

**First Congregational-Christian Church, United Church of Christ
New Gloucester, Maine**

Bylaws

**19 Gloucester Hill Rd, PO Box 14
New Gloucester, ME 04260
(207) 926-3260**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLE I: NAME	1
ARTICLE II: PURPOSE	1
ARTICLE III: MISSION/VISION	1
ARTICLE IV: GOVERNANCE	1
ARTICLE V: FAITH AND COVENANT	1
ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP	2
ARTICLE VII: GOVERNING BODY	2
ARTICLE VIII: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS/FISCAL YEAR	3
ARTICLE IX: BOARD OF DIRECTORS	3
ARTICLE X: TRUSTEES, DEACONS AND MISSIONS	5
ARTICLE XI: DESCRIPTION OF ADDITIONAL POSITIONS AND GROUPS	6
ARTICLE XII: PASTOR	7
ARTICLE XIII: CHURCH ASSETS, INDEMNITY, AND DISSOLUTION	7
ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS	8

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this congregation shall be The First Congregational-Christian Church, United Church of Christ, located in New Gloucester, Maine.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

*God has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does our God require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?*

— Micah 6:8

We, the members of this church, strive to share the love of Christ Jesus by doing unto others as we would do unto ourselves. We accept the dignity, worth, and belovedness of each person as we strengthen our spiritual family through sacraments and prayer. We bring to our greater community our efforts toward peace, understanding, freedom, and social justice through acceptance of all.

ARTICLE III: MISSION/VISION

As an Open and Affirming congregation, we encourage spiritual growth through acceptance, education, and action.

We are a joyful, multigenerational community sharing our spirit through music, story, and conversation for all to hear.

We are dedicated to the support of our neighbors who need a community that is willing to walk with them physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

ARTICLE IV: GOVERNANCE

This self-governing church shall be in covenant with the United Church of Christ, through membership in the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference.

ARTICLE V: FAITH AND COVENANT

A. Covenant. This church holds that Christian faith springs from the life and teachings of Christ Jesus. We grant to each individual the right to their interpretation of the principles of the Christian faith and respect each person's honest convictions. We celebrate two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

B. Affirmation of Faith. The following Affirmation of Faith, adopted from the United Church of Canada for this congregation, reflects our mission and vision, and is not a test for membership:

God is Holy Mystery, beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description. Yet, in love, the one eternal God seeks relationship.

So God creates the universe and with it the possibility of being and relating.
God tends the universe, mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.
God enlivens the universe, guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.
Grateful for God's loving action, We cannot keep from singing.
With the Church through the ages, we speak of God as one and triune:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
We also speak of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, God, Christ, and Spirit
Mother, Friend, and Comforter, Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,
and in other ways that speak faithfully of the One on whom our hearts rely,
the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.
We witness the Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP

The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control as outlined in these Bylaws.

A. Active Members. Any person desiring to join in the ministry of this church in support of its mission and vision may request membership through one of the following: acceptance of covenant; confirmation; adult baptism; letter of transfer; or reaffirmation of faith. Membership shall be duly noted by the Pastor and recorded as required by the Deacons. Members are encouraged to participate in the fellowship of congregational life and to support the mission and vision of the church. Active Members have full voting rights at all congregational meetings and may serve on any board and group as desired. Active Members contribute to congregational life through attendance at worship, financial support, donation of their time, or sharing of skills, knowledge and talents.

B. Associate Members. Associate membership is offered for those individuals who also retain membership in another spiritual organization. Associate Members shall otherwise enjoy the privileges and obligations of Active Members.

C. Friends. Non-members who are active participants in the congregational life of the church or active supporters of the church do not have voting rights at congregational meetings and may not serve on the Board of Directors. Friends are welcome to serve as team members in other boards and groups.

D. Former Members. Membership status may be changed to Former Member at the request of the individual or following recommendation of the Pastor or Deacons. Inactivity of two years will result in movement to Former Member status as reported at the Annual Meeting. A Former Member shall not enjoy the privileges and obligations of membership but may request reinstatement to active status.

ARTICLE VII: GOVERNING BODY

The government of the church shall be vested in its Active Members and Associate

Members who shall exercise the right of control in its affairs. The members of the church shall have the following duties and powers:

A. Ownership. Collectively own all real property of the church. The acquisition, sale, mortgage or transfer of real property requires an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present at a congregation meeting.

