

Constitution and By-laws Of the First Christian Church (DOC)



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CONSTITUTION

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)
Valparaiso, IN

Preamble

We followers of Jesus Christ, responding to the Call of the Holy Spirit, desire to unite together as First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In faithful response to the will and purposes of God as revealed through Jesus Christ and God's continuing revelations in the world, we will proclaim the Word, administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and carry out the mission of the Church. We do hereby adopt this Constitution on **October 23, 2016 effective January 1, 2017** and commit ourselves to be governed by its provisions, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Congregation shall be the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), affiliated with and an integral part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation is:

- to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in faithful response to God's will and purpose as revealed through Jesus Christ and God's continuing revelations in the world;
- to support and be supported by the general and regional manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- to seek in all persons a faith and commitment to Jesus Christ;
- to serve the community of which it is a part;
- to bring the gospel message to bear upon society;
- to work cooperatively with Christians in other communions; to seek the oneness of the body of Christ; and
- in all ways to make known the love of God.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the Earth" (Acts 1:8)

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of this Congregation, as a part of the whole family of God on earth, shall consist of people who:

- are now members of the Congregation;
- formally unite with this Congregation either by confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, giving expression of their faith through baptism by immersion and commitment to Him; or
- were baptized by immersion or other baptism traditions and by confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:26-27)

ARTICLE IV. RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONGREGATION

The Congregation shall:

- manage its affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ;
- maintain its faithfulness to the gospel;
- own, control and encumber its property;
- organize and carry out its mission and witness of the Congregation;
- establish its budgets and financial policies;
- call its Minister(s); and
- participate, through voting representatives, in regional and general assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in forming the corporate judgments of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Congregation shall demonstrate voluntarily its mutual concern for the nurture, mission and witness of the whole church, and among other responsibilities, it shall:

- proclaim the gospel;
- provide for the spiritual nurture of its members;
- celebrate the Lord's Supper;
- administer baptism (by immersion) and
- be faithful in Christian stewardship, strive to share proportionately in providing resources for the total life, work and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- grow in understanding of the church as a universal fellowship;
- transcend all barriers within the human family such as race, gender, and culture; and
- seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other churches of the community and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

The Congregation shall:

- sustain its Minister(s) in faithfulness and seek counsel from the Executive Regional Minister.
- shall exercise and enjoy all other rights, privileges and responsibilities requisite or appropriate to carrying out its purpose.

*Now may the God of peace
Himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and
body be preserved complete,
without blame at the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is
He who calls you, and He also
will bring it to pass (1
Thessalonians 5:23-24)*

ARTICLE V. CHURCH OFFICERS, ELDERS, DIACONATE, TRUSTEES, COUNCIL, AND MINISTRY TEAMS.

Section A. Church Council

The Congregation shall have a Church Council, which shall be responsible to the Congregation and have authority to act on behalf of the Congregation when it is not in a congregational meeting.

The Church Council shall:

- be composed of members as set forth in the By-laws and for terms of office therein stated.

- be responsible for receiving reports from its Minister(s), officers and various departments within the Congregation as may be defined in the By-laws.
- shall establish by its action the program and budget of the Congregation subject to action by the Congregation at its annual meeting.
- be responsible also for conducting all legal business matters of the Congregation and carry out other such responsibilities as may be defined in the By-laws.

Meetings of the Church Council:

- Stated meetings of the Church Council shall be held once a calendar quarter.
- Special meetings of the Church Council shall be called by the President upon request of the Minister(s) or three members of the Church Council. Notice of special meetings shall be given to each member at least seven days prior to the meeting date. The purpose, date, time, and place of said meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

Section B. Officers

The Congregation shall elect from members of the church; the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. These officers shall be elected for the following year at the 4th quarter congregational meeting as set forth in the By-laws. Other positions as designated in the By-laws shall be appointed by the President of the Church Council, with approval of the council members.

Section C. Elders and Diaconate

The Congregation shall elect from members of the church Elders and a Diaconate, whose election, qualifications, and responsibilities shall be as set forth in the By-laws.

