

**By-Laws  
of  
Bethany Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ**

**Foxborough. Massachusetts**



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**+BY-LAWS**  
**of**  
**BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**Foxborough, Massachusetts**

**ARTICLE I**  
**Name**

The name of this Church is Bethany Congregational Church of Foxborough, member of the United Church of Christ. This Church, established November 26, 1779, now exists as a Corporation, under the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of a charter issued May 25, 1915.

**ARTICLE II**  
**Object and Covenant**

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 of making God's Will dominant in individual and collective lives, especially as that Will is set forth in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The covenant of this Church shall be: We are banded together as a Christian Church to maintain the worship of God, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, to develop in all people a consciousness of their relationships and duties to God and to each other, and to inspire them with love for truth, passion for righteousness, and enthusiasm for service. To this end we pledge our loyalty to Christ and covenant with each other to express God's spirit in our individual and corporate life; to live together as a Christian family and submit ourselves to the government of this Church, working, giving, praying for its increase, its purity, its peace, and seeking in every way to make it a power for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

**ARTICLE III**  
**Doctrine**

This Church recognizes the Holy 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.

The following United Church of Christ Statement of Faith is not a test but an expression of the spirit in which this Church interprets the Word of God.

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being,  
create persons in your own image  
and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will  
declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior,  
you have come to us  
and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the world to yourself.

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

You call us into your Church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be your servants in the service of others,  
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.

You promise to all who trust you  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
your presence in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power to be unto you. Amen.

#### **ARTICLE IV** **Polity**

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

Members shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

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 Charter of Incorporation granted it under the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The government of this Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel, cooperation, and fellowship which is common among United Church of Christ churches. Furthermore, it desires fellowship with all persons and groups of persons who love and worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **ARTICLE V** **Church Membership**

### **Section 1 – Application**

All persons who give evidence of Christian character and who, knowing the spirit and teaching of this Church, are willing to enter into covenant with its members may apply for membership in this Church by indicating their intent to participate actively in the mission of this Church. Such application shall be made to the Diaconate.

### **Section 2 – Qualifications and Conditions**

Church membership will be based on one of the following:  
confession of faith and baptism,  
a letter of transfer from another church,  
reaffirmation of faith or confirmation,  
evidence of which will be accepted by the Diaconate.

### **Section 3 – Reception**

Persons shall be received into membership of this Church at a Communion Service at which time they shall make public assent to the Church's covenant. Any person unable to attend a specified Reception Service may be received into membership by the Pastor or an Associate Pastor and an authorized representative of the Diaconate acting on behalf of the Church.

### **Section 4 – Classification**

Church members shall be classified as active or inactive.

Members will be considered active when they:  
attend worship services, or  
contribute financially to the Church, or  
are a full-time student, or  
are a member of the armed forces on active duty, or  
have a known hardship.

Members will be transferred to inactive status when they:  
fail to adhere to the qualifications for active status, and  
fail to communicate with this church within thirty days after written  
notification of this proposed action.

The status of members, as active or inactive, shall be established annually by the Diaconate.

An inactive member may be restored to active status upon request to the Diaconate, after meeting the requirements for active status.

### **Section 5 – Termination of Membership**

Membership in this Church may be terminated by the Diaconate on the following basis:

a request for a letter of transfer to another church, or  
a request for termination by a member, or  
established knowledge that the member has joined another church.

### **Section 6 – Restoration of Membership**

Individuals whose memberships have been terminated and who desire to be reinstated will make their requests known to the Diaconate.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Meetings**

#### **Section 1 – Religious Meetings**

Meetings for worship shall be held each Sunday. Special religious meetings may be called by the Pastor, Council of Elders, Diaconate, or vote of the Congregation. There shall be at least six observances of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the year.

#### **Section 2 – Annual Business Meeting**

The church year shall end December 31. The Annual Business Meeting shall be held within thirty days of the close of the church year at such date as determined by the Council of Elders and announced to the Church members before January 1. At this meeting, the annual reports shall be rendered in writing and the Officers of the Church and such boards and committees as are provided in the By-Laws shall be elected. Such other business for which due notice has been given may also be conducted at the Annual Business Meeting.

