

Constitution of Central Square Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

Approved March 19, 2023

Article I. Name

The name of this church is Central Square Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, as provided by Chapter 187 of the Acts of the General Court of Massachusetts of 1904. In 1961 the church became a member of the denomination known as the United Church of Christ.

Article II. Purpose and Policy

The purpose of this church shall be to maintain public services for the worship of God and the teaching and preaching of the Gospel and to work for growth in Christian grace, the progress of knowledge, the pursuit of justice, the reign of peace, and the interconnection of all God's creatures.

The church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its sole head and finds the Holy Scriptures (interpreted by the Holy Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience) its guide in matters of faith and discipline.

This church shall be an independent body, not amendable to any other ecclesiastical authority or hierarchy, having within itself all necessary powers of government and discipline. The government of this church is vested in its members, who shall exercise control of all its affairs. It accepts the obligation of a mutual council, comity, and cooperation involved with the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ and pledges itself to share its common aims and work in a covenantal manner. Actions by, or decisions or advice emanating from, the General Synod, the Southern New England Conference, or Pilgrim Association will be held in the highest regard by Central Square Congregational Church. This regard will be evidenced by prayerful consideration and discernment, always seeking to understand the intent, and always using respectful language in any communication which expresses disagreement.

Article III. Membership

Persons become members of Central Square Congregational Church, UCC, by:

- a.) baptism and either confirmation or profession of faith
- b.) re-affirmation or re-profession of faith
- c.) letter of transfer or certification from other Christian churches.

Persons wishing to become members shall so inform and then consult with the pastor.

All persons who are or shall become members of Central Square Congregational Church, UCC, are thereby members of the United Church of Christ.

Members are expected to regularly attend the worship services of the church, either in person or virtually, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to give as a matter of habit to its support and benevolence, to share in its organized work, and to diligently seek the spiritual welfare of the church. Active membership is fundamentally defined as being regularly present and involved in the life of the church and supporting the church financially.

All members are expected to follow the Behavioral Covenant for Christian Communication of Central Square Congregational Church, UCC.

All members of the church may vote at its business meetings.

Members who desire to maintain membership in this church will be expected to communicate at least once per year and make a financial contribution toward the support of the church. If any person neglects to do this for two consecutive years, they will be moved to the inactive member list. Inactive members forfeit voting rights. Active membership can be restored by a letter of request to the pastor.

Article IV - Pastor, Cabinet, and Officers

Section 1: Pastor, Associate Pastor, and other staff

- A. Pastor - The Pastor shall be charged with the spiritual welfare of the church and its relationships. The Pastor shall seek to enlist persons as followers of Christ; preach the Gospel; administer the sacraments and rites; have under their care the services of public worship; give pastoral guidance; administer the activities of the church in cooperation with the Cabinet and Teams. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Cabinet and all Teams but does not have to attend all meetings.

The Pastor and/or Associate Pastor shall be called under the terms as specified in a Letter of Call, by a two-thirds vote of the active members voting at a properly called Church Meeting. The process outlined in the Policy Handbook shall be followed for calling and terminating Pastors.

- B. The Pastor, in cooperation with the Property and Finance Team, shall be responsible for the supervision of the Associate Pastor and other staff. Annually, they will conduct a written performance review of all paid staff in accordance with their job descriptions.

Staff shall be hired and terminated at the discretion of the Pastor and the Property and Finance Team.

Section 2: Cabinet

The Cabinet shall consist of the Pastor ex-officio, the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, a representative from the Spiritual Engagement Team, a representative from the Property and Finance Team, a

representative from the Congregational Engagement Team, and a representative from the Community Engagement Team.

The Moderator shall lead the Cabinet meetings. The Cabinet shall meet monthly, and a majority of the Cabinet membership shall constitute a quorum. All church members are welcome at the monthly Cabinet meetings, however when a situation arises that requires confidentiality, the Moderator or the Pastor may call for a special closed meeting of the cabinet.