Section D. Trustees

The Congregation shall elect from members of the church Trustees, whose election, qualification, and responsibilities shall be as set forth in the By-laws.

Section E. Administrative Leadership Team

The Administrative Leadership Team shall be responsible for coordinating the program and work of the Congregation and generally assisting the Pastoral Staff in administrating of the same. It may also initiate programs. It shall be composed of such members as set forth in the By-laws.

Section F. Ministry Teams

The Congregation, through its Church Council shall establish the standing ministry teams and other such teams necessary for the conduct of the work of the Congregation as set forth in the By-laws.

ARTICLE VI. DISBURSEMENT OF ASSETS

The church is organized exclusively for religious, educational, and charitable purposes including making distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law.)

No part of the net earnings of the church shall accrue to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make

payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes herein before set forth. No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, the church shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Upon the dissolution of the church, the Trustees shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all the assets of the church exclusively for the purposes of the church in such manner or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious, educational and charitable purposes, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Trustees shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of the county in which the principal office of the church is then located, exclusively for or to such organization or organizations as said court shall determine, are organized and operated exclusively for religious, educational, and charitable purposes.

ARTICLE VII. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A congregational meeting shall be held annually on or near the last Sunday in October for the purpose of electing members to the Church Council and to present the budget of the next calendar year beginning January 1 and ending December 31. Notice of all stated or special congregational meetings shall be announced at a regular Sunday morning worship service of the congregation at least seven days in advance of the meeting and by means of the church newsletter, electronic media or written notice sent through the mail and postmarked at least ten days before the meeting. The purpose, date, time, and place of the meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting on the amendment, provided written notice of the proposed amendment has been sent through the mail or by electronic media to members of the Congregation at least ten days prior to the time the vote is to be taken and the proposed amendment has been read at or following two successive Sunday morning worship services immediately prior to the time the vote is taken.

BY-LAWS

I. CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Membership

1. Voting Members of the Church Council shall be composed of the Elders, the Trustees, and the Church Officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Asst. Treasurer, **plus twelve Deacons chosen annually by the Diaconate from among their membership (here and after referred to as "elected officials")**).
2. The Team Leaders of the three standing ministry teams, are appointed by the President and approved by the Church Council, shall be voting members of the Council.
3. The Pastor(s) of the Congregation shall serve ex-officio (non-voting) member(s) of the Church Council by virtue of their office.

B. Election and Term of Office

1. At the 4th quarter Congregation meeting, the Congregation shall elect from the nominating team's slate and or nominations from the floor, the officers, Elders, Diaconate, and Trustees named in the Article V, Constitution.
2. A term of office for all officers of the Church Council begins January 1 and ends on December 31 of the same year.
3. The Elders and the Diaconate shall be elected by the Congregation each year for a term of three years. After serving two consecutive terms on the Church Council they shall not succeed themselves in the same capacity until one year has elapsed. They may, however, serve consecutive terms in another capacity.
4. Trustees will serve a five-year term. After serving two consecutive terms on the Church Council they shall not succeed themselves in the same capacity until one year has elapsed. They may, however, serve consecutive terms on the Church Council in another capacity.

C. Authority

1. The Church Council shall perform its duties according to the authority granted in the constitution or otherwise delegated to it by the Congregation.
2. In keeping with traditions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the ultimate authority of the Church shall rest with the Congregation. The three Ministry Teams within the Congregation shall be responsible to and report regularly to the Church Council and through it to the Congregation.
3. The Church Council shall concern itself with policy, oversee church business in keeping with the Mission of the church (Constitution, Article II).

4. All business meetings of the Church Council shall be conducted by informal Robert's Rules of Order, with the understanding that the discernment process shall be utilized as deemed appropriate by the Administrative Leadership Team.

