

**BYLAWS
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OF HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA**

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ARTICLE 1: IDENTITY

1.1 Church Name

The name of this Church is **First Congregational United Church of Christ of Hendersonville, North Carolina**, located within the Town of Laurel Park. We are a member of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC).

1.2 Mission Statement

We respect all people and viewpoints and strive to follow the teachings and actions of Jesus. We nourish and support congregants' spiritual journeys and joyfully minister to their needs. We work for justice in our community and world by living compassionately, protecting creation, and reaching out to our neighbors with love.

1.3 The Local Church

The government of this Church is vested in its congregants who make all decisions, subject in legal matters to its Certificate of Incorporation and non-profit laws in the State of North Carolina. Congregational churches have historically emphasized local autonomy, including the rights to choose their own pastors and to own property—principles the United Church of Christ continues to uphold.

1.4 The United Church of Christ

Though independent of higher ecclesiastical authority, this Church embraces mutual counsel, social harmony, and cooperation within the United Church of Christ, committing to its shared goals and ministries through the Southern Conference and General Synod.

1.5 A Covenantal Church

First Congregational United Church of Christ of Hendersonville is a covenantal church—congregants being united by mutual commitments rather than doctrinal creeds. We welcome people with diverse beliefs, meet people where they are on their spiritual journeys, and walk together in mutual respect and openness to differing perspectives.

1.6 Sacraments

The sacraments of this Church are Baptism and Holy Communion. They are administered by the Pastor(s) and others designated by the Pastor(s).

1.7 Membership

1.7.1 General – Belonging to this congregation means committing to worship, fellowship, and support of the Church's mission and its core values of justice, compassion, and inclusion.

1.7.2 Membership Distinctions

Congregants are defined as those who attend services, engage in Church activities, or contribute financially. All congregants are encouraged to participate in one or more of the Church's Ministries.

All congregants may participate and vote in meetings (except on legal matters as noted in the paragraph below) and may serve as Officers and Council members.

Enrolled Members are defined as those who have *publicly committed* to the Church and its core values of justice, compassion, and inclusion. Only Enrolled Members may vote on pastoral changes, property sales, Church dissolution, and other legal matters defined by Church Council.

ARTICLE 2: GOVERNANCE and OPERATIONS

Congregants assembled in congregational meetings govern the Church. Between meetings, the Church Council, as defined below, acts as the governing board.

2.1 Election and Terms of Officers and Church Council

The members of Church Council shall be: the Moderator; the Assistant Moderator; the Clerk; the Treasurer; the Assistant Treasurer; the Representatives to the Ministry of Financial Resources and the Ministry of Physical Resources; the Liaisons to the Ministry of Worship, Ministry to Members and Friends, and Ministry of Community Outreach and Justice; the called Pastor, and all other Ministers.

A slate of candidates for new Council positions will be developed by a Nominating Committee, as described in Section 2.5.4 below, and presented for congregational vote at the Annual Congregational Meeting in January.

Church Officers and Council members, except *ex officio* members, must be elected annually by a majority of congregants present and voting at the Annual Congregational Meeting and assume their duties immediately thereafter.

Ex Officio is defined as positions bestowed upon persons by virtue of their office rather than by vote. *Ex officio* positions hold the same voting privileges as elected positions.

The Moderator and Assistant Moderator may each serve up to two consecutive one-year terms. All other elected officers may serve up to four consecutive one-year terms. After serving the maximum term for an office, an officer may be re-elected to that office only after at least one year has passed with another individual in the role. Any exception to this rule requires formal approval by the Church Council.

Ministry Facilitators, Representatives and Liaisons may serve up to three consecutive one-year terms. Any exception to this, necessitated by unusual circumstances, requires formal approval by the Church Council.

2.2 Church Council

2.2.1 Council Purpose — The Church Council serves as both the governing board between congregational meetings and a leadership wisdom circle to foster and implement the congregation’s vision.

All Council members are voting members, having one vote each. Any Council position that is split between more than one person shall have a single vote. Council decisions require consensus, defined as no more than two dissenting votes. A majority of voting members present shall constitute a quorum of Council.

The Council identifies Church issues and needs, develops action plans, and works to foster peace and unity within the congregation. The Council supports innovative ideas aligned with the Church’s core values of justice, compassion, and inclusion, and assists Church Ministries upon request.

Council members serve as spiritual leaders by cultivating belonging—especially for new congregants, nurturing spiritual growth, and compassionately and joyfully meeting congregants’ needs.

