory shall determine the frequency and manner of public worship services as well as the frequency and manner of the observation of the sacraments.

#### Section 2. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

The fiscal year shall be concurrent with the calendar year. The annual meeting shall be held within forty-five days following the close of the fiscal year. At that meeting:

- A. Financial reports for the previous fiscal year will be presented.
- B. A budget shall be adopted for the current year.
- C. All appropriate officers and members of ministries shall be elected with their terms commencing immediately thereafter.
- D. Other reports and other appropriate business may be transacted.

#### Section 3. SPECIAL MEETINGS

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Consistory or upon written request of thirty members in good standing directed to the Consistory. Appropriate business of the church that is specifically identified and defined in the notice of the meeting may be transacted.

#### Section 4. RULES FOR CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Unless otherwise elsewhere specifically provided in this constitution, the following rules shall apply to all annual and special congregational meetings:

- A. A quorum shall be defined as 20 members present at the meeting.
- B. Only members shall vote. (See Article IV Section 3 Item A)
- C. Notice of every meeting shall be given by public announcement during the worship services on each of the two Sundays next preceding the date of the meeting, and by publishing the same in a church letter or news bulletin mailed or sent electronically not less than ten days nor more than thirty days before the day of the meeting to all members on the rolls. Each such notice shall contain a statement of the specific item(s) to be considered. The annual meeting may consider and act upon any items or subjects which may be considered by the members, even though not contained in the notice.

- D. Matters shall be passed by a majority vote of members present.
- E. The rules of procedure in the conduct of the meeting shall be those commonly accepted by legislative bodies. They may be expressly fixed by majority action of the members present, for any given meeting.

## Article VII - PROPERTY

The Consistory in the name of the congregation may acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequests or otherwise and may own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property, both real and personal, for such work as the church may undertake. The Consistory may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purposes of the church; they may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objectives and purposes of the church. Articles of conveyance may be executed on behalf of the church by the President and the Clerk upon resolution of the Consistory. Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it shall 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, shall be transferred to the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The Consistory shall not borrow in any one instance in excess of 10% of the current annual budget nor shall the Consistory dispose in any single instance of real property valued at more than 5% of the current annual budget without the approval of the congregation.

## Article VIII - AMENDMENTS

Section 1. The by-laws may be amended at any meeting of the Consistory by a two-thirds vote of Consistory members present, provided that written notice of the proposed changes shall be given to the Consistory members four weeks prior to the Consistory meeting and notice of the proposed changes shall be given to the congregation as required in Article VI section 4 of the constitution at least two weeks prior to the Consistory meeting.

Section 2. This constitution may be amended at any meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote of members present, provided that notice of the proposed changes shall be given as required in Article VI.

# **BY-LAWS**

## **Article I - OFFICES AND TERMS OF OFFICE**

**Section 1. OFFICERS** of this congregation shall be members of the church, and shall include:

- A. A President who shall be elected for a two-year term and assume office at the annual meeting by a majority of those members present and voting.
- B. A Vice President who shall be elected from within the Consistory for a one-year term and is eligible for a second one-year term.
- C. A Clerk and a Treasurer each are to be elected for a term of one year at the annual meeting by a majority of those members present and voting.

### **Section 2. PRESIDENT**

The duties of the President shall include presiding at all meetings of the congregation and the Consistory and other duties as contained elsewhere herein. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside, or in their absence the congregation or the Consistory may elect a Moderator for a given meeting.

### **Section 3. VICE PRESIDENT**

The duties of the Vice President shall include presiding at any congregational or Consistory meetings in the President's absence. The Vice President serving in the second year of a President's term shall prayerfully discuss with the Consistory being nominated and serving a two-year term as President.

### **Section 4. CLERK**

The Clerk shall be a member of the Consistory serving as secretary of the Consistory, reporting to the annual meeting, recording the minutes of pertinent church meetings, and such other duties as may be assigned.

### **Section 5. TREASURER**

The Treasurer shall oversee the accounts of the church and assist in the receipt and disbursements of its funds under the direction of the Consistory or upon resolution of the Consistory for such amounts which are considered repetitive and ordinary. The Treasurer shall file a report appropriately reviewed by a third party appointed by the Consistory, which shall be presented at the annual meeting. The Treasurer shall be a member of the Finance Ministry. The Treasurer shall oversee the work and duties of the Bookkeeper.

## Article II - CONSISTORY AND MINISTRIES

### Section 1. CONSISTORY

- A. The Consistory shall be considered the Directors and Trustees of the corporation. The Consistory shall include:
  1. the President, the Vice President, the Clerk, and the Treasurer,
  2. one representative from each ministry, and
  3. four at-large representatives from the congregation.
- B. In the second year of each President's term, the Consistory shall engage in a process of prayerful discernment. The Consistory shall review the current ministry of the whole church with particular attention to the opportunities and challenges for ministry in the coming two years. Through conversation, the Consistory will identify the skills and strengths needed for the next President. The current Vice President will prayerfully consider if they have the God-given skills and strengths identified by the Consistory. Collaborating closely with Nominating Committee, the Consistory will recommend a candidate to be nominated as President for election at the annual meeting.
- C. Each ministry will select a representative each year.
- D. The at-large members of the Consistory shall be elected for two-year terms each year at the annual meeting.
- E. Members of the Consistory (excluding officers) may serve for no more than two successive terms exclusive of any partial term for which they have been appointed to fill a vacancy.
- F. The Consistory shall oversee the work of the Pastor(s) and the total interest of the church.

