

CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS
CENTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
474 BROAD STREET
MERIDEN, CT 06450-5897

Effective January 1, 2012

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March 2011
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ARTICLE 1 NAME

The name of this Church shall be Center Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Meriden, Connecticut.

ARTICLE 2 OBJECT

The object of this Church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God, and in making God’s will dominant in the lives of all individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings, death, resurrection and living presence of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE 3 POLITY

This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its Head, and finds in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Divine Spirit through reason, faith and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline.

The government of this Church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation granted it by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut.

While this Church is amenable to no ecclesiastical judicatory, it freely enters into covenant with the United Church of Christ and pledges to share in common aims and work.

ARTICLE 4 DOCTRINE

A) This Church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship.

Each member shall have the right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of one's own conscience, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We adopt the following principles as expressive of our faith and doctrinal attitude:

1. The Holy Bible, our only rule of faith and practice.
2. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and our only Savior.
3. Christian, a sufficient name for the followers of Christ.
4. Christian character of life, the only test of fellowship.
5. Individual interpretation, the right and privilege of all Christians.
6. The union of all the followers of Christ, that they shall all be one.

B) The COVENANT of this Church shall read as follows:

WE COVENANT with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in His 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.

AND WE WILL CONSECRATE our time, talent, income and influence as heirs of God and joint- heirs with Christ. Amen.

ARTICLE 5 SERVICES OF WORSHIP

THE LORD'S SUPPER shall be administered when the Clergy and the Board of Deacons deem it advisable.

BAPTISM shall be administered at the time of admission to Church Membership to applicants who previously have not received the Sacrament.

BAPTISM shall be celebrated during a regular service of worship, in the presence of the congregation. When circumstances make baptism necessary apart from the presence of the congregation, a member of the Board of Deacons, if possible, shall be present to represent the congregation.

BAPTISM shall be administered to children of whom at least one of the parents presenting the child for baptism shall be a member of a Christian congregation in full communion; otherwise sponsors, who have been interviewed and approved by the Board of Deacons and who are members of a Christian congregation in full communion, shall join in answering baptismal questions.

ARTICLE 6 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Members shall be received by vote of the Church with public acceptance of the Church Covenant. Applicants--either by confirmation, confession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer--shall, after personal consultation with the clergy, have their names presented to the Board of Deacons, who after due consideration may submit their names to the Church at its public worship at least one week prior to reception into membership. If approved by a vote of the members present, applicants will become full voting members.

The Board of Deacons may confer non-voting Associate Membership on parishioners who choose not to relinquish church membership elsewhere.

ARTICLE 7 VOTING, RIGHTS, AND PRIVILEGES

ALL MEMBERS as defined by Article 6 shall have one vote. A ballot vote may be requested by any member present and shall be granted without discussion. A majority of votes cast is decisive.

SPECIAL MATTERS, such as the call or dismissal of a Minister, Church polity, discipline, major expenses in excess of 5% of the current operating budget, and alteration of the by-laws shall require a two-thirds vote of members present.

THE CLERGY shall be a member of all boards and committees with voice but no vote, except for full congregational meetings.

ARTICLE 8 CHURCH OFFICERS

Officers of the Church shall be:

- a. Moderator
- b. Clerk
- c. Treasurer
- d. Assistant Treasurer

EXPLICIT DUTIES OF OFFICERS

MODERATOR

The Moderator shall:

- a. Preside at all Congregational and Church Council Meetings. If Moderator is not present, the Senior Deacon or Deaconess or Church Council appointed member may preside.
- b. May sign legal documents on behalf of the congregation.
- c. Enforce the bylaws and perform the general duties as are common to the office, including such additional duties as may be directed by the congregation from time to time.

CLERK

The Clerk shall:

- a. Keep a record of the proceedings of the Church and the Church Council;
- b. Sign credentials of delegates chosen; issue letters of dismissions and/or transfers granted by vote of the Board of Deacons; send notice of such dismissions and/or transfers to the church addressed;
- c. Keep a record of all baptisms and marriages if a secretary is not employed.
- d. Keep a register of all Church members, showing dates and modes of their reception and removal; if a secretary is not employed.
- e. Give legal notice of meetings when necessary.

TREASURER

The Treasurer shall:

- a. Keep and preserve the accurate records of all receipts and disbursements, except for Special Funds, and submit a written report of them at all regular meetings of the Board of Trustees and Church Council.
- b. Assure accuracy and propriety of all financial transactions of the congregation, under the supervision of the Board of Trustees.

ASSISTANT TREASURER

The Assistant Treasurer shall:

- a. Keep and preserve the accurate records of all receipts and disbursements of Special Funds, and submit a written report of them at all regular meetings of the Board of Trustees and Church Council.
- b. Assure accuracy and propriety of all Special Fund financial transactions of the congregation, under the supervision of the Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE 9 MEETINGS

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Church shall be held on the First (1st) Sunday in March, unless adverse weather then the second Sunday to receive annual written reports of Church Officers and to transact other pertinent business.

