

**Principles and Rules of Order**  
of the  
**United Congregational Church**  
of  
**Conway, Massachusetts**

**I The Church**

- A. Name: The name of this church shall be the UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of Conway, Massachusetts.
- B. Ecclesiastical Character: This church is an independent body, and in matters of doctrine, order and discipline is subject to the control of no other organization. But it will extend to other Christian churches and will seek from them the fellowship and cooperation which should unite all true followers of Christ, and it will sustain toward other churches with whom it is affiliated those peculiar relations of mutual counsel and assistance which are common among churches of our order.
- C. Confession of Faith: “I confess my faith in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, and make Him my example, and take for my rule of life His words: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul, and thy neighbor as thyself’.”
- D. Covenant of Worship and Service: “In the presence of God and these witnesses, I give myself unreservedly to His service, and take this to be my Church. Ever mindful of the welfare of my fellow members, I promise to walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love. And I promise that, so far as able, I will attend the services of this Church, observe its sacraments, share in its work, support its benevolences, and endeavor to make it a fruitful body of Christians.”

**II Membership**

- A. Admission: The names of candidates for membership shall be proposed from the pulpit at least one week prior to a vote by the Church. Accepted candidates shall become members by publicly assenting to the Confession of Faith and Covenant if coming on confession of faith, or to the covenant if coming by letter.
- B. Dismission: Letters of dismissal to a particular church may be granted at any regular meeting. No member is considered dismissed until evidence is received of his/her reception by another church.
- C. Inactive Members: The name of any member who has not communicated with this Church for a period of two years shall be placed on the inactive roll.
- D. Reinstatement of Inactive Members: Any inactive member wishing to return to “active” status must engage in regular participation (an average of twice a month) in worship,

church life, or church support for a six-month period. (Exceptions will be made for those necessarily away for school, a season, or health reasons). Following that six-month re-engagement, the inactive member may request verbally or in writing (to the Pastor or Church Council) his/her desire to be re-instated as an active member. Council will then vote on said reinstatement request and if the above terms have been met, the petitioner will be immediately returned to active status with full voting rights and membership privileges.

### **III Officers and Committees**

- A. Officers: The officers of this Church shall be a pastor, a clerk, an assistant clerk, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, an auditor, a moderator and a Sunday school superintendent.
- B. Church Council: The United Congregational Church of Conway will be governed by a Church Council made up initially of one person elected from each of the existing committees and boards (a Sunday school representative, deacon, trustee, a Second Monday representative, a music representative, a missions representative and a stewardship representative) as well as the existing officers (pastor, clerk, treasurer, auditor and moderator). To begin, each existing committee will appoint one member to serve on the Church Council. If an officer's position is vacant, a volunteer for the position will be asked for at the annual meeting or an all-church meeting and there will be a balloted election to fill the vacancy. The moderator will preside over the Church Council that will meet monthly. The Church Council will assume the responsibilities of all the out-going committees and will appoint task teams as needed to fulfill the duties. At annual meeting each year, the Church will elect three new at-large members to serve with the elected officers on said Council. At-large members will be elected for a two-year term. There will be a term limit of four consecutive years for Church Council members except for the pastor and Church officers. If a new pastor is hired or Church officer is elected, they will take an immediate seat on the Church Council. After a period of one year, a previous member may be voted back onto the Church Council. The intent is to maintain the Church Council at a level of twelve members instead of the numerous officers, committees and boards existing now.

These Rules of Order are the final arbiter of church order. In the event that rules are adopted by any group or committee that contradict or conflict with these Principles and Rules of Order of the United Church of Conway, this document shall supercede.

- C. Election: The officers and members of the Church Council shall be elected by ballot. All elections shall be determined by a majority of the members present and voting at an all-church meeting or the annual meeting. The Church Council shall take the initiative in securing a pastor and report to the church for official action.
- D. Terms of Office: The clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer, assistant treasurer, auditor, moderator and Sunday school superintendent shall each be elected annually. The rest of

the Church Council members shall each serve two year terms. There shall be enough Church Council members voted in each year to maintain a level of twelve members. Officers and Church Council members, except the Sunday school superintendent, shall take office following the close of the annual meeting. The Sunday school superintendent shall take office following the close of the Sunday school year. The pastorate shall be reviewed annually by the Church Council prior to the annual meeting and shall continue as long as agreeable to both parties. Either party desiring to terminate the relationship may be required to give the other party three months notice in writing.