B. Investment. Establish and maintain investment funds to ensure the long-range financial health of the church.

C. Budget. Approve all annual operating and capital budgets.

D. Pastors. Ordain, Call, and dismiss pastors.

E. Elections. Elect officers for all boards and, as needed, the Ministerial Search and Call Team members.

F. Bylaws. Adopt and amend the bylaws of the church.

G. Dissolution. Dissolve the church.

H. Governance. Take any action required for effective governance of the church.

ARTICLE VIII: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS/FISCAL YEAR

A. Quorum. A quorum is required when voting at any congregational meeting. A quorum is defined as 10% of the Active Members attending in person or electronically, except when voting to call or dismiss a Pastor under Article XII or voting to dissolve the church under Article XIII. The rules of order for the Annual Meeting and any special congregational meeting shall follow the Simplified Martha's Rules of Order.

B. Annual Meeting/Notice. The Annual Meeting is intended for the election of officers of the Board of Directors; the election of members of the Trustees, Deacons and Missions boards and election of the Assistant Treasurer; consideration of annual reports; adoption of annual budget; and the transaction of other business. The Annual Meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday of January, unless an alternate date is chosen by the Board of Directors. Publication of the meeting shall be made through mail or email, and orally during worship at least 24 days prior to the meeting date. Annual reports shall be submitted to the Administrative Assistant no later than one (1) week prior to the meeting.

C. Special Meeting/Notice. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Directors, the Pastor, or upon written request to the Board by ten (10) percent of the Active or Associate Members of the congregation and must be held within 24 days of the call or request. Notice of any special meeting shall be published at least 21 days prior to the meeting through mail or email, and orally during worship.

D. Fiscal Year. The church fiscal year shall be from January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE IX: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. Board Duties/Members. The Board of Directors shall be the executive body of this congregation, shall act for the congregation between Annual Meetings, and shall

determine and oversee the operating policies and procedures in accordance with these Bylaws, and subject to the will of the congregation. The Board shall consist of no less than the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer; the Chairs of the Trustees, Deacons, and Missions; and the Pastor. The Board of Directors may be expanded to include the Chair of any new group whose designation, purpose, and description have been approved by Bylaw amendment voted at any congregational meeting.

B. Meetings/Quorum. The Board shall meet at least quarterly, with optional workshops as needed. Meetings may be held in person, online, or hybrid. A quorum to conduct business shall consist of 80% of the members of the Board.

C. Officers. Board officers shall include the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Treasurer, and the Chairs of Trustees, Deacons, and Missions, all of whom shall be Active or Associate Members for no less than one (1) year. Except for the Treasurer, officers shall be elected to no more than two (2) consecutive terms in one (1) position, consisting of three (3) years in one (1) term. The Treasurer shall be elected to a three (3) year term and without limit on the number of terms. A position that becomes vacant between Annual Meetings shall be filled by majority vote of the Board until the next Annual Meeting.

1. Chair. The Chair shall preside at all Board and congregational meetings; prepare an agenda for each meeting in consultation with the Pastor; and review activity annually to ensure compliance with the Bylaws.

2. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair shall preside at all Board and congregational meetings in the absence of the Chair; serve as meeting recorder except when presiding; present nominees for positions annually or as given by an appointed nominating team.

3. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall keep a record of all transactions and prepare monthly financial reports, along with any special reports requested by the Trustees, and, in collaboration with the Trustees, shall prepare the annual budget for presentation and adoption at the Annual Meeting. The Treasurer shall also prepare records for annual audit, ensure that the church's Administrative Assistant has access to financial records for bookkeeping duties, and train the Assistant Treasurer to assist in all duties of the Treasurer.

4. Chair of Trustees. In conjunction with the Treasurer, the Chair of Trustees shall address how funds are allocated and make recommendations to the Board for any expenditure beyond the scope of the annual budget.

5. Chair of Deacons. The Chair of Deacons shall provide updates concerning regular and special worship services; and shall collaborate with the Pastor, Director of Music, and Christian Education in reviewing and presenting their respective needs.

6. Chair of Missions. The Chair of Missions shall provide reports on projects, income and expenditures related to the church's mission projects and activities.

