

# Constitution of The Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ

## **Article I - Name**

The name of this organization shall be The Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ.

## **Article II - Purpose**

The purpose of this Church shall be to foster the love and worship of God, to promote a community committed to the service of humanity, to offer through word and deed a witness to Christian ideals and to provide a fellowship that nurtures Christian love, growth and caring for one another.

## **Article III - Polity**

The governance 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 Secretary of State of the State of Texas.

## **Article IV - Membership**

Any person who sincerely desires to join the church, declares support for the purposes stated in Article II, and professes commitment to the church's covenant; upon receiving an orientation from the Pastor and applying to the Board of Deacons may be admitted to membership by a vote of affirmation by the congregation.

## **Article V - Congregational Meetings**

There shall be an Annual Business Meeting, and any such additional special meetings as may be required, as prescribed in the By-Laws.

## **Article VI - Quorum**

The time, place and purpose of a congregational meeting shall be announced from the pulpit or in the church bulletin or the newsletter at least one week in advance. At a meeting so announced, 25% of the membership, shall constitute a quorum. That number will be based on an official count of the membership conducted by the Clerk.

## **Article VII - Coordinating Council**

There shall be a Coordinating Council which shall have two major purposes. The first is to address issues which are of church-wide importance, and which are not expressly delegated to a particular Board or Committee. The second is to engage in long-term planning regarding the directions, purposes and programs of the Church, and make appropriate recommendations to the Congregation based on those efforts.

## **Article VII - Board of Trustees**

There shall be a Board of Trustees, elected by the membership as provided in the By-Laws. It shall be the purpose of the Board to provide for the care, custody and growth of the assets of the Congregational Church of Austin. The Board shall be responsible for all legal, financial, and related matters.

#### **Article IX - Board of Deacons**

There shall be a board of Deacons, elected by the membership as provided in the By-Laws. It shall be the purpose of the Board to attend to the spiritual needs of the members. It will collaborate with the Pastor and with the Music Committee in the planning and conduct of religious services.

#### **Article X - Board of Christian Education**

There shall be a Board of Christian Education, elected by the membership as provided in the By-Laws. It shall be the purpose of the Board to collaborate with the Pastor and Superintendent of Christian Education in meeting the needs of the entire congregation with regard to their religious education.

#### **Article XI - Nominating Committee**

There shall be a Nominating Committee whose purpose shall be to submit to the congregation candidates to fill vacant, currently approved, church positions as needs require. The Nominating Committee will function as a standing body.

#### **Article XII - Church Officials**

The Officials of the Congregational Church of Austin shall include a Pastor, a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, a Financial Secretary, a Historian, a Superintendent of Christian Education, as well as members of the three Church Boards and existing Committees. They shall also include church representatives to selected, external, religious bodies.

#### **Article XII - Terms of Office of Church Officials**

The pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period by unanimous recommendation of the Search Committee, followed by an affirmative vote of at least 80% of the members of the Church. The Pastor's term of office and other conditions of employment will be stipulated in a written contract prepared by the Board of Trustees.

All other Church officials shall be elected by the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting. He or she shall be elected for terms of office of varying lengths -- ranging from one year to three years -- as stated in the By-Laws.

#### **Article XIII - Duties of Church Officials**

The duties and responsibilities of Church Officials will be as stipulated in written Job Descriptions. It shall be the responsibility of the Coordinating Council to see that there exists a Job Description for all church offices and positions, and that they are updated and maintained. To assure informed consent, the Nominating Committee shall supply all potential candidates for church office with current Job Descriptions.

#### **Article XV - Memorial Fund**

There shall be a Memorial Fund to serve as a way of remembering deceased members and friends. This Fund shall be administered jointly by the Board of Deacons and Trustees. Their respective roles are stipulated in the By-Laws.



#### **Article XVI - Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the congregation at any meeting at which 35 percent of the membership is present, provided that copies of the proposed amendment and note of a forthcoming vote shall have been presented to the members at a congregational meeting or in written communication, not less than 30 days previously.

**Approved as Amended, March 29, 1996**

# By-Laws of The Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ in Agreement with the Constitution

## Article I - Membership

**Section 1.** There shall be only one category of membership: Member. Members shall be entitled to participate in all aspects of the church's services, programs and activities. A member may hold any church office for which he or she have been duly nominated and elected by the congregation. A non-member may only serve on Committees. If a member so requests, he or she will be permitted to maintain simultaneous membership in a church to which he or she has previously belonged.

**Section 2.** It is expected that a Member will contribute time, talent and treasure, as he or she is able, to the successful functioning and continuance of this church. Any member who ceases to participate in the work of the church and who discontinues financial support shall be contacted by the Board of Deacons as to his or her desire to retain membership. Upon the request of a member, or when the Board of Deacons determines the member has severed physical, financial and psychological ties, the member will be dropped from membership. That member may subsequently make application for reaffiliation. The membership roll shall be examined and updated by the Board of Deacons at least every two years.