5. One third of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum.

D. Responsibilities

1. The Church Council shall conduct its affairs in harmony with the Constitution and the By-laws of the Congregation.

2. The Church Council shall be responsible for conducting the business affairs of the Congregation and providing for the planning coordination, researching, evaluation, and implementation of the work and activities of the Congregation.

3. The Church Council shall meet at least four times a year with a minimum of one meeting per quarter. Stated meetings of the Council shall be scheduled at the first meeting of the new council.

4. The Church Council has established the three ministry teams related to the basic needs of the Congregation.

- a. Worship & Witness Ministry Team
- b. Membership & Mission Ministry Team
- c. Facility & Finance Ministry Team

Definitions of ministry team responsibilities and servant groups within each team are provided in the Church Council's *Role and Functions* handbook (and incorporated herein by reference).

5. The Church Council shall establish other special needs ministry teams as needed for the work of the church.

6. The incoming council president shall appoint by January 1st the team leader of each ministry team.

7. The Church Council shall receive the proposed annual budget of the Congregation from the Facilities and Finance Ministry Team at its third quarter meeting. The budget approved by the Church Council shall be presented to the Congregation at the annual meeting the last Sunday of October for their approval or disapproval. After exhausting budgeted funds, requests for additional funds from the ministry teams shall be approved or disapproved by the Church Council.

8. The Church Council shall establish, when necessary, a pastoral search team for the purpose of securing pastoral staff for the Congregation. Membership and responsibilities of the pastoral search team shall be as described in the By-laws III, B-1.

9. The Church Council shall recommend to the Congregation for approval the calling of

- a. full-time pastoral staff, upon the recommendation of the pastoral search team.
- b. part-time pastoral staff, upon the recommendation of the pastoral search team.
- c. commissioned or licensed ministers, upon the recommendation of the church elders.

10. The Church Council shall approve the creation of any new employee position and the appropriate funding.

E. Resignation/Termination

1. Voluntary resignation of Trustees, Elders, Deacons, or Congregational Officers, shall be submitted to the Church Council in writing, after consultation with the Council President.
2. Involuntary termination of Trustees, Elders, Deacons, or Congregational Officers shall be dealt with confidentially among the Pastor, the Council President and the Elders.
3. The Nominating Servant Group shall submit names to the council to fill the vacant position through the remainder of the term.

II. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Election and Term of Office

1. The elected officers of the Church Council shall be called the Administrative Leadership Team (ALT) and consist of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer and the appointed Ministry Team Leader
2. The nominating team shall submit its candidates for officers, to the Congregational to be elected at the 4th quarter meeting. Any member may nominate from the floor any congressional member who has agreed to be nominated.
3. The officers of the Church Council shall hold office for one year. The President, Vice-President, the Secretary of the Council, may be re-elected to serve another term of one year provided they are elected for an additional term.
4. In the event of more than one nominee for an office, election shall be held by a secret ballot. The President shall appoint three tellers, who are not nominees, to count the ballots. An officer shall be elected by a majority of votes cast by those present.
5. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall serve one-year terms, but may be reappointed to serve another one-year term until such time as they resign from the positions or they have served in one or both positions for a total of six years.

" . . . Temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
(Timothy 3:1-7)

B. Qualifications

1. Officers must be members of the Congregation.
2. Officers must be active in the Congregation's life and give evidence of seeking to grow in their own understanding and practice of the Christian life. Such evidence would include the following:

- a. Conduct one's life in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- b. Promotion of good will and Christian fellowship in the Congregation and community.
- c. Attendance at the worship services and stated meetings of the Congregation.
- d. Regular financial contributions to the support of the Congregation and its outreach program.
- e. Willingness to fulfill assignments on behalf of the Congregation.
- f. Demonstrated skills or evident potential in carrying out responsibilities of the particular office.