#### **Section 3 – Other Business Meetings**

A meeting of the Congregation may be held at any time providing the request for such meeting is made by the Pastor, Council of Elders or by five active members. A request for a meeting shall be submitted to the Pastor, Moderator or Clerk. An emergency meeting may be called by vote of the majority of the Corporate Officers, whereby proper notice may be waived. Only such business as created the need for an emergency meeting may be conducted at such a meeting.

#### **Section 4 – Notice of Meetings**

The Clerk shall give written notice of the time, place and object of the Annual Business Meeting and of each other business meeting to all active members of the Church, mailed no later than five days before the date of the meeting. Notice of emergency meeting as defined above will be given to as many active members as practicable and by the best possible means available under the circumstances.

#### **Section 5 – Eligible Members and Voting Rights**

Only active members of the Church shall be eligible to vote on any matter concerning the Church except that, for corporate matters, the member must be of full legal age as required by the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

#### **Section 6 – Quorum**

A quorum at all business meetings shall be thirty-five eligible members. No corporate business shall be transacted at any meeting unless a quorum is present.

### **ARTICLE VII Officers**

#### **Section 1 – Officers**

The Corporate Officers of this Church shall be:

The Senior Pastor  
Moderator  
Vice Moderator  
Clerk  
Treasurer  
Assistant Treasurer

Each officer must be an active member of the Church. At the Annual Business Meeting of the Church, each officer shall, where appropriate, submit a written report.

#### **Section 2 – Pastor and Associate Pastor(s)**

All Pastors and Associate Pastors shall be elected in accordance with the United Church of Christ usage at a meeting of the Congregation designated for that purpose, and shall serve until relations between them and the Church are terminated in accordance with United Church of Christ usage.

The Pastor(s) shall have charge over the pastoral and spiritual welfare of the Church; and shall seek to enlist all persons as followers of Christ, preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, direct all religious services of the Church, and administer the activities of the Church in cooperation with various boards and committees. The Senior Pastor shall be an ex officio member with vote on all boards and committees.

The Associate Pastor(s) shall assume such duties as may be agreed upon in consultation with the Senior Pastor and the Diaconate; and shall be a member of all boards and committees appropriate to meet assigned duties.

In the event of a vacancy in the pastorate of the Church, the Church members shall elect a Pastoral Committee, which, in accordance with United Church of Christ usage, shall bring a candidate before the Church for election. In the interim, the Diaconate shall be responsible for providing pastoral care and spiritual care.

### **Section 3 – Moderator**

The Moderator shall be elected at the Annual business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for one year or until a successor is elected. After serving for two full years in succession, the Moderator shall be ineligible to serve in this capacity until the next Annual Business Meeting.

The Moderator shall preside at the Annual Business Meeting and at all other business meetings, and shall preside at all meetings of the Council of Elders.

A vacancy in the office of Moderator may be filled by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regularly called business meeting.

### **Section 4 – Vice Moderator**

The Vice Moderator shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for one year or until a successor is elected. After serving for two full years in succession the Vice Moderator shall, for one year, be ineligible for reelection.

The Vice Moderator shall assist the Moderator in the discharge of duties, and shall act as Moderator in the absence of the Moderator.

A vacancy in the office of Vice Moderator may be filled by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regularly called business meeting.

### **Section 5 – Clerk**

The Clerk shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for one year or until a successor is elected. The Clerk shall be a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Clerk shall keep the records of the Church and its membership roll and maintain such other records and correspondence as may be necessary as Clerk of the Corporation, and shall be properly sworn before taking office. The Clerk of the Church shall act as Clerk of the Council of Elders, and shall keep a separate record of its proceedings.

A vacancy in the office of the Clerk may be filled by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regularly called business meeting..

## **Section 6 – Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for one year or until a successor is elected.

The Treasurer shall receive all monies and other assets contributed to the Church, or raised in the name of the Church, and income derived from investments, trusts, and other income-producing assets owned and/or operated by the Church, its boards, committees, and/or affiliated organizations. Monies received either directly or by conversion of assets shall be disbursed by the Treasurer as voted by the Church. The Treasurer, acting for the Church, shall borrow funds as directed by the vote of the Church.

