

BYLAWS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN LENOX
THE CHURCH ON THE HILL



Lenox, Massachusetts

Gathered 1769 | Incorporated 1887

BY LAWS 2024
DRAFT TO BE ADOPTED JANUARY 28, 2024



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Article I. Name

This organization, incorporated under the provision of Chapter 404 of the acts of the year 1887, shall be called “The United Church of Christ in Lenox, Massachusetts,” more familiarly known as “The Church on the Hill.”

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to gather together, in a worshipping and working community, followers of Jesus Christ who seek to deepen their relationship with God and to grow in the understanding of what it means to love one’s neighbors as oneself.

Article III. Government

This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its only head. The government of this Church is vested in its Members who control the administration of its affairs according to their corporate understanding of the Word of God.

This Church holds its standing as a Local Church of the United Church of Christ by its membership in the Berkshire Association of the Southern New England Conference of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

Article IV. Sacraments, Faith, Covenant, Membership

Section 1 – Sacraments: In accordance with the teaching of the Gospels and the practice prevailing among churches with roots in the Protestant Reformation, we recognize two Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. We understand that the Sacraments are typically shared by the Church gathered in worship and shared privately only in exceptional circumstances.

The Sacrament of Baptism shall ordinarily be administered at any service of public worship. Any person, without restriction, may receive Baptism.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion shall be administered one Sunday each month, or as deemed necessary by the Diaconate and Pastor. Any person, without restriction, may receive Communion.

Section 2 – Faith: This Church recognizes the four-fold authority of the Holy Scriptures, Christian tradition and history, the created order, and personal revelation interpreted in community as foundational for our faith and acknowledges in all persons the freedom of interpretation through the Holy Spirit. As a Member congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC), we share its understanding of core Christian teaching as expressed in its official statements.

Section 3 – Covenant: We covenant with Jesus Christ and with one another; and we do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk in the Lord’s Holy Ways. We will strive to be doers of the Word and not hearers only; to be firm in faith, quickened in hope, and constant in love. We will consecrate our time, talent, substance, and influence, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Section 4 – Membership: We are bound together as a church by our covenant with each other and with God to study and to teach the faith of the Church; to take part in the worship and business of the Church; to support the work of the Church here and throughout the world with our labor and our gifts according to our means.

A person who wishes to participate in the life of this Church while maintaining membership in another church may be received as an Associate Member by the same process as active Members are received.

All Members, full and associate, will strive to join regularly in public worship and to celebrate the sacraments so as to nurture and improve the spiritual welfare of this Church, the people it serves, and themselves. They shall also strive to be good stewards, sharing with this congregation their time, talents and financial resources. Members will be expected to familiarize themselves with the history, beliefs and polity of the United Church of Christ as well as this particular Church.

Members of this Church who wish to change their place of worship may request Letters of Transfer to unite with another church. Letters of Transfer will be granted by the Pastor on request.

A Member whose address has long been unknown, or who for a period of two years has not communicated with the Church or contributed to its support with time, talent, or treasure, will, by a vote of the Church Council, be transferred to its Inactive Status. Prior to this transfer, potential inactive members will be contacted by the Pastor and/or Diaconate, if possible.

Member records shall be reviewed by the Church Council yearly, in the month prior to the Annual Meeting based on information received from the Clerk.

Article V. Officers

Section 1 – Officers: The officers of this Church shall be: Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. Only pledging (time, talent and treasure) Members and Associate Members of the Church may serve as officers or be elected to serve on boards. All terms begin at the annual meeting in which they are elected, and end at the following annual meeting.

Except as noted below, all officers shall be elected annually for a term of one year but may be re-elected after each term.

Section 2 – Pastor: The pastor shall be called for an indefinite period at a Congregational Meeting of the Church, by a two-thirds majority of those present and qualified to vote. The call shall be stated, and approved by the Church Members, and shall include all financial and other provisions as agreed upon by the candidate and the Church.

The duties of the pastor shall include, but not be limited to: promoting and guiding the spiritual activities of the Church; conducting its services of worship; preaching

the gospel; administering the Sacraments; giving pastoral care and spiritual guidance to members of the congregation and community through visitations in homes, hospitals, etc. and by other means when desirable; assuming an active and positive role in the Church's planning and implementation of its programs in the community at large.

The office of pastor shall be held until either the Pastor or a majority of Members present and voting in a specially called meeting terminates the relationship by giving sixty days written notice to the other.

Section 3 – Moderator: The Moderator shall be elected annually for a term of one year but shall serve no more than three consecutive terms. The Moderator shall preside at the Annual Meeting, meetings of the Church Council, and other special meetings as called in accordance with Article VIII, Section 2, of these Bylaws.

Section 4 – The Clerk: The Clerk shall keep a record of all business meetings of the Church Council, keep a careful record of the names and addresses of members, with dates of admission and transfer, baptisms, marriages, and deaths; notify all officers and members of boards and committees of their election or appointment. The Clerk shall issue Letters of Transfer and Recommendation voted by the Church Council; preserve, on file, all communications and official written reports; give legal notice of all meetings whenever such notice is required by these Bylaws. The Clerk shall act as parliamentarian at all Church meetings, and shall discern whether there's a quorum and thus declare at the beginning of every congregational meeting.