ARTICLE X: TRUSTEES, DEACONS AND MISSIONS

All Boards shall create and maintain a Purpose and Policy Manual for themselves and their groups. Copies of those manuals will be kept in the library for public access.

A. Trustees. The Trustees shall consist of the Chair plus four (4) or more members who shall be elected to no more than two (2) consecutive terms in one (1) position, consisting of three (3) years in one (1) term. Trustees shall meet at least monthly. The Chair shall preside at Trustees meetings, and in consultation with the Pastor shall prepare meeting agendas. In the absence of the Chair, the Trustees may appoint and authorize a Chair *pro tem* to represent the Trustees and vote at meetings of the Board of Directors. The Trustees shall, in collaboration with the Treasurer, have oversight of all finances of the congregation; ensure an annual audit of the financial books; collaborate with the Treasurer to complete an annual budget prior to the Annual Meeting and offer budgetary reports as requested by the Board of Directors; be responsible for the operation, maintenance and repair of all properties of the congregation within the annual budget; annually recommend a salary and benefits package for the Pastor, relying upon the annual guidelines of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ; hire the Director of Music, the Administrative Assistant, the Sexton and other church staff, and outside contractors as needed; and present recommendations to the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors for the election of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

B. Deacons. The Deacons shall consist of a Chair plus two (2) or more members who shall be elected to no more than two (2) consecutive terms in one (1) position, consisting of three (3) years in one (1) term. Deacons shall meet at least monthly. The Chair shall preside at Deacons meetings, and in consultation with the Pastor shall prepare meeting agendas. In the absence of the Chair, the Deacons may appoint and authorize a Chair *pro tem* to represent the Deacons and vote at meetings of the Board of Directors. The Deacons shall prepare the sanctuary or other spaces designated for worship and for funerals and other services, with guidance from the Pastor; and prepare sacramental elements for baptisms and communion services, as well as assist in distribution of communion at the direction of the Pastor.

C. Missions. Missions shall consist of a Chair plus two (2) or more members who shall be elected to no more than two (2) consecutive terms in one (1) position, consisting of three (3) years in one (1) term. Missions shall meet at least monthly. The Chair shall preside at Missions meetings, and in consultation with the Pastor shall prepare meeting agendas. In the absence of the Chair, the Missions may appoint and authorize a Chair *pro tem* to represent Missions and vote at meetings of the Board of Directors. Missions shall oversee ongoing mission and outreach programs and groups, as well as provide research materials and request support for potential

mission opportunities from the congregation.

ARTICLE XI: DESCRIPTION OF ADDITIONAL POSITIONS AND GROUPS

Additional church positions and groups provide important work in fulfillment of the church's purpose and mission. Future positions and groups may be added to the Bylaws at Annual Meeting through the amendment process. Any position or group approved by Bylaw amendment shall report either as provided in the amendment or as directed by the Board of Directors.

A. Assistant Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected to a term of three (3) years without limit on the number of terms. The Assistant Treasurer shall assume the role of Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer and will undergo annual review by the Board of Trustees.

B. Historian. The Board of Directors shall appoint the Historian without limit upon the term of service. The Historian shall keep a record of all news releases, pictures, programs, and activities relating to the life of the church, which are of historical value, and shall transfer records to the New Gloucester Historical Society as directed by the Board of Directors.

C. Pastoral Relations Group. The Board of Directors, in consultation with the Pastor, shall appoint a Pastoral Relations Group of two (2) and no more than three (3) members to serve for a maximum of three (3) consecutive years. The Pastor may appoint one (1) additional member for a similar term. The Pastoral Relations Group, in reliance upon guidelines provided by the United Church of Christ as outlined in the *Manual on Ministry* and the *Manual on Church*, and with assistance from the Cumberland Association, shall provide emotional and spiritual support to the Pastor for the purposes of guiding and encouraging the Pastor in matters of professional development, and of facilitating dialogue between the Pastor and the members of the congregation in matters pertaining to the health and welfare of the church community.

D. Christian Education Group. Individuals may volunteer to serve with the Christian Education Group without a definite term. The Christian Education Group shall report to the Board of Deacons, and is responsible for children, youth, intergenerational, and adult programming in collaboration with the Pastor.