C. Responsibilities

1. The president shall preside at all stated and special called meetings of the Congregation and Church Council and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of president.
2. The vice-president shall serve to support the president, preside in his or her absence at meetings of the Congregation and Church Council and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of president, as required. The vice-president shall preside at Administrative Leadership Team meetings.
3. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the Congregation and Church Council and provide for these minutes to be reviewed and approved by their respective bodies.
4. The treasurer shall receive all income of the Congregation, make a record thereof and deposit in proper church accounts, including all memorials, endowments and trusts. The treasurer shall pay all accounts of the Congregation as authorized by the budget or special action of the Church Council when such items are not in the budget, provide accurate records of all expenditures, make regular written reports to the Church Council, and provide for an annual audit of both income and expenditures. The treasurer and assistant treasurer shall be bonded and the bonding fee shall be paid by the church. The assistant treasurer shall act as treasurer in the absence or incapacity of the treasurer.
5. The Church Council shall approve voluntary or involuntary termination of officers of the Council upon the recommendation of the Administrative Leadership Team.
6. The Council President shall appoint a church historian and parliamentarian each year.

III. PASTORS

A. Responsibilities

1. The pastoral staff (ordained and commissioned) of the congregation shall be responsible for preaching, teaching, and nurturing of the congregation in compliance with the Congregation's Constitution and By-laws and the policies and procedures of the congregation and the Church Council. The pastoral staff shall assist, as requested, the church council officers in carrying out the mission and ministries of the church.
2. The pastoral staff shall be non-voting members of the congregation.

B. Selection

1. Ordained ministers

The Congregation as hereinafter described shall choose the pastoral staff:

- a. To select a full or part time pastoral staff member, a pastoral search team shall be composed of six individuals. Membership on the team shall include: an Elder, two from the Diaconate, and one from each of the three named ministry teams of the congregation. They are to be appointed by the President of the Church Council.
- b. The pastoral search team shall utilize the services of the Congregation's Regional Minister for information and counsel concerning prospective candidates.
- c. The pastoral search team shall gather information and interview prospective candidates.
- d. The pastoral search team shall perform a background check prior to making a recommendation of a prospective candidate to the Church Council.
- e. The Church Council, at a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the pastoral search team by at least two-thirds majority of those council members present and voting.
- f. Upon approval of the Council, an invitation will be extended to the prospective candidate to preach on a coming Sunday. An honorarium shall be provided to the prospective candidate.
- g. The Congregation, shall, at a called meeting, discuss and vote on the calling of the prospective candidate to First Christian Church. At least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting is required.
- h. Upon approval of the Congregation, a call shall be extended to the prospective pastor by the President and the elders, on behalf of the congregation.

2. Commissioned, licensed, or lay ministers

- a. The calling of commissioned, licensed, or lay ministers into a specific ministry in the congregation is the responsibility of the Elders.
- b. When a member of the congregation reveals through their actions a calling to minister to the community, the elders may recommend to the Congregation a formal calling to ministry through the Indiana Region of the Christian Churches commissioned ministry program.
- c. A formal calling to commissioned ministry identifies the local congregations' support of the individual in their ministry call and calls them to perform the ministry through and for this congregation. A commissioned, licensed or lay minister may receive financial support, i.e., salary, and/or expenses from the congregation. Commissioned ministers attend three training events per year as well as meet with a Nurture & Certification Team once each year

C. Terms of Employment

1. Terms of employment shall be directed by Human Resources Team (HRT).
2. A written agreement of employment setting forth the starting salary to be paid to the Pastor and other conditions of the call shall be provided to the pastor, with a copy filed in the church office and one copy filed with the Regional Office.
3. The term of ministry may be terminated with a minimum of thirty days' notice.

D. Pastoral Relations Team

The Pastoral Relations Team shall consist of three members of the congregation, selected by the pastoral employee in consultation with the President. They shall serve three years on rotating terms. The

Pastoral Relations Teams (PRT) shall provide support and contact between the congregation and the pastor, fostering constructive communication. The PRT

shall be consulted by the

Human Resource Team during the annual review of the pastor as a additional source of information on the performance of the pastor.

See Revised Guidelines for Pastoral Relations Committee (April 2008); Disciples Home Mission (DHM), Indianapolis, Indiana.