Semi-annually, the Treasurer shall submit to the Financial Management Board a balance sheet of the assets and liabilities of the Church in accordance with accepted accounting standards and practices. Each month the Treasurer shall submit to the Financial Management Board and to the Council of Elders a statement of actual income and expenses as related to the Annual Budget voted at the Annual Business Meeting. The Treasurer's books of account shall be audited annually prior to the Annual Business Meeting. The Treasurer shall keep accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and give such bond with corporate security as the Financial Management Board shall prescribe.

A vacancy in the office of Treasurer may be filled by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regularly called business meeting.

## **Section 7 – Assistant Treasurer**

The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for one year or until a successor is elected.

The Assistant Treasurer shall assist and aid the Treasurer in all duties, with full power of substitution in these duties, and shall be bonded in the same manner as the Treasurer.

A vacancy in the office of Assistant Treasurer may be filled by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regularly called business meeting.

**ARTICLE VIII**  
**Council of Elders**

There shall be a Council of Elders consisting of the Pastor, the Moderator, the Vice Moderator, the Clerk, and four elders-at-large elected at the Annual Meeting to serve overlapping two-year terms. After serving three full terms in succession, an elder-at-large shall for one year be ineligible for reelection. The four elders-at-large should be chosen to represent the diversity of the congregation.

An Elder must be a believer and spiritually mature; must have been a member of Bethany for at least three years; must be well respected, with many of the characteristics outlined in the Scriptures (just, temperate, not contentious); must be able to maintain confidentiality; and must have the ability to listen and to recommend courses of action.

The Moderator shall be the Chair of the Council of Elders.

The Elders shall hold regular meetings at such times and places as they may determine. Special meetings of the Elders may be called by the Pastor or the Moderator by giving notice to each of the other Elders.

A quorum shall consist of four Elders; no business may be transacted unless a quorum is present.

The Clerk of the Church shall be the Clerk of the Elders and shall keep proper records of the proceedings of the Elders and post them in a timely fashion.

The Elders may invite any member of the Church to sit in their meetings, and any and all members of the Church shall be permitted to attend meetings of the Elders, except that the Elders may close a meeting when a sensitive matter is being discussed.

The Elders shall reflect on the entire task of the Church, always including long term considerations. The principal function of the Council of Elders shall be to prayerfully coordinate the work of the officials and organizations of the Church in order to make the programs and operations of the Church more effective. To that end, all officers, boards and committees of the Church shall present their plans and report their activities to the Elders. The Elders shall discuss any problems that affect officers, organizations, or teams of the Church and shall advise them, suggest any necessary coordination or cooperation, and shall make such recommendations as it deems advisable.

In particular, the Council of Elders shall meet in time to review and coordinate the unified budget with the Financial Management Board and to consider and accommodate changes in personnel.

The Council of Elders shall review monthly financial statements, taking action on over-budget items. Council approval is required for unbudgeted expenditures greater than \$1,000.

The Council of Elders shall work with the Pastor to evaluate, support, and assist members of the church staff.

The Council of Elders shall review, at least annually, the performance evaluations and the total compensation of all salaried personnel of the Church. They shall submit their recommendations for compensation to the Financial Management Board for consideration in the budget it presents to the Church.

Any employment agreement or change in agreement shall require approval of the Council of Elders.

The Council of Elders shall create such committees not otherwise provided for in these By-Laws as may be required for carrying on the Church's activities. Any committee so created shall report to the Council of Elders.

The Council of Elders shall make decisions on behalf of the Church membership in any matter except one which in accordance with these By-Laws or the custom of this Church should be determined by the Church membership. In all matters the Council of Elders shall be responsible to the Church membership for its actions.

The Council of Elders shall prepare the agenda for each Annual Business Meeting and for each other business meeting of the Church and shall also prepare a recommendation concerning each item of the agenda.

An Elder shall not be a member of any elected committee unless approved by the Council of Elders.

An Elder shall be assigned to share responsibility for communication with each officer and the chair of each Board or Committee.

At least once a year, the Council of Elders shall schedule a retreat to consider long term direction and issues.

The Council of Elders can require an Elder to resign, or take a sabbatical, after a full discussion with the Elder in question and a vote of all but one (1) of the remaining Elders.

## **ARTICLE IX** **Boards and Committees**

### **Section 1 – General**

Certain boards and committees shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church. These include the Diaconate, the Board of Trustees, the Financial Management Board, the Children's Ministries Committee, the Music Committee, the Leadership Development Committee, the Mission Outreach Committee, the Pastoral Relations Committee, and the Evangelism Committee.

