

**Constitution and By-Laws for**  
***Westfield Congregational Church***  
of the United Church of Christ, Danielson, CT

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## ***BY-LAWS of WESTFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH***

### **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The corporate name of this Church shall be "The Westfield Congregational Church of Danielson, Connecticut." It shall be affiliated with the United Church of Christ.

### **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for sharing in the worship of God and making God's will dominant in the lives of people, individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings and saviorhood of Jesus Christ.

### **ARTICLE III - COVENANT**

(Polity)

The government of this Church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to Laws of the State of Connecticut.

We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the word and the will of God. We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshipping God, and striving for truth, justice and peace. As did our forebears, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.

One expression of our faith is:

*STATEMENT OF FAITH*

(Approved by General Synod of the UCC)

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, and to whose deeds we testify:

God calls the worlds into being,  
creates humankind in the divine image,  
and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,  
God has come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

God calls us into the Church

to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be servants in the service of the whole human family,  
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.

God promises to all who trust

forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God.

Amen.

## ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

### *Section A. Membership*

This church welcomes into its membership all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, who propose to live according to his law of love, and desire to share the joy and responsibility of Christian fellowship and corporate worship.

Its membership shall consist of those who have been approved by the minister and /or the Board as to Christian faith and character, and having received baptism when not previously baptized, are formally received into its fellowship by letter of transfer or by affirmation of faith.

Members are expected to support the mission, maintenance and programs of the church by sharing treasure, talents and time as generously as possible.

### *Section B. Associate Membership*

Associate members shall be those who have church membership elsewhere and who, for valid reasons, do not wish to sever them, but who desire to share in the fellowship of this church while resident here. Associate members shall be officially listed as such by the clerk on approval and recommendation by the minister and/or Board and their names entered upon a special Associate Membership list. They shall have full rights and responsibilities as outlined above for regular members.

### *Section C. Termination of Membership*

Termination of membership may be by:

- 1) Letter of transfer - Members in good standing shall, on request, be granted a letter of transfer to another church.
- 2) Letter requesting withdrawal - They shall be released from membership, if after due conference with the minister and/or Board, and personal deliberation, they are clear in their desire for full release.
- 3) Retirement to inactive status - Members whose addresses have long been unknown or who for a period of two years, in spite of kindly reminders, have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support, may be transferred to the inactive list upon the recommendation of the minister and/or Board, and by vote of the Church Board.

## ARTICLE V - ORGANIZATION

The Church shall have a single governing body, the Church Board, referred to herein as the Board. The Board shall consist of 20 voting members – including the 6 Officers of the Church, described below. Officers' terms shall be 1 year and officers may serve without term limitations.

*Section A. Board Authority and Responsibility*

- 1) Acts as a personnel committee - hire lay staff; approve job descriptions. Also propose new budget items related to staffing.
- 2) Keep a permanent record, (i.e. minutes), of all their transactions.
- 3) The Board has the power to buy, sell, mortgage or borrow (on unsecured notes) in amounts of \$5,000 or less. They may not lease or transfer any real estate without specific vote of the church authorizing such action.
- 4) The Board has charge of the financial affairs of the Church and shall authorize and direct the Treasurer as to payments of monies placed in their care, authorize the Treasurer to make prompt payment of salaries and current expenses, and shall make full report at the Annual Meeting of the Church, including the report of the annual audit.
- 5) Members of the Board are to identify and recruit people to assist in the various areas of ministry and assist with the work of the church.
- 6) The Board is authorized to fill any vacant elected office between meetings of the church.
- 7) The Board may replace members whose lack of attendance restricts the work of the Board.

*Section B. Officers*

*1) Lay Moderator*

- a) The Lay Moderator shall preside over all business meetings of the Church and of the Church Board. The Moderator is to insure that effective communication is maintained throughout the church body. The Lay Moderator shall also be the official spokesperson of the Church and for the Church.
- b) The Lay Moderator shall call a Nominating Committee to recommend candidates for elected leaders.
- c) The Lay Moderator shall appoint an auditor who shall file a report with the Board.
- d) The Lay Moderator shall call together a Christian Education member, the Pastoral Relations person and the pastor to review the Safe Church policy annually.