E. Resignation/Termination

1. Voluntary resignation of any member of the pastoral staff shall be submitted to the Church Council in writing, after consultation with the President and the appropriate Pastoral Relations Team.
2. Involuntary termination of any member of the pastoral staff shall be dealt with confidentially among the Pastor, the President, the appropriate Pastoral Relations Team, and the Regional Minister.

IV. ELDERS, DIACONATE, AND TRUSTEES

A. Election and Term of Office

1. The congregation at its annual meeting shall elect for terms of three (3) years Elders, and Deacons.
2. Trustees shall be elected to five (5) year staggered terms.

B. Qualifications

1. The qualifications for Elders, the Diaconate, and Trustees shall be the same as described for the officers of the Church Council in By-law II-B.

C. Responsibilities

1. Elders primarily shall be responsible for the spiritual life of the Congregation and preside at the Lord's Table. The Elders will share with the pastoral staff in the conduct of ministerial functions regarding the spiritual life and development of the Congregation. The Elders shall serve in the servant groups under the Worship and Witness Ministry Team.
2. The Diaconate shall assist in the growth of the Congregation. The Deacons shall serve in the servant groups under the Membership and Mission Ministry Team.
3. Trustees shall act as legal agents for all related matters at the direction of the Church Council. By authority of the Church Council, the Trustees are to establish policy and procedure for Memorial Gifts given to the church. The Trustees must decide whether the gift is appropriate to this Congregation's life and faith. The Trustees shall serve on the Facility and Finance Ministry Team.

4. The trustees shall give a detailed account annually to the Council of any activity in memorials, endowment and trusts. An audit may be called for by the Congregation at a congregational meeting.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

A. Membership and Meetings

1. The Administrative Leadership Team's (ALT) presiding officer will be the vice-president of the Church Council. The members of the Administrative Leadership Team shall be the officers of the Church Council, the team leaders of each standing ministry team and the pastoral staff.
2. The Administrative Leadership Team shall meet a minimum of four times a year.

B. Responsibilities

1. The ALT shall be concerned with coordinating programs among ministry teams and with the overall long-range plans for our church in the community and in the world.
2. The Administrative Leadership Team shall initiate, and coordinate the activities and programs of the Congregation in keeping with church themes and policies.
3. The Administrative Leadership Team shall evaluate all activities and programs in light of the Mission Statement of the congregation.

VI. NOMINATING MINISTRY TEAM

A. Membership

1. The nominating ministry team, appointed by the President shall consist of the immediate past president, who serves as team leader, an Elder, a Deacon, and a man and a women from the Congregation.
2. Appointment of the nominating ministry team shall be made at the first council meeting after the new council is elected.

B. Responsibilities

1. The nominating ministry team shall present a slate of officers, and nominate candidates for Elders, Deacons, and Trustees to be elected to the Church Council by the Congregation at its annual meeting. Nominations to the Church Council may be made from the floor provided the nominee has consented to serve.
2. The nominating ministry team shall make nominations to fill vacancies. Said nominees shall be approved by the Church Council.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCE TEAM

A. Membership

The Human Resource Team (HRT) shall consist of an Elder, a Deacon, and five church members appointed by the President to serve three years on rotating basis.

B. Responsibilities

The team shall review pastoral responsibilities, foster constructive communication, evaluate ministry performance, deal with pastoral problems, and annually review the Pastor(s) contract. The team shall review the pastoral pay package with the Stewardship Servant Group and make a recommendation to the board during the budget process.

VIII. AMENDMENTS

These By-laws may be amended by a majority vote of the Church Council recommending amendment(s) to the Congregation and by a majority vote of the Congregation in stated or special meetings. The proposed amendment(s) shall be circulated to the Congregation by two or more means of communication (bulletin, Bell Tower, email, Text, Web-site, Social Media) a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting of the Congregation at which the amendment(s) is to be considered.

IX. REVIEW AND REVISION

These by-laws shall be reviewed and revised as necessary every ten years, or sooner as deemed necessary by the Church Council.

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