1. The duties of the Cabinet shall include:

- Reviewing church programs and issues
- Cooperating with the Property and Finance Team in the preparation of the annual budget of the church
- Approving changes to the Team Handbooks
- Appointing and dissolving ad hoc teams as it deems appropriate
- Having the power to affirm the slate of elected Team members provided by the Congregational Engagement Team, and to affirm a successor to any officer who is unable to finish their term of office.
- Conducting an annual Church Review

2. Fiduciary Responsibilities

- **Authority of the Cabinet:** The Cabinet shall have the care and custody of investments and other evidence of ownership in the name of the corporation. The Cabinet shall authorize the treasurer of the corporation to execute such instruments of transfer as may be required. However, the Cabinet shall not have the power to buy, sell, mortgage lease, or transfer real property without specific authority by a vote of the church members at a called meeting.
- **Funds donated without restrictions:** As to unrestricted gifts or bequests, the Cabinet may treat the funds in any manner deemed proper for the maintenance and betterment of the church and its congregation, including use for current expenses or long-term investments,
- **Funds donated with restrictions:** Funds bequeathed or donated to the church with restrictions to be held as income-producing may be invested with the United Church of Christ Conference as custodian, or in long-term savings certificates, or through another investment company as recommended by the Cabinet and our current investment manager.
- **Dissolution:** If the church should cease to exist or function, or upon a vote of its members to dissolve, the Cabinet, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the church, may transfer its assets and all property and interests of which it shall then possess, including any device, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after dissolution, to another religious society by a two-thirds vote of the members present. Lacking such a vote, assets shall be transferred to the Southern New England Conference of the UCC.
- **Reports:** The Cabinet shall present a full report of trust funds and all other property entrusted to its care at the Annual Meeting of the Church.
- **Budget Preparation:** The Cabinet, in conjunction with the Property and Finance Team, shall annually prepare a budget for the upcoming fiscal year for presentation, possible modification, and adoption at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3 - Officers

All officers shall be members of the church. They shall begin their service on July 1 and shall serve one-year terms, with a limit of six consecutive terms. They may not be eligible for re-election until the lapse of one year. No person shall serve in more than one elected position at the same time. Each outgoing officer shall provide orientation to the incoming officer.

If a conflict of interest arises involving officers, the pastor(s), and/or elected members of the Teams, the parties involved shall recuse themselves from votes.

Moderator

The Moderator shall preside at the Annual Meeting and at all other regular and special meetings of the church, and at all meetings of the Cabinet. In the absence of the Moderator, a Moderator pro tem shall be designated by the Cabinet.

Clerk

- Shall keep a faithful record of proceedings at church meetings, providing the Moderator with one copy and keeping another on file at the church office,
- Shall oversee the keeping of a register of the names of all members of the church, and the dates and modes of their reception and removal,
- Shall oversee the keeping of records of all baptisms, marriages, and funerals performed in the church or parish by any Pastor representing this church,
- Shall cooperate with the office staff in maintaining files in the church office for all important correspondence and the reports of all officers and Teams
- Shall maintain an up-to-date record of all policies, job descriptions, elected Team members, and the Constitution.

- Shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the pastor(s) or the Moderator.
- In case the Clerk is absent from any meeting, a Clerk pro-tem shall be appointed by the Moderator

Office of the Treasurer

The Office of the Treasurer shall consist of the following elected officials. Elected Officers of the Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Property and Finance Team.

Treasurer

- Shall receive, record, hold, and disburse all church money, under the direction of the Property and Finance Team, and shall keep complete and accurate books of account
- Shall have custody of all valuable papers relating to the property of the church and a copy of all employee contracts
- Shall prepare regular financial statements and give reports at the direction of the Property and Finance Team.
- Shall be bonded, the cost of which shall be borne by the church.
- Shall keep the church funds in such banking institutions as shall be approved by the Property and Finance Team
- Serves as a member of the Cabinet

Assistant Treasurer

- Shall have the same duties as the Treasurer
- Shall work closely with the Treasurer and be familiar with all the books and financial operations of the church
- Shall perform all the duties of the Treasurer whenever the latter is absent or unable to serve

Financial Secretary

- Shall keep a full and correct account between the church and each person contributing toward the current expenses and benevolences or other funds of the church
- Shall receive all contributions to the church, whether by mail, electronic funds transfer, or in the regular church offerings, and shall record them and deposit them in the proper bank accounts as promptly as possible
- Shall periodically render statements of account to all persons who have pledged or contributed financially to the support of the church
- Shall acknowledge undesignated memorial gifts to the donor for their personal tax purposes.