2.2.2 Council Responsibilities – The Church Council will:

- Hold regular meetings at times determined by its members, with a quorum being defined as a majority of its members.
- Oversee all Church ministries and manage congregational business between meetings and receive regular reports from Ministry facilitators, the Church Treasurer, and other groups upon request.
- Call congregational meetings upon vote of the Council.
- Call congregational meetings upon written petition from twenty (20) or more congregants stating the reason for the meeting.
- Approve the proposed annual budget before submitting it to congregants at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- Approve real and personal property gifts to the Church as proposed by the Ministry of Physical Resources.
- Appoint individuals to fill Officer vacancies that occur between annual meetings. These appointments last until the next annual meeting and do not affect eligibility for a subsequent full term.

2.3 Positions and Responsibilities

2.3.1 Pastor – Recognizing that the Church Council governs between congregational meetings, the Pastor serves as executive head of the Church, accountable to congregants and responsible for supervising all compensated staff.

The Pastor oversees all public worship services, administers the sacraments, provides pastoral care, and collaborates with the Church Council, Ministries, and staff. The Pastor serves as an ex-officio voting member of Council and all Ministries.

The Pastor must become an Enrolled Member of this Church and pursue Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ Association/Conference.

2.3.2 Other Minister(s) – All Minister(s) must become Enrolled Members of this Church and serve as ex-officio voting members of Council and all Ministries.

2.3.3 Moderator – The Moderator presides over all congregational meetings and Church Council sessions and may attend, speak, and vote at all Ministry meetings, providing guidance and coordination for Officers and Ministries.

The Moderator, or the Assistant Moderator, serves as the Church’s legal authorizing officer and, unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, must sign all documents related to property transactions, services, loans, and contracts approved by the Church Council, Enrolled Members, or another authorized Church body.

The Moderator, or the Assistant Moderator, together with the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer, shall have access to the Church’s safe deposit box.

2.3.4 Assistant Moderator – The Assistant Moderator supports the Moderator and in their absence or incapacity presides over all congregational meetings and Church Council sessions, performing any necessary Moderator duties.

2.3.5 Clerk – The Church Clerk serves as Secretary and official record-keeper for the Church and Church Council. Clerk responsibilities include:

- Notifying the congregation of all regularly scheduled and called meetings.
- Maintaining records of all congregational meetings and Church Council sessions.
- In the absence or incapacity of both the Moderator and Assistant Moderator, presiding over meetings until a Moderator pro-tem is elected.
- Keeping a record of elected Church Officers and Ministry Facilitators.

2.3.6 Treasurer — The Treasurer oversees care and custody of Church operating funds and all other funds not assigned to another party, under the supervision of the Ministry of Financial Resources and in accordance with these Bylaws.

2.3.7 Assistant Treasurer — The Assistant Treasurer(s) assists the Treasurer and in their absence or incapacity performs necessary Treasurer duties as directed by the Ministry of Financial Resources and in accordance with these Bylaws.

2.4 Ministries

2.4.1 General — Ministry groups carry out the Church's programs. Ministries include, but are not limited to, those listed in Sections 2.4.4 - 2.4.8 below.

2.4.2 Members — Congregants are encouraged to join any Church Ministries they are interested in and may resign at any time.

2.4.3 Organization — Ministries organize their own activities and may appoint their Facilitators and other necessary roles. The Ministry of Financial Resources and the Ministry of Physical Resources must also nominate Representatives to Church Council. Liaisons to Church Council from the Ministry of Worship, the Ministry to Members and Friends, and the Ministry of Community Outreach and Justice will be nominated by the Church's standing Nominating Committee. All nominees to Church Council will be submitted at the Annual Congregational Meeting for a congregant vote of approval.

2.4.4 Ministry of Worship — The Ministry of Worship supports the Pastor(s) by preparing meaningful and appropriate worship spaces and assisting in worship preparation. The nominating committee will select a Liaison from this team who, if elected by the congregation, will serve as a member of Council.

2.4.5 Ministry of Financial Resources

2.4.5.1 General — The Ministry of Financial Resources shall oversee all Church financial operations, including but not limited to: preparing reports, paying obligations, managing income, and leading the stewardship campaign, in accordance with these Bylaws. All further details of this Ministry's duties and responsibilities are outlined in the *Financial Operations Handbook*. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are ex officio, voting members of the Financial Resources Team. The Ministry of Financial Resources will select a Facilitator. If the Ministry desires, the Facilitator can also serve as the Ministry's Representative to Church Council.

2.4.5.2 The Heritage Fund — The Ministry of Financial Resources may withdraw up to 5% of the Church's Heritage Fund to support the annual operating budget. Any withdrawal greater than 5% requires a majority vote of the Church Council and affirmed by a majority vote of congregants attending and voting.

2.4.5.3 Tithe of Annual Pledged Amount — First Congregational Church is committed to service to our community. Each year, the Ministry of Financial Resources will set aside 10% of the previous year's total church income to be distributed back into the community.