Section 5 – The Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be elected to serve a renewable two-year term but shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The Treasurer have charge of all monies contributed and received for:

- a) Current expenses, paying out the same by order of the Trustees;
- b) Benevolent purposes and special offerings;
- c) Memorial gifts, and communion offerings, paying out the same by order of the Diaconate;
- d) Educational purposes;

- e) Endowment funds and their distribution under the direction of the Trustees and Finance Committee, and in cooperation with outside financial advisors;
- f) Any special accounts, paying out the same by order of the Church Council or any other specially designated Church board.

All deposits made and all checks drawn shall be in the name of the Church. The Treasurer shall prepare a monthly report of such receipts and expenditures, copies of which shall be distributed in a timely manner to all officers, boards, and committees of the Church whose expenditures are items in the Church's annual budget, and a written detailed report of all receipts and expenditures at the Annual Meeting.

As noted elsewhere, the Treasurer attends meetings of the Church Council, the Trustees, the Finance Committee, and the Memorial Committee.

Section 6 – The Assistant Treasurer: The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected to serve a renewable two-year term but shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The Assistant Treasurer, under the direction of the Treasurer, will assist in carrying out all responsibilities of the Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer will assume the full responsibilities of Treasurer in case of temporary absences, such as illness or vacation.

The Assistant Treasurer shall also work with the Treasurer to collect regular service offerings, maintain records crediting to members' accounts money so designated; and issue quarterly reports to those who pledge, showing the current status of their accounts. After the careful recording of all offerings, the money received shall be promptly deposited. All records of pledges and offerings shall be treated as confidential to maintain the privacy of the congregation. If at any time, there appears to be a particular concern regarding pledges, the Assistant Treasurer or Treasurer may seek counsel of the Pastor.

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will cooperate with periodic audits to inspect and verify all financial accounts and financial procedures of the Church.

Article VI. Boards & Committees

Section 1 – Church Council: The Church Council is responsible to the Congregation only, its task being to visualize the whole ministry of the Church and to coordinate its activities. The Church Council shall act for the Church in any matter that does not require a vote of the congregation, as specifically stated in these Bylaws. It shall consist of the Moderator (presiding), the Pastor, the Clerk (as secretary), the Treasurer, the Chair of the Deacons, and the Chair of the Trustees. If any Church Council member is unable to attend any regular or special meeting, that member must appoint an alternate as their representative. The coordination of all officers, boards, and committees of this Church shall be vested in the Church Council.

Section 2 – The Diaconate: The Diaconate shall cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual needs of the Church and community. It shall aid the Pastor in offering pastoral care as needed, what has traditionally been considered care for the poor, the sick and the sorrowing. It shall help the Pastor in extending an invitation to strangers to worship with us and shall see to acts and events of hospitality. It shall have the responsibility for supplying the pulpit in the temporary absence of the Pastor.

There shall be three to six members on the Diaconate who shall be elected annually for a term of three years. After serving one full term, Deacons may be re-elected for an additional one-year term each year for a maximum of three additional years.

The Music Director is responsible to the Diaconate. The Diaconate shall assist the Music Director in providing a well-rounded musical program for the Church.

The Diaconate shall provide and train ushers for receiving all who gather for worship, and shall organize liturgists for Sunday service and hosts for coffee hour following worship each week, providing sign-up sheets in the Meetinghouse narthex or Chapel for Members to fill in.

The Diaconate shall submit an annual budget to the Trustees outlining its total operating expenses for the following year. The items included shall be for: worship supplies, fellowship supplies, music, pulpit supply, guest musicians, and the care and maintenance of the organ, pianos and sound system, and shall direct the Treasurer to make specific payments within the limits of the approved budget.

Section 2a – The Memorial Committee: is a sub-committee of the Diaconate comprising the Pastor, a member of the Diaconate, and the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer or someone appointed in their stead. This committee is responsible for receiving, acknowledging, and dispensing of memorial gifts.

Section 3 – The Trustees: The Trustees shall consist of 3 - 6 members elected to serve one three-year term. After serving one full term, a Trustee may be re-elected for an additional one-year term each year for a maximum of three additional years.

The Trustees shall hold all property of the Church in trust and shall provide insurance for the same. The Trustees shall not have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, contract for loans, or transfer property without a special vote, or authorization, from the congregation.

They shall prepare a budget for the following year and present it to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. The budget shall incorporate and revise, if necessary, the requests from other boards and committees of the Church. The Trustees may authorize the Treasurer to borrow from reserve funds to meet current budgetary expenses when necessary. They shall receive quarterly reports from the Finance Committee of the financial assets of the Church. They shall assist in raising of monies to meet current and other expenses of the Church. They shall periodically engage an auditor to review the Church's accounts and financial procedures and make available the auditor's report to the congregation.

The Trustees shall fix fees for use of Church property.