E. Vacancies: Vacancies in any of the above-named offices, that of the pastor excepted, may be filled at any regular meeting, provided notice of the intention has been given from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday. The persons thus elected shall hold office during the unexpired term.

#### **IV Duties of Officers and the Church Council**

A. Pastor: The pastor shall have direction of the public worship; administer the ordinances; shall have general spiritual oversight of the congregation; shall be an ex officio member of all committees with the privilege of voting.

B. Clerk: The clerk shall keep a faithful record of the business meetings of the church, including those of the executive committee; issue letters of dismission voted by the church; keep a list of members with dates of admission, dismission or death; keep a record of baptisms and/or dedications; give notice from time to time of vacancies in any of the stated offices; present at the annual meeting a full report of the business transactions during the year.

C. Assistant Clerk: The assistant clerk shall substitute for the clerk in his or her absence; assist the clerk with such other duties as shall be agreed upon between them.

D. Treasurer: The treasurer shall account for all monies received and paid out by him or her on behalf of the Church; give a report at the regular meetings of the church council; give a full report of the financial accounts of the Church for the year at the annual meeting; coordinate the stewardship drive each year following the establishment of a proposed budget by the church council and the annual meeting. The value and activity of all funds, investments, passbooks and checkbooks containing Church assets shall remain accessible to the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, or their representative continuously during the year so an on-going audit can be conducted. There will be two signatures required on all checks being written or monies being paid from the Church General Fund in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00).

E. Assistant Treasurer: The assistant treasurer shall substitute for the treasurer in his or her absence; collect and disburse all monies for benevolent purposes under the direction of the Church Council; give to the treasurer and to the annual meeting an account of all monies received and paid out during the fiscal year; hold the savings account books which are designated exclusively for missions and charitable purposes.

- F. Auditor: The auditor shall audit the books of the treasurer, the assistant treasurer and the trustee in charge of the trust funds prior to the annual meeting. The books of all treasurers of societies within the Church shall be audited each year by their respective auditors and a report presented at annual meeting.
- G. Moderator: The moderator shall be the presiding officer at all meetings of the church. If the moderator is not present at a church meeting, the clerk shall oversee the election of a presiding officer for that meeting.
- H. Sunday School Superintendent: The superintendent shall be responsible for the organization, administration and oversight of the Sunday school program; serve as an ex officio member of the Christian education committee.
- I. Church Council: The Church Council shall have charge of the affairs of the Church subject to the approval and under the direction of the Church. It shall meet at least monthly to transact the current business of the Church and implement the actions taken at church meetings. It shall establish a proposed budget each year prior to the stewardship drive, and shall prepare a final budget after the stewardship drive for submission at the annual meeting. A quorum shall consist of seven members of the Church Council present at any properly scheduled meeting. A person who qualifies as a member in more than one capacity shall have one vote only.

The Church Council shall cooperate with the pastor in ministering to the spiritual interest of the Church; assist in the administration of the ordinances and sacraments of the Church; assist in caring for the sick, the poor, the sorrowing, the dying, the indifferent, and the stranger (These services shall be assisted by the Church Councils' Fund, (formerly known as the Deacon's Fund) administered by the Church Council and the pastor); receive applications for baptism, church membership and marriage, and, act upon them with the necessary preparation of the applicants in cooperation with the pastor; recommend applicants for church membership; give leadership to the Church in the absence of the pastor and supply the pulpit with suitable preachers.

The property and funds of the Church shall be in the care of the Church Council. Any decision concerning the sale, transfer or lease of the property or funds shall be by approval of the members of the Church Council at a regularly scheduled or properly notified meeting of such, with the intent of such actions announced at the previous Church Council meeting. Any decisions concerning the sale, transfer, investment, re-investment, or lease of the property, funds, or assets of the Church in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) shall require the signatures of two Church Council members. Any transactions above in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) shall only be completed after the proposed transaction has been presented in due form to the congregation at a duly called meeting of the church. A notice of the intent to hold said meeting shall be mailed to all members of the Church at least two weeks prior to the meeting date. The meeting will also be announced from the pulpit for two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting date. It will require a vote of two-thirds of the members in attendance for passage of such a transaction. There must be at least twelve members present to constitute a quorum.