Immediately following the Annual Business Meeting, each board and committee shall organize and elect its chairperson, preferably a person who has served at least one year as a member of that board or committee. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the board or committee and shall be responsible for the organization and operations of the board or committee. The Chairperson shall also communicate with the designated Elder for that committee.

The Church may elect or appoint, originally or through the Council of Elders, such other officials and committees as shall be deemed necessary. At the time of election or appointment, such officials or committees shall be directed as to how they are to report.

Vacancies in corporate offices of the Church may be filled by majority vote of the members of the Church present and voting at any regularly called business meeting. Vacancies on boards and committees of the Church may be filled by appointment of the Leadership Development Committee. Appointees shall serve until the Annual Business Meeting. All officials and all committees, through their chairpersons, shall, where appropriate, submit a report in writing of their activities to the Annual Business Meeting of the Church.

The Pastors, boards, and committees shall have liberty to use the church buildings at their discretion to promote the pastoral and spiritual interests of the Church. The Pastors and Diaconate shall have supervision over the use and decoration of the Meeting House and Chapels. For all other purposes, use of the Church buildings shall be by permission of the Board of Trustees.

### **Section 2 – Diaconate**

The Diaconate should consist of ten or more Deacons, with an equal number of men and women, each of whom shall be an active member of the Church. Members shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving three full terms in succession, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

It shall be the responsibility of the Diaconate to share with the Pastor in ministering to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the Church membership and community. The Diaconate shall assist the Pastor in the administration of the worship services and sacraments.

The Diaconate shall have sole jurisdiction in the administration of the Good Samaritan Fund and shall also administer the Memorial Fund as directed by Church members.

The Diaconate shall maintain a Church membership list in accordance with Article V.

It shall be the responsibility of the Diaconate to provide for the supply of the pulpit in the case of a vacancy or in the absence of the Pastor, except as provided in Article VII.

Minutes of meetings of the Diaconate shall be posted in a timely manner.

### **Section 3 – Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees should consist of five or more Trustees. They shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms in succession, a Trustee shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

Subject to the directing vote of the Church or of the Council of Elders, the Board of Trustees shall have the care, custody and control of the real property of the Church, except as otherwise provided.

Minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees shall be posted in a timely manner.

#### **Section 4 – Financial Management Board**

The Financial Management Board should consist of five or more members including the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. Members of this board, with the exception of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving three full terms in succession, members shall for one year be ineligible for reelection. The Chairperson of the Financial Management Board shall determine the duties and responsibilities of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

It shall be the duty of the Financial Management Board to determine all the financial policies and procedures of the Church, including policies related to the investment of Church monies and conversion of assets.

The Financial Management Board shall be empowered to assemble and make recommendations for changes to a unified budget that shall reflect expenses requested by officers, Church boards, committees, and affiliated organizations, as well as plans for raising the income required to meet those expenses. The Financial Management Board will also direct the campaign to raise these funds.

Prior to the Annual Business Meeting, the Financial Management Board shall have the books of the Church audited by an independent auditor or auditing committee appointed by the Financial Management Board.

Prior the Annual Business Meeting, the Financial Management Board shall present the unified budget to the Council of Elders for review.

At the Annual Business Meeting the Financial Management Board shall present the unified budget, for acceptance by the Church membership. This presentation of the unified budget shall indicate anticipated income to be contributed to the Church, received as a result of conversion of tangible assets, assets owned and/or operated by the Church, its boards, committees, and/or affiliated organizations.

Subsequent to the Annual Business Meeting, the Financial Management Board shall meet with the affected boards, committees and the Council of Elders to plan the timing of large expenditures.

#### **Section 5 – Children’s Ministries Committee**

The Children’s Ministries Committee shall consist of five or more members who shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee shall have the general responsibility for fostering the Christian growth of children. With the interest and involvement of all Church members, it shall promote educational activities that nurture and guide children of the Church in the Christian way of life, so as to enable them to participate in the mission of the Church.

Minutes of meetings of the Children's Ministries Committee shall be posted in a timely manner.