A REGULAR MEETING shall be called on the Second (2nd) Thursday of November to receive, through the Board of Trustees, projected budgetary proposals for the ensuing year. The congregation will elect officers and members of committees and transact any other pertinent business at this time.

SPECIAL MEETINGS of the congregation may be called by the Clerk, upon written request of ten (10) voting members; or by the Clergy, the Board of Deacons, or the Church Council. The object of the meeting must be stated in the call.

NOTICES OF MEETINGS are required to be given at least four (4) days prior to the date with one Sunday announcement from the pulpit.

A QUORUM to transact business shall be twenty-five (25) voting members. A smaller number may call another meeting at a fixed date.

ARTICLE 10 ELECTION

1. AT THE REGULAR MEETING, when terms of office so require, there shall be elected FOR A TERM OF THREE (3) YEARS the following Singular positions:
 - a. Clerk
 - b. Treasurer
 - c. Assistant Treasurer
 - d. Treasurer of Missions
 - e. Collector
 - f. Assistant Collector
 - g. Church Statistician
 - h. Chairperson of Seating
 - i. Historian
 - j. Moderator

There shall be elected FOR A TERM OF THREE (3) YEARS the following Committee positions:

- a. One (1) member to the Stewardship Committee
- b. One (1) member to the Missions Committee
- c. One (1) member to the Nominating Committee
- d. Two (2) members to the Christian Committee Education
- e. One (1) member to the Board of Trustees
- f. One (1) member at large to the Church Council
- g. One (1) member to the House Committee
- h. One (1) member to the Audit Committee
- i. One (1) member to the Scholarship Committee
- j. One (1) member to the Music Committee

There shall be elected FOR A TERM OF FOUR (4) YEARS the following:

- a. One (1) Deacon
- b. One (1) Deaconess

2. All terms of office begin on January 1st. All ordinary duties for each office end on December 31st of the last year of each term except the preparation of the report(s) required for the Annual Meeting which will be the responsibility of the member who held that office for the year the report is to cover.
3. On the advice of the Nominating Committee, vacancies in these offices or committees shall be filled by majority vote of the Church Council until the next Annual Meeting.
4. Vacancies in the Board of Deacons will be filled as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs using the following procedure: If a member has to be replaced during his or her term, a new member will be referred to the Nominating Committee and must receive a majority vote of the Church Council for election. This new member will serve the four (4) year term, and the other members of the Board of Deacons will move up one term, if the occasion requires it.
5. A member and his/her spouse cannot serve on the Board of Trustees or Board of Deacons at the same time.
6. A staff member or his/her spouse cannot serve on the Board of Trustees.
7. After serving two (2) consecutive terms, a member must wait one (1) year before performing the same position.

ARTICLE 11 BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

CHURCH COUNCIL

It shall consist of:

Pastor – voice only; no vote
Moderator – vote only if a tie

VOTING MEMBERS:

Clerk
Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer
Chair of Board of Trustees, or duly appointed representative.
Chair of Missions, or duly appointed representative.
Chair of Christian Education, or duly appointed representative.
Chair of Music Committee, or duly appointed representative.
Chair of the Board of Deacons, or duly appointed representative.
Two (2) elected members at large

It shall:

- a. Be the official policy-making board of the church.
- b. Hold a minimum of six (6) regular meetings a year chaired by the Moderator. Other meetings may be called by the Clergy, Moderator, or Clerk, the latter upon request of four (4) Council members. At Council meetings, the Chairperson or representative of a committee shall present a report to the Clerk about their respective activities.
- c. Select officers for emergencies and unexpired terms on advice of the Nominating Committee.
- d. Appoint committees for special tasks.
- e. Have authority to spend two percent (2%) per annum in total of the Annual Operating Budget for causes not provided for in the Budget, with a reasonable program for replenishment of said funds.
- f. Approve candidates for non-clergy staff employment.

A QUORUM shall consist of six (6) members.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

It shall consist of:

- a. Three (3) elected members
- b. Treasurer
- c. Assistant Treasurer
- d. Collector
- e. Assistant Collector
- f. A member of the Stewardship Committee

The TRUSTEES shall have full charge of building and properties of the Church. They shall:

- a. Solicit and prepare contracts for repairs, renovations, maintenance, and employment, and supervise completion of contracts. For items not in the Annual Operating Budget or designated Special Fund, prepare such for submission to the Church Council and the congregation;
- b. Approve payment of bills submitted for the general operation of the Church;
- c. Prepare an Annual Operating Budget for expected expenses in the next year for submission to the congregation, with the approval of the Church Council;
- d. Monitor performance of investment accounts;
- e. Submit financial reports for church operations, special funds, and collections at Church Council meetings.

The Treasurer and/or Chairperson of the Board is authorized to sign contracts and legal documents. Authority to do so can be delegated otherwise by the Trustees.