**Section 3.** Applicants for membership will first met with the pastor to receive an orientation to the traditions of this church, responsibilities of membership, and to satisfy any questions that they may have about the church and/or its parent denomination. They may then make a request for membership to the Board of Deacons by affirming their concurrence with the purposes of the church as stated in Article II of the Constitution, and indicating that they have read, understand and support this church's covenant.

**Section 4.** When the steps stated in Section 3 have been taken, The Board of Deacons will so announce to the congregation, who will then affirm the candidate as accepted into membership. Following that affirmation, The Board will arrange a formal rite of membership celebration to be held during a regular church service not later than thirty (30) days thereafter.

## Article II - Congregational Meetings

**Section 1.** Whenever the official business of the church requires the involvement of the entire congregation, a congregational meeting will be called. Those meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Moderator, the Coordinating Council, or by a majority of members of any standing Board, or upon written request of at least ten members. Except as elsewhere specified, a week's notice will be required.

**Section 2.** The Annual Business Meeting of the church shall be held in the month of January on a date and at a time and place designated by the Coordinating Council. In this instance, church members must be given 30 days' notice.

## Article III - Annual Report



**Section 1.** The church will produce a written Annual Report. It will be distributed to members of the congregation at least one week prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

**Section 2.** The Annual Report -- which serves as an official record of church activities during the year -- will contain a State of the Church report by the Pastor and summaries of the activities of the Coordinating Council and all other church boards and committees. In addition, it will include a summary of the inflow and outflow of income over the past year and the proposed budget for the coming year. It will also contain the slate of candidates nominated for church offices for the coming year. It will have the official count of changes in membership during the past year. Finally, it will encompass any other matters that should be permanently recorded.

#### **Article IV - Nominations, Elections, and Terms of Office**

**Section 1.** Officials of the church shall be elected at the Annual Business Meeting.

**Section 2.** After due deliberation, the Nominating Committee shall select at least one candidate for each vacant church office. They shall include that slate of nominees in the Annual Report. Church members desiring to nominate alternative candidates will determine their candidates' willingness to serve, and present his or her name on the floor of the Annual Business Meeting.

**Section 3.** When an incumbent church official is unable to complete a term of office, the Nominating Committee shall select and then nominate at least one person to fill the unexpired term. That nominee will be voted upon at a special meeting called for that purpose.

**Section 4.** All voting shall be conducted by a show of hands or by a voice vote unless a vote by written ballot is requested by a majority of those present.

**Section 5.** To calculate whether or not a quorum is present, actual number of current members as maintained by the clerk shall be used. That estimate will be based on a count of members listed in the current church directory plus any new members not listed and minus any who have died or withdrawn in the meantime. A quorum will exist when the required percentage of current members is present to conduct the particular type of business needing attention.

**Section 6.** Adult members of Boards of Deacons, Trustees, Christian Education, the Moderator, the Clerk, and all standing committees shall be elected for a three year term of office. A fraction of the members of each church body having multiple members shall be elected each year. This will produce staggered terms of office. Incumbents of these positions may not be re-elected until at least one year of office has passed.

**Section 7.** Youth members of the Boards of Deacons, Trustees and Christian Education shall be elected for a one year term.

**Section 8.** The Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Historian, the Director of Enlistment and Stewardship and his/her Assistant, the Superintendent of Christian Education, the Music Committee Chair, elected representatives to external organizations and any other church officials not specified shall serve a one year term of office. The incumbents of these shorter term offices may succeed themselves.

## **Article V - Functioning of the Coordinating Council, Boards and Committees**

**Section 1.** The duties of the Coordinating Council, the Boards and Committees of the church shall be those written in a current Job Description. The appropriate Job Description will be given to all persons being asked to serve, so that each will have a realistic view of a position's demand.

**Section 2.** The Coordinating Council, and all Board and Committees shall hold such meetings as are deemed necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities by their Chair or a majority of their members.

**Section 3.** Council, Board and committee members will be replaced for lack of regular attendance, defined as missing more than 3 meetings during a 6 month period. Unless god cause is found during a consultation with the member concerned, that church official will be asked to resign.

**Section 4.** The Coordinating Council and each of the standing Boards will have the prerogative of establishing whatever sub-groups each deems necessary to carry out its responsibilities. These sub-groups may be ad hoc or standing. Wherever possible, the membership of any such sub-group(s) should include at least one member of the parent body.

**Section 5.** Whenever an issue is being discussed which creates a conflict of interest for any member of a church body, that person must abstain from voting.