The Trustees shall either function as the Church's Personnel Committee or shall appoint a Personnel Committee of three to six members. As such, the Trustees shall:

- a) Hire all paid staff, with the exception of the Pastor;
- b) Fix staff salaries within the limits of the approved budget;
- c) Oversee yearly evaluations of all paid staff.

The Trustees shall have charge of, and contract for, the maintenance, repair and supplies of the Church's physical assets (not including the organ and piano).

Section 3a – The Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the Trustees and shall consist of the Moderator, Treasurer, and at least three members appointed by the Trustees for a three-year term, limited to two terms. They shall be responsible for overseeing the financial assets of the Church, in conjunction with a financial advisor. The Committee shall maintain and distribute funds from the investments as stated in the Endowment Fund Resolutions and Statement of Investment Policies. They shall meet at least once each quarter and provide a quarterly update of Investments to the Trustees, and a full and complete account at each Annual Meeting of the Congregation, and shall meet with the Trustees upon request regarding investment policy and performance.

Section 4 – Committee of Delegates: The Committee of Delegates shall consist of up to three members, one elected annually for a period of two years but may be re-elected after each term. It is the duty of this Committee to attend those Area, Association, State and National meetings of the United Church of Christ at which the Church is allowed representation. The Delegates shall vote in the name of the Church and, periodically, give reports of such meetings to the Church Council, and at the Annual Meeting of the Church. The Delegates shall submit a budget covering their annual expenses to the Trustees.

Article VII. Vacancies

Section 1 – Vacancies in Lay Leadership: Vacancies in any office, board or committee, except that of Pastor, occurring between Annual Meetings, shall be filled by the Church Council. Such appointments shall be for the balance of the current year only and will not count as a full term. If for any reason, a position, or positions, on the various boards or committees cannot be filled, incumbents may (if they are willing) remain until their replacement(s) can be found.

Section 2 – Vacancies in the Pastoral Office: Should a vacancy occur in the Pastoral Office, the Church Council shall work with the Associate Conference Minister of the UCC Conference to establish an interim search committee which shall call an interim or designated term pastor to serve until a new pastor is called and during whose term the congregation shall establish a search committee of three-five members of the congregation.

The Committee shall conduct the search for a suitable candidate for the vacant office. This process should include, but not be limited to: the immediate notification of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ that a vacancy exists; in conjunction with the congregation, develop a profile as prescribed by The United Church of Christ; the solicitation and review of profiles/resumes from interested and eligible applicants; the personal interviews of those applicants deemed compatible with the Church's expression of its needs and future mission; arranging for, and hearing, an example of the preaching capabilities of those applicants considered to be likely candidates for the position; selection and presentation of a candidate for consideration at a congregational meeting.

Article VIII. Services & Meetings

Section 1 – Services of Worship: Services of public worship shall be held at a stated time each week.

Section 2 – Meetings: The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held on the last Sunday in January or on some other date agreed upon by the Church Council. It shall be for the election of officers, boards and committees, and for the transaction of any other business which may legally come before it.

Notice of the Annual Meeting will be given at the regular worship service on the two Sundays prior to the meeting in January, and by a public notice, signed by the Clerk, posted in the narthex of the Church and in the Chapel, eight days before the Meeting.

Copies of all Annual Reports of officers, boards, and committees shall be available for general distribution in the vestibule of the Church and at the Chapel on the two Sundays before the Annual Meeting.

Special congregational meetings may be called by the Moderator, by a particular board or committee, or by a petition of at least ten eligible members. The purposes for such meetings shall be announced, by the Clerk or Moderator, at a worship service at least two weeks before the meeting date, unless this is not feasible, and a shorter notice period is approved by the Moderator.

A quorum for any meeting of the congregation shall be 50% of the active members and shall be declared by the Clerk at the beginning of the meeting. A simple majority of those present is required to carry a motion. The rules of Parliamentary procedure shall be in accordance with “Robert’s Rules of Order.”

Article IX. By-Law Review & Amending

A committee shall be appointed from the Church council to review these Bylaws at least once every five years. The committee shall suggest revisions as deemed necessary. These Bylaws may be amended at any Annual Meeting by a vote of seventy-five percent of the Members present and voting, or at a Congregational Meeting specially called for that purpose, in advance of which copies of the new Bylaws shall be provided to voting Members by at least two weeks.

Article X. Continuity of Ministry

While it is our intent that this Church will continue its ministry without end, it is prudent to include in the Constitution and By-laws a vision for faithful and orderly transition in the event of cessation of this faith community.

For this to occur, a two-thirds majority vote of active Members in accordance with Article VIII, Section 2 is required. This is a sorrowing decision, but it is also an opportunity for missional decision-making. It will have the Church Council proceed, in partnership with the Southern New England Conference, in liquidating all real property and contents thereof, following which all Church assets of whatever nature shall be transferred to the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ and/or other entity(s) as voted by Congregational Meeting.

It is understood that such assets do not belong to any Members of this Church but are assets for missional work in the world, which shall continue as long as the Holy Spirit is at work, which will doubtless outlast any human endeavoring to participate in such holy work. We bless unto eternity our humble efforts in this regard.