The Church Council shall inspect the facilities and grounds of the church at least annually for structural condition, proper and timely maintenance, as well as code compliance. Church members licensed or accredited to perform such inspections shall be asked to assist in these inspections with the church council prior to using outside sources. A written report shall be presented at a Church Council meeting for review and to develop a presentation of actions deemed necessary to the congregation. Facility and grounds inspections must also be performed during and/or immediately following any catastrophic event such as storms, fire, flooding, earthquake, mechanical failure, etc. Safety of the persons performing the inspections is a primary concern. If there is damage to the facilities or grounds requiring immediate emergency repairs or actions, an emergency meeting of the Church Council will be called. In the event anticipated expenditures due to the catastrophic event will be larger than five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00), all Church members will be called via telephone tree to attend an emergency meeting where the required actions will be presented for a vote. There must be at least twelve church members present to constitute a quorum. It will require a vote of two-thirds of the members in attendance for passage of such a transaction.

The Sunday school superintendent will seek the assistance of members of the Church Council, as needed, to provide general oversight of all Christian education work within the Church and arrange for leadership training.

The council shall consider the missions of the Church relating to the local and world-wide ministry of the Church. The council shall encourage the understanding and support by the Church of denominational and ecumenical mission activity, and make recommendations to the Church for contributions to benevolent causes.

The Church Council shall be responsible for maintaining a musical program for the Church. This can be by securing a music director, pianist and/or organist the talents of whom will go toward maintaining the spiritual uplifting of a choir and hymns relating to the worship service brings to the parishioners.

The treasurer, assistant treasurer, or their representative, shall be responsible for canvassing the membership and friends of the Church each year for pledges and financial contributions that will give support to the Church in the ensuing year. This shall take place after the establishment of a proposed budget by the council and prior to the annual meeting. The accomplishment of this task shall be accompanied by concern for the needs of the people visited and/or contacted.

Nominations for any vacancies of officers and Church Council members will be presented at the annual meeting.

## V Meetings

- A. Regular Meetings: There shall be a worship service every Sunday except as otherwise provided by the executive committee. The communion shall take place at the time of the morning service on the first Sunday of each month. All Christians, not members of this Church, who would thus confess their faith in Christ, are invited to unite with us in this service.
- B. Annual Meeting: The annual meeting of the Church shall be held on any one of the first twenty-one days of January. The definite date shall be determined by the executive committee and shall be announced from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays. The fiscal year shall coincide with the calendar year.
- C. Special Meetings: Special meetings of the various interests of the Church may be called by the pastor, clerk, or on request in writing of seven members through a notice from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday. At all meetings of the Church, twelve members shall constitute a quorum. Any special meeting being called, including those to consider the sale, transfer, lease, investment or re-investment of funds as outlined in Section IV, Paragraph K, etc. shall only be held after a notice of intent to hold said meeting has been mailed to all active members of the Church, at least two weeks prior to the meeting date and the special meeting has been announced from the pulpit for two consecutive weeks.

## VI Benevolences

- A. Annual Plan: The Church, believing in systematic giving, shall contribute to benevolent causes according to a plan adopted at the annual meeting.
- B. Recommendations: The assistant treasurer and the missions committee shall make recommendations to the Church for contributions to benevolent causes.

## VII Amendments and Suspensions

- A. Amendments: The Confession of Faith, Covenant of Worship and Service, and Rules of Order of this Church shall not be changed except by a vote of two-thirds present at the annual meeting or at a meeting specially called for the purpose by notice from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays.
- B. Suspensions: Any of the foregoing rules, with the exception of VII. A., may be suspended at any business meeting by unanimous consent.

**Note:** The Congregational Church in Conway was organized July 14, 1768. It was incorporated December 26, 1918. With the Baptist and Methodist Churches it organized the United Church of Conway in 1919. The Methodist Church was dissolved in 1935 and the Baptist Church was

dissolved in 1972. The Congregational Church affiliated with the United Church of Christ on March 26, 1961. The United Church of Conway was dissolved and the Congregational Church voted “to conduct its affairs using the name UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of Conway for all matters except those relating to real estate, and accept as full voting members” all persons then eligible to vote in the affairs of the United Church of Conway, effective May 14, 1980. On legal advice the real estate remains in the name of the Congregational Church of Conway.

**ADDENDUM:**

Changes effective 22 January 2012 were voted at an all church meeting dated November 6, 2011, with the provision that they were not to become effective until an Endowment Policy was voted by the church. This Policy was voted in on 22 January 2012, the second day of the annual meeting.