## **Article VI - The Coordinating Council**

**Section 1.** The Coordinating Council shall consist of the Pastor, the Moderator, the Clerk, a representative of each Board: the Deacons, Trustees and Christian Education, all ex-officio, and an elected member-at-large.

**Section 2.** The officers of the Coordinating Council shall be the Chair and Secretary; these positions will be filled by the Moderator and the Clerk, respectively.

## **Article VII - The Board of Trustees**

**Section 1.** The Board of Trustees shall consists of the Pastor, the Treasurer, and the Financial Secretary as ex-officio members, along with eight other members elected as follows: six adult members and, when available, two youth members. When youth, members are not available, additional adults will be elected as needed to reach the full complement of eight members.

**Section 2.** The officers of the Board shall be the Chair, the Vice-Chair, and the Secretary. They will be elected annually from amongst the Board members.

## **Article VIII - The Board of Deacons**

**Section 1.** The Board of Deacons shall consists of the Pastor, as ex-officio member, and eight other members elected as follows: six adult members and, when available, two youth members.



When not available, adult members will be elected as needed to reach the full complement of eight members.

**Section 2.** The officers of the Board shall be the Chair, the Vice-Chair, and the Secretary. They will be elected annually from amongst the Board members.

### **Article IX - The Board of Christian Education**

**Section 1.** The Board of Christian Education shall consist of the Pastor and Superintendent of Christian Education, as ex-officio members, and eight other members. Two of these should be youth, if available, If not, adult members will be elected as needed to reach the full complement of eight members.

### **Article X - The Nominating Committee**

**Section 1.** The Nominating Committee shall consist of three members.

**Section 2.** There shall be two officers of the Committee, the Chair and the Secretary. They will be elected annually from amongst its members.

### **Article XI - The Music Committee**

**Section 1.** The Music Committee is responsible for maintaining the music program that best fits the needs of the congregation, for hiring the musicians to implement that program, and for supporting and evaluating the program and musicians. This committee shall consist of the pastor (ex-officio), the Chair, a liaison from the Board of Deacons, a representative from the choir, and two members-at-large elected by the congregation.

**Section 2.** There shall be two officers of the Committee, the Chair, elected annually by the congregation; and a Secretary elected by the Committee.

### **Article XIII - Enlistment and Stewardship Committee**

**Section 1.** The Enlistment and Stewardship Committee, accountable to the board of Trustees, is charged with inspiring and educating the congregation in the Christian stewardship of their time, talents and treasure. The committee will be responsible for planning and implementing the annual enlistment drive and soliciting the necessary financial and personnel resources needed to sustain the church. They shall also be responsible for carrying out a stewardship education program.

**Section 2.** The Committee shall be composed of two members elected by the congregation, plus one representative of the Board of Trustees.

**Section 3.** There shall be two officers of the committee: the Chair or Director of Enlistment and Stewardship and the Secretary. They will be elected by the congregation.

### **Article XII - Job Descriptions**

**Section 1.** There shall be a Job Description for every standing position in the church.

**Section 2.** All church officials including chairs of church bodies shall be responsible for writing and keeping current the Job Descriptions for their respective office or church body.

**Section 3.** All such Job Descriptions shall be updated annually and submitted to the Coordinating Council and the nominating committee at least two months prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

#### **Article XIV - Memorial Fund**

**Section 1.** There shall be a Memorial Fund. Its purpose will be to server as a vehicle through which church members and friends may give financial and other gifts to commemorate the lives of loved ones. Funds or other tangible gifts accepted will be used in the furtherance of the mission and ministry of the church. Such gifts will be used to provide permanent remembrances of the persons being memorialized. Ordinarily, it would not be fitting to use Memorial Funds to meet operating expenses, to purchase consumable items, or to purchase any other gifts of a temporary nature.

**Section 2.** The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for accepting and safely keeping moneys or gifts donated to the Fund.

**Section 3.** It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to make a recommendation to the congregation regarding the suitability of any gifts offered. A majority vote of the Board will determine the recommendation the devise.

**Section 4.** After the Board of Deacons gives its recommendation, it will be the responsibility of the congregation to decide by vote whether to accept or decline a Memorial Gift offered.

**Section 5.** In consultation with the families of Memorial Fund recipients; the Board of Deacons will recommend possible ways in which undesignated moneys might be spent. these recommendations will be presented to the membership for their decision and vote.

**Section 6.** It shall be the responsibility of the Financial Secretary to send an appropriate and timely letter of appreciation to the donor(s).

**Section 7.** Families of gift recipients shall be kept fully apprised, when Memorial Fund designated or undesignated gifts are received and families shall be informed of the identity of the donors, unless the donors request anonymity.

#### **Article XV - Amendments**

The Bylaws may be amended at any meeting at which 25% of the members are present, provided that at least two weeks' prior notice shall have been given, and that at least two-thirds of the members present vote for the amendment(s).