### Section 2. THE MINISTRIES

- A. Each ministry shall consist of four to six members. Members of each of the ministries shall be elected at the annual meeting for staggered two-year terms.
- B. Members of the ministries may serve no more than three successive terms excluding any partial term for which they have been appointed to fill a vacancy. The Consistory or members at a Congregational Meeting may make exceptions to term limits as needed.
- C. The Ministries are subject to the Consistory. The Consistory may delegate responsibilities to the ministries.
- D. The ministries may include:
  1. The Outreach Ministry concentrates on matters pertaining to local mission, wider United Church of Christ mission, hands-on service, social action, and program development.
  2. The Finance Ministry concentrates on the supervision of matters pertaining to stewardship, memorials, budget development and control, property care and control, accounts, and disbursements.
  3. The Education Ministry concentrates on matters pertaining to the educational programs of the church. The Director of Education or other

salaried employees may be members of this ministry ex-officio without vote.

4. The Membership Ministry concentrates on matters of membership, nurturing growth, assimilation and retention, fellowship, care for members, and annual review of membership rolls.

## Article III - COMMITTEES

### Section 1. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee shall consist of five to seven members, comprised of one representative from each ministry (four) and three members who shall be elected at each annual meeting. This committee shall prepare a list of nominations for all elected offices for the next annual meeting. It shall nominate people to fill vacancies occurring during the church year on an interim basis with such nominations to be ratified by vote at the following Consistory meeting. The committee is accountable to and shall report progress to the Consistory.

### Section 2. PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

There shall be a Pastoral Relations Committee consisting of five members, who shall serve for two-year terms, with members elected each year at the annual meeting. Members may serve no more than three successive terms excluding any partial term for which they have been appointed to fill a vacancy. This committee shall support a healthy relationship between the pastor and congregants in order to enhance the effectiveness of the church's ministry. Its goal is to promote faithful, shared ministry between the pastor and the congregation. The Committee serves in two primary ways:

- As an advisory group to the pastor: sharing ideas, dreams, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor.
- As a support group for the pastor's leadership: interpreting roles, functions, boundaries, opportunities, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

### Section 3. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee shall consist of three to four members who shall serve for staggered two-year terms, elected each year at the annual meeting. Members may serve no more than three successive terms excluding any partial term for which they have been appointed to fill a vacancy. The duties shall consist of:

1. hiring or terminating any church employee with the exclusion of the Pastor and Associate or Assistant Pastor(s)
2. evaluating the performance of all employees within two months after date of hire, and yearly thereafter
3. recommending compensation packages, including benefits, for all employees and
4. developing and maintaining job descriptions for all positions.

The committee is accountable to and shall report to the Consistory as needed.

#### **Section 4. OTHER MINISTRIES AND COMMITTEES**

The Consistory may appoint any additional ministries or committees, and any ministry or committee may appoint a subcommittee for any purpose consistent with these articles.

Where committees exist, they are responsible to the Consistory through the ministry which delegated responsibilities to them. Ministries may delegate specific portions of their responsibilities to committees.

### **Article IV - ORGANIZATIONS**

All organizations related to this church are regarded as integral parts of the church and under its general supervision and shall make a report to the annual congregational meeting.

### **Article V - ELIGIBILITY, TERMS AND VACANCIES**

Unless otherwise specifically provided in this constitution, any member in this church is eligible for election to any board or office of this church but may hold only one such position at any one time. Exceptions may be allowed if approved when the Nominating Committee submits its report to the annual meeting or through approval of the Consistory.

## **Article VI - RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR CONSISTORY, MINISTRIES AND COMMITTEES**

#### **Section 1. VOTING**

All action shall be taken by majority vote of members present. A quorum of the Consistory and each ministry and committee shall consist of one-third of its voting members.

#### **Section 2. MEETINGS**

The Consistory and ministries shall establish regular meetings – in person, electronic, or hybrid – at which any authorized action may be taken.

Special Consistory meetings may be called by the President, or any three members, but only upon at least 48 hours' notice and only action specifically defined in the notice may be taken.

#### **Section 3. OTHER RULES**

The Consistory and each ministry and committee may establish other procedures consistent with this constitution.

## **Addendum**

### **History of Constitutional Revisions and Up-dates:**

Adopted by the congregation at the Annual Meeting of December 8, 1974.

Article IV amended in its entirety at the Annual Meeting of December 4, 1977.

Article III amended at the Annual Meeting of January 18, 1981.

Article XI, Section C., amended at the Annual Meeting of January 23, 1983. (This citation is believed to be incorrect.)

Updated to comply with established procedures at the Annual Meeting of January 26, 1996.

Updated at the Annual Meeting of January 25, 1997.

Above revisions approved at a special congregational meeting held November 4, 2001.

Above revisions approved by Consistory August 9, 2011.

Article IV, Section 5; Article V, Section 3; By-Laws Article 1, Section 3; By-Laws Article V, amended at the Annual Meeting of February 8, 2015.