THE BOARD OF DEACONS

It shall consist of:

Eight (8) elected members

It shall:

- a. Provide for the Communion services by preparing the elements;
- b. Advise the Clergy in their ministry to the Church and its spiritual outreach;
- c. Recommend, with the Clergy, candidates for Church Membership to the congregation;
- d. Approve letters of transfer or dismissal;
- e. Assist in caring for the sick, the poor, and others in need;
- f. Have sole authority to disburse funds accruing from the O.B. Arnold Fund;
- g. Have sole authority to disburse funds from the Ida Flint Scholarship Fund in accord with the intent of the fund;
- h. Present to Clergy an outline of duties expected; evaluate the performance of said duties, and recommend compensation package to the Board of Trustees;
- i. Provide for the supply of the pulpit in the Clergy's absence;
- j. In case of vacancy, provide for the interim supply of the pulpit, and institute, with the congregation, proceedings for the calling of the Clergy. Candidates for the ministry will be interviewed by a committee, all with equal vote, consisting of:

The Board of Deacons;

The Moderator;

One (1) representative from the Christian Education Committee;

One (1) representative from the Board of Trustees;

One (1) representative from the Missions Committee;

One (1) representative from the Music Committee;

One (1) Youth;

Any Church Member may be present at the interviews. The Committee will then recommend a candidate to the Congregation.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members

Treasurer of Missions

They shall:

- a. Organize and present mission projects to the congregation (Mission projects include both projects selected by the committee and UCC sponsored projects).
- b. Collect and disburse funds for various mission projects.
- c. Hold events to raise funds and/or increase awareness of mission projects.
- d. Submit financial reports summarizing receipts and disbursements to the Church Council.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Six (6) elected members.

They shall:

- a. Coordinate the Sunday School and other Christian education activities, except Church Membership instruction.
- b. Advise and evaluate the Director of Christian Education.
- c. Have the authority to appoint and relieve people necessary to carry out the programs.
- d. Supervise the Youth activities.
- e. Submit an Annual budget.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

The Minister of Music
The Handbell Choir Director
Three (3) elected members

They shall:

- a. Advise and evaluate the performance of the Minister of Music and the Handbell Choir Director and make recommendations to the Church Council.
- b. Supervise all choirs.
- c. Secure the services of an Organist in case of vacancy, illness or vacation.
- d. Care for the proper maintenance of all musical instruments owned by the Church.
- e. Contact and recruit new members for all choirs and act as liaison between the Minister of Music, the Handbell Choir Director, and parishioners.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members

They shall:

- a. Recruit and fill open positions of Officers, Boards, and Committees with members of the church.
- b. Present a written report of nominees at the Fall annual meeting.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members
The Assistant Collector

They shall:

- a. Devise ways and means to secure funds for the general operation of the Church.
- b. Encourage the commitment of time and talent by members through their active participation in the affairs of the church.

HOUSE COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members

They shall:

- a. See that the kitchen is maintained in a clean and orderly fashion.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members
A representative from the Christian Education committee

- a. The Scholarship committee serves as fund trustees and provides oversight of awards of the Robert Wharton Scholarship.
- b. No one may be a member of the Committee if he/she has an immediate family member eligible for the scholarship during his/her term.
- c. The Committee reports to the Church Council.
- d. The Committee selects the Scholarship recipients (number of awards, amount of awards, and timing of awards).
- e. The Committee maintains an accurate written record of eligibility requirements and scholarship awards to be submitted to the Church Council.
- f. Amendments to the written records of eligibility must be approved by the Church Council.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

It shall consist of:

Three (3) elected members

They shall:

- a. Examine all financial books kept by the church and submit a report for the Annual Report.
- b. Notify the treasurer, assistant treasurer, and other treasurers to examine the books and bank statements.

THE COLLECTOR

The Collector shall:

- a. Deposit and record all operating collections, and forward all non-operating collections to the proper treasurers.
- b. annually make duly audited reports of all transactions.
- c. assign duties of the Collector to the Assistant Collector as required.

THE ASSISTANT COLLECTOR

The Assistant Collector shall keep an accurate account with each contributor, and furnish financial statements to contributors annually.

HISTORIAN

The Historian shall keep a journal of all occurrences of interest to the Church and be Curator of memorabilia for the Church.

SEATING CHAIRPERSON

The Seating Chairperson shall recruit and supervise ushers for regular and special services of the Church and keep attendance records of these services.

CHURCH STATISTICIAN

The Church Statistician will collect and analyze those figures already compiled by the Clerk, Seating Chairperson, Treasurers, Collectors and other Committees and Boards within the church, that reflect the growth of Center Church, i.e.: church attendance, Sunday School attendance, baptisms, marriages, new members, transfers, deaths. The Church Statistician will prepare and present a quarterly report to the Church Council and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE 12 ALTERATION OF BY-LAWS

These by-laws may be altered, amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of qualified members in attendance at any regularly called meeting or special meeting called for that purpose, the changes having been read at a previous meeting and the object of the meeting being stated in the call.

ARTICLE 13 PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary procedure as defined by ROBERTS REVISED RULES OF ORDER shall be followed.