*2) Assistant Lay Moderator*

- a) The Assistant Lay Moderator shall work closely with the Lay Moderator. In the absence of the Lay Moderator, the Assistant Lay Moderator shall be prepared to serve in the same capacity as the Moderator. In the absence of the Assistant Lay Moderator, any member of the Board may be appointed to chair a Board meeting.

- b) The Assistant Lay Moderator serves as an Advocate for church members at Board meetings.

3) *Treasurer*

- a) The Treasurer shall be responsible to the Church Board. The duties shall be those usually associated with this office (including the signing of checks, initialing of bills, ensuring prompt payment of all bills, and maintaining records of all Church investments.) The treasurer shall ensure the preparation of the Annual Proposed Budget and oversee other financial matters including the weekly collection process, the management of bequests memorial gifts and trust funds. The Treasurer may be bonded by the church.

4) *Assistant Treasurer*

- a) The Assistant Treasurer will assist the Treasurer as the Treasurer deems appropriate.

5) *Clerk*

- a) The Clerk shall keep a record of all business meetings of the Church and of the Church Board. These records shall be available to any member upon request.
- b) The Clerk shall ensure accurate records of Church membership, baptisms, marriages deaths, and letters of transfer. The Clerk shall issue notice of all meetings of the Church and of the Church Board, and prepare a list of members no longer to be retained in active membership each year.
- c) The Clerk will assist the Historian by supplying records and data for Church cumulative records.

6) *Assistant Clerk*

- a) The Assistant Clerk will assist the Clerk in keeping records of the church, baptisms, marriages, births, deaths and membership.
- b) The Assistant Clerk and the Historian will evaluate records and make recommendations for archiving data and records.
- c) The Assistant Clerk will record minutes of all business meetings in the absence of the Clerk.

*Section c. Board Composition*

- 2) 20 Members as follows :
- 3) 2 with Worship/Ministry responsibilities
- 4) 2 with Property/Fiscal responsibilities
- 5) 2 with Missions/Outreach responsibilities
- 6) 2 with Christian Education responsibilities
- 7) 2 with Stewardship/Fundraising responsibilities
- 8) 2 with Fellowship/Development responsibilities

- 9) 1 with Pastoral Relations responsibilities
- 10) 6 Church Officers
- 11) Pastor Ex-Officio

*Section D. Board Member Responsibilities*

- 1) *Worship/Ministry*
  - a) Oversees all aspects of the worship service, including communion, music, sanctuary, greeters, ushers, acolytes, flowers, pulpit supply, etc.
  - b) Assists the pastor in ministering to all spiritual needs of the Church.
  
- 2) *Property*
  - a) Oversees the maintenance of all church property. Works with the treasurer and/or assistant treasurer in managing the church's assets.
  - b) They may authorize expenditures up to \$1,000.
  
- 3) *Missions/Outreach*
  - a) Directs the Church's charitable giving, mission and outreach programs in accordance with the Vision Statement. This includes UCC, Windham Association and community-based programs.
  - b) Is attentive to the needs and concerns of the congregation.
  
- 4) *Christian Education*
  - a) Coordinates all religious education programs held through the church. This will include youth, adult, and special programs held during the year such as confirmation class, Youth Recognition Sunday, Vacation Bible School.
  - b) Enlists and supports Sunday School teachers, keeps accurate attendance records, maintains appropriate parental consent records, and selects curricula in consultation with interested teachers and/or parents.
  
- 5) *Stewardship/Fundraising*
  - a) Coordinates stewardship activities throughout the year, including the annual Pledge drive.
  - b) Coordinates annual fund-raising opportunities throughout the year, including church suppers, Winter Bazaar and other fundraising activities.
  
- 6) *Fellowship/Development*
  - a) Coordinates fellowship opportunities throughout the year, including coffee hour, new member orientation, and social events.
  - b) Coordinates spiritual and personal growth opportunities.