### **Section 6 – Music Committee**

The Music Committee should consist of three or more members who shall each be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms in succession, a member of this committee shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee shall have the primary responsibility for Church music, including supervision of use and normal maintenance of all musical instruments; the purchase of new music; the care of the music library and choir gowns; and the hiring of the Organist, Choir Director, and soloists. Any extraordinary repairs or purchases of the physical musical instruments, such as the Church organs, shall be the responsibility of the Trustees, but the recognition of the need for such repairs or purchases and the continuing consultation on these shall be the responsibility of the Music Committee.

Minutes of meetings of the Music Committee shall be posted in a timely manner.

### **Section 7 – Leadership Development Committee**

The Leadership Development Committee should consist of four or more members who shall be nominated by the Council of Elders and elected at the Annual Business Meeting for overlapping terms of two years each. After serving three full terms in succession, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee shall have the primary responsibility to seek out the best-qualified and committed persons for Church leadership positions and to develop an ongoing program for the training and nurturing of this leadership.

Vacancies on boards and committees of the Church may be filled by appointment of the Leadership Development Committee. Appointees shall serve until the Annual Business Meeting.

Except as otherwise provided for in these By-Laws; this Committee shall report its recommendations to the Council of Elders and to the membership of the Church for action.

### **Section 8 – Mission Outreach Committee**

The Mission Outreach Committee should consist of five or more members who shall each be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms in succession, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee shall have the supervision of the denominational and other mission outreach programs of the Church, and shall have the responsibility for promoting mission outreach awareness within the Church.

Minutes of meetings of the Mission Outreach Committee shall be posted in a timely manner.

### **Section 9 – Pastoral Relations Committee**

The Pastoral Relations Committee should consist of five to seven members, each of whom should be an active member of the Church, and shall meet at least four times a year. Committee members shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms in succession, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee shall serve as the primary support group for the Pastor(s), promoting, monitoring, and reviewing their continued professional, personal, and spiritual growth and well-being.

The Committee shall also assist the Pastor(s) and the members of the congregation in maintaining a mutual understanding of each other's expectations and roles in carrying out the intended mission of the church.

This Committee reports to the congregation.

### **Section 10 – Evangelism Committee**

The Evangelism Committee shall consist of at least six members including a chairperson and secretary. The Committee will report to the Pastor and the Council of Elders.

Members shall be elected for overlapping terms of two years. After serving for three full terms in succession, a member shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

This Committee is charged with promoting church growth, staying connected with peripheral members, greeting and meeting potential and current members on Sunday, providing support to the Diaconate where requested, and actively finding means to support the membership. The committee members are expected to regularly attend worship services and to participate in adult education.

Minutes of meetings of the Evangelism Committee shall be posted in a timely manner

### **Section 11 – Delegates**

There should be up to three delegates to the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and up to three delegates to the Metropolitan Boston Association. Delegates shall be elected for a term of two years. After serving three full terms in succession, a delegate shall for one year be ineligible for reelection.

Delegates shall represent Bethany Congregational Church at meetings of the respective bodies and shall report to the Council of Elders and to the Annual Business Meeting the activities of the respective bodies.

After listening to those they represent, delegates may vote their conscience on any matter except actions that may legally or financially bind the Church, such actions require a prior vote of the Church.

### **Section 12 – Historian**

The Historian shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church and shall serve for a one year term or until a successor is elected.

The Historian shall have the responsibility to assemble and maintain Church records and memorabilia.

The Historian shall take the responsibility to be informed of the Church history and shall make this information available upon request.

**ARTICLE X**  
**Conveyance of Real Estate and Execution of Documents**

No sale, lease, mortgage, or exchange of any real estate owned by the Church shall be made, nor shall any real estate be purchased, nor shall any building be erected on any real estate owned by the Church, nor shall any alterations of a substantial nature be made in any of the existing buildings except by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a regularly called business meeting.

All contracts and all mortgages, leases, deeds, transfers and other conveyances of the real property of the Church shall be executed by the Treasurer and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

**ARTICLE XI**  
**Amendment**

These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a regularly called business meeting, provided that the proposed amendments have been published in a written notice and sent to all members of the Church at least one month before the meeting.

**ARTICLE XII**  
**Repeal of Prior Constitution and By-Laws**

Upon adoption, these By-Laws supersede all prior constitutions and By-Laws of this Church and all amendments thereto.