E. Music Group. Individuals may volunteer to serve with the Music Group without a definite term. The Music Group shall report to the Board of Deacons and the Minister of Music. This group may assist the Minister of Music in planning and procuring music, in collaboration with the Pastor, as needed for worship and unique events. They may also assist with the procurement of instruments and musicians when requested.

F. Liturgical Arts Group. Individuals may volunteer to serve with the Liturgical Arts Group without a definite term. The Liturgical Arts Group shall report to the Board of

Deacons and the Pastor. This group assists the Pastor in the design of the sanctuary or other spaces used for worship and includes dressing of the pulpit and altar and assisting with implementation of other design elements throughout the space.

ARTICLE XII: PASTOR

The Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the congregation, with freedom of the pulpit, and shall administer the program of the church in cooperation with the congregation. The Pastor shall be ordained or licensed and in good standing in the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference, United Church of Christ, and shall be an Active Member of the congregation and serve, *ex-officio*, on the Board of Directors.

A. Call. The Pastor shall be Called for an indefinite period at a congregational meeting with at least 20% of the Active and Associate Members attending in person, and upon a two-thirds vote of those in attendance. The terms of the Call Agreement shall be negotiated by the Search and Call Group in consultation with the Board of Directors and Trustees and shall include the procedure for review and for ending the pastoral Call by either the Pastor or the congregation.

B. Ex-officio. By virtue of the office, the Pastor shall be welcomed, *ex-officio*, to the Trustees, Deacons, and Missions, and to all groups. The Pastor may assist the Chair in preparing meeting agendas and managing meetings, provide pastoral support, and offer opening and closing prayers at meetings.

C. Pastoral Search and Call. When a vacancy in the office of Pastor occurs, the Board of Directors shall appoint a Search and Call Group, consisting of seven (7) Active Members or Associate Members, for the purpose of conducting a search for and interviews of candidates for a settled Pastor. The Search and Call Group shall give regular updates to the Board of Directors and to the congregation concerning the search, but without offering names or locations of any candidates. The Group shall seek the advice and recommendations of the Cumberland Association, the Maine Conference, and other offices within the United Church of Christ maintaining personnel records, and after conducting interviews with interested applicants, the Group shall nominate a candidate for presentation to the congregation at a duly called meeting. The Search and Call Group shall work with the Treasurer and the Trustees to prepare, offer, and negotiate a Call Agreement containing a compensation package for the nominee.

ARTICLE XIII: CHURCH ASSETS, INDEMNITY, AND DISSOLUTION

A. Transparency. No member of the church, or the Pastor or their immediate family, may personally benefit from any financial transaction involving any church property in any manner, unless the full details of such a transaction are fully disclosed to the members in conformance with the provisions of Title 13-B M.R.S. Sec. 718 and approved by a vote of the members at a special congregational meeting held pursuant to article VII plus Article VIII concerning meetings. No alleged Conflict of Interest

transaction shall be voidable or provide grounds for imposing liability on a director or officer, if the transaction was fair at the time it was entered into or is approved in accordance with 13-B M.R.S. Sec. 718.

B. Indemnification. The church shall indemnify any officer, employee or agent, or member of the Board of Directors against any and all liability or expenses incurred in connection with any proceeding arising out of their role on behalf of the church to the fullest extent permitted by law, except in cases of gross negligence, criminal activity, or willful misconduct. Expenses are intended to be broadly interpreted to include attorney's fees, costs and any other reasonable and necessarily incurred expenses.

C. Dissolution. A vote to dissolve the church shall occur at a congregational meeting with at least 20% of the Active and Associate Members attending in person, and upon a two-thirds vote of those in attendance. In the case of dissolution, all of the church property (except specific assets identified with other legal requirements), real and personal, after paying all just claims upon it, shall be conveyed to and vested in the Maine Conference United Church of Christ or its legal successor, or to any United Church of Christ-related organization as determined by the Trustees. The Board shall perform all actions required by law to affect such conveyance.

ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS

The Board of Directors, the Pastor, or any group of ten (10) or more Active Members may propose amendments to these Bylaws at any duly called congregational meeting, provided that the proposed amendments shall be included in the notice of the meeting, which must be published and the meeting held as required by Article VIII, and adopted by a two-thirds vote.

As Adopted July 12, 2026