7) *Pastoral Relations*

- a) Addresses potential problems, conflicts, and misunderstandings. Is responsible to both the congregation and the pastor, on matters relating to the pastoral service.
- b) Advocates for the needs of both the congregation and the pastoral family.
- c) Coordinates with the Board annual ministry performance evaluations of both the pastor and congregation.

*Section E. Board Member Terms*

- 1) Member terms are two (2) years.
- 2) It is recommended that elected Members ~~may~~ serve no more than 2 consecutive terms.
- 3) It is recommended that Board members take one year off before returning to the Board.

*Section F. Pastor*

The Pastor shall have responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Church. This person shall be an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, or having been duly ordained in another communion, this person shall seek the appropriate standing in the United Church of Christ. The Pastor is an ex-officio member of the Board.

- 1) When a vacancy occurs, the Board shall appoint a ministerial search committee whose responsibility shall be to contact the Conference Placement Office. This committee shall act as a personnel committee to screen potential candidates and shall recommend to the general church membership a candidate for final approval.
- 2) When a pastor accepts a call to the Church, the Board and the pastor shall join in requesting the Windham Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ to arrange for a service of installation or recognition. A report of this service shall be included in the records of the Church.
- 3) The Pastor shall be elected by the Church membership and shall serve for an indefinite period of time. Said services may be terminated with three months written notice by either the Church or the Pastor, subject to counsel of the Ministerial Standing Committee of our Association. Under unusual circumstances and for good cause the written notice requirement of three months may be waived.

*Section G. Nominating Committee*

The Nominating Committee shall consist of three people recommended to the Lay Moderator by current members of the Board and the Pastor for the March meeting. At the June Annual Meeting of the Church the Nominating Committee shall present:

- 1) A slate of Church Officers as described in Article V, Section B&C.
- 2) A slate of Board members as described in Article V, Section B. The consent of the candidates must be obtained before their names are placed in nomination. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. Officers and Board members must be members of Westfield Church.
- 3) Delegates to the Connecticut Conference (2), Windham Association (2), and Killingly/Brooklyn Interfaith Board (2).

## **ARTICLE VI - MEETINGS**

### *Section A. Meetings of the church as a whole.*

- 1) The Church's Annual Financial Meeting shall be held in January at which time the annual budget will be voted on.
- 2) The Church's Annual Organizational Meeting shall be held in June at which time annual reports shall be presented, officers and other members of the organization elected and other business transacted.
- 3) Special meetings shall be called by the Clerk whenever requested by the Minister, Lay Moderator, the Board or at least five members of the Church.
- 4) Special meetings shall be called by a notice stating the purpose printed in the Sunday Bulletin at least two of the Sundays prior to the meeting.
- 5) A quorum of twenty five percent of active church members shall be required for the conduct of business at all meetings of the Church as a whole.

### *Section B. Meetings of the Board*

- 1) The Board shall meet regularly, at least 10 times per year, at such times as the Board may determine. Special meetings may be called at the request of the pastor, the Lay Moderator, or of any three members of the Board. Notice of special meetings shall be printed in the worship bulletin or shall be given to each member individually at least three

days before the meeting. In all meetings of the Board a simple majority of elected members shall constitute a quorum.

## **ARTICLE VII – ELECTIONS**

- 1) Elections of Officers and Board members shall be held at the June Annual Church Meeting. Candidates shall be presented by the Nominating Committee.

## **ARTICLE VIII - PROPERTY**

### *Section A*

The Church may in its corporate name sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise and own, hold, invest, reinvest or dispose of property both real and personal for such work as the Church may undertake. It 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. It 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.

### *Section B*

In case of a division in the membership of the Congregation, both parties shall submit the question of the right to the property to the Conference and the decision of said judicatory shall be binding on all members of the Congregation.

### *Section C*

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 obtained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the Conference of which the Congregation is a member. In the event of dissolution, the Conference will be asked to dedicate at least fifty one percent of the Church assets to ministry in the Killingly area.

## **ARTICLE IX - RULES OF ORDER**

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by these By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to these By-Laws may be made at any duly called Congregational meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present, with the proposed amendment(s) having been presented in writing two weeks prior to the meeting.