Assistant Financial Secretary (optional)

- Shall have the same duties as the Financial Secretary and shall perform these duties whenever the Financial Secretary is unavailable or absent.
- The Assistant Financial Secretary shall work closely with the Financial Secretary so as to be familiar with all procedures and software applications

Section 4 -Teams

There will be four standing Teams: the Spiritual Engagement Team, the Property and Finance Team, the Congregational Engagement Team, and the Community Engagement Team. There shall be three elected leaders of each team that will organize and oversee the responsibilities and projects of the team and one elected leader shall represent the Team at Cabinet meetings. The leaders shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term and will be eligible for re-election without restriction if re-nominated by the Congregational Engagement Team. Additional team members shall be flexible/fluid and some team members may be recruited for specific projects or purposes. Ad hoc teams may be appointed by the Cabinet for special purposes.

Spiritual Engagement Team

The responsibilities of the Spiritual Engagement Team will include such things as assisting in creating worship, administering sacraments, and developing and maintaining Christian education programs. Details of the team's responsibilities are delineated in the Spiritual Engagement Team Handbook.

Property and Finance Team

The responsibilities of the Property and Finance Team will include such things as assisting in fiscal management, maintaining church properties, fundraising, and conducting business affairs of the church. Details of the team's responsibilities are delineated in the Property and Finance Team Handbook.

Congregational Engagement Team

The responsibilities of the Congregational Engagement team will include such things as fellowship, parish care, talent cultivation, and nominating elected members of the standing Teams. Details of the team's responsibilities are delineated in the Congregational Engagement Team Handbook.

Community Engagement Team

The responsibilities of the Community Engagement Team will include things such as developing Christian outreach both locally and globally, developing programs for community outreach and connections, and strengthening our bond with the Wider Church. Details of the team's responsibilities are delineated in the Community Engagement Team Handbook.

Article V: Meetings

Section 1- Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held on the second Sunday in June for the following:

1. receiving/hearing reports of all Officers and Teams
2. approving the recommended budget, as presented by the Property and Finance Team for that year.
3. receiving and voting on the nominations of the Congregational Engagement Team.

Section 2 - Special Meetings

Special Meetings of the church may be called by the Cabinet, pastor(s), or the moderator whenever pending business may require, or upon written request signed by not less than 12 members of the church, in which case the moderator shall call the meeting within three weeks after receipt of the request.

Section 3 - Notice of Meetings

Notice of Meetings shall be posted in prominent locations in the church at least seven days before each meeting, announced from the pulpit at the earliest opportunity, emailed, and posted on other available social media. If the purpose of the meeting is to consider financial matters involving sums of over \$5,000 or an amendment to the Constitution, a written notification shall be made to all members via US Mail. All notices of the meetings shall include the warrant listing the articles to be acted upon. No other matters may be presented for action except upon presentation of the subject matter in written form to the moderator before the meeting and approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

Section 4 - Quorum

Fifteen percent (15%) of the members of the church that are eligible to vote, as reported in the Annual Report, shall constitute a quorum.

Article VI: Official Year

The official fiscal year of the church shall begin on July 1, with elected terms to begin at the close of the annual meeting.

Article VII: Amendments

This Constitution may be amended at any duly called church meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members with voting status present and voting, providing a draft of the proposed amendment is included in the warrant for the meeting. Following such action, the clerk shall send copies of the amended document to the moderator, the pastor(s), the officers, and the elected leaders of all Teams.