2.4.5.4 Non-Budget Expenditures — Any proposed non-budgeted expenditure of Church funds in excess of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) must be recommended by the Facilitator of a Ministry; approved by the Ministry of Financial Resources who will submit a recommendation to Council; approved by Church Council who will call a congregational meeting for the purpose, and affirmed by a majority vote of congregants attending and voting.

2.4.6 Ministry of Physical Resources — The Ministry of Physical Resources manages Church buildings, grounds and mechanical operations, including the vegetable garden, memorial garden, labyrinth, and all other living areas. All further details of this Ministry's duties and responsibilities are outlined in the *Physical Resources Operations Handbook*. The Ministry of Physical Resources will select a Facilitator. If the Ministry desires, the Facilitator can also serve as the Ministry's Representative to Church Council.

2.4.7 Ministry of Congressional Life — The Ministry of Congressional Life supports the Church through congregational care and fellowship. This Ministry enables and supports congregants in forming teams to conduct specific tasks identified by the congregation and Pastor(s). The nominating committee will select a Liaison from this Ministry who, if elected by the congregation, will serve as a member of Church Council.

2.4.8 Ministry of Community Outreach and Justice — The Ministry of Community Outreach and Justice supports the Church by connecting the congregation with opportunities to meet broader community needs through service, support, and social justice advocacy. This Ministry enables and supports congregants in forming teams to conduct specific tasks identified by the congregation and Pastor(s). The nominating committee will select a Liaison from this Ministry who, if elected by the congregation, will serve as a member of Church Council.

2.5 Standing Committees

This Church has several standing committees responsible for carrying out specific Church activities. Additional committees may be established at the discretion of the Church Council. Standing committees report directly to the Church Council.

2.5.1 Human Relations Committee – The Human Relations Committee — composed of the Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Clerk, and any other congregants appointed by Church Council; maintains, archives, and makes available to the congregation the *Church Personnel Handbook*. The Pastor generally manages support staff according to these policies. The Human Relations Committee will address any concerns or disputes between support staff and the Pastor that remain unresolved.

2.5.2 Pastoral Relations Committee – The Pastoral Relations Committee— composed of members selected as outlined in the Pastoral Relations Committee Charter, advises and supports the Pastoral Staff by providing a safe space to discuss concerns and fostering communication, well-being, and self-care. This Committee also conducts an annual Pastoral Staff review and recommends compensation.

2.5.3 Service and Giving Committee – The Service and Giving Committee— composed of interested congregants, allocates funds set aside by the Ministry of Financial Resources to be distributed to our community. This Committee researches, identifies, and selects appropriate community groups and decides the amount to be donated to each group.

2.5.4 Nominating Committee – The Nominating Committee—composed of the Assistant Moderator, Pastor(s), called Minister(s), and any other congregants that Council may appoint; will develop an annual slate of candidates for new Council positions and present those candidates for a vote at the Annual Congregational Meeting (January).

2.6 Additional Operating Documents

The following documents shall be maintained by the appropriate bodies and made available to the congregation upon request:

- Ministry of Financial Resources: *Financial Operations Handbook*
- Ministry of Physical Resources: *Physical Resources Operations Handbook*
- Human Relations Committee: *Church Personnel Handbook*
- Pastoral Relations Committee: *Pastoral Relations Committee Charter*

Article 3: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

3.1 Rules of Order

Congregational meetings must be conducted following the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Quorum – Generally, a quorum for voting on Church matters is defined as 35% of congregants—except in the matters of Pastoral Change, Property Sales, and Church Dissolution wherein a quorum of 70% of Enrolled Members is required.

The Church Clerk must count votes at all congregational meetings and may appoint tellers to assist. A secret ballot may be used if a majority of congregants present vote in favor of secret ballot. After an appropriate holding period, the Clerk must destroy the secret ballots.

3.2 Annual Congregational Meeting (January)

The Annual Congregational Meeting provides annual reports from the Moderator, Treasurer, Ministries, and Pastor(s); reviews and adopts the budget; elects officers and Council members, and addresses other agenda items.

3.3 Called Meetings

The Church Council may call a congregational meeting for a specific purpose or upon a written petition from 20 or more congregants. The Clerk will announce the meeting's time, place, and purpose.

The Clerk must ensure the meeting notice, stating the specific reason, is given at least two Sundays prior via the Sunday bulletin, pulpit announcement, and, if directed, written or electronic notice.

Article 4: CHURCH POLICIES

4.1 Church Property & Property Alterations

Any sale, lease, mortgage, or exchange of Church-owned real estate; acquisition of real estate; construction of new buildings—including method of necessary fundraising, requires approval by:

- The Church Council, and
- A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of Enrolled Church Members present and voting at a congregational meeting.

4.2 Church Affiliations

Any change in the Church's denominational affiliation or union with another church requires:

- Approval by the Church Council, and
- A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of Enrolled Members present and voting at a congregational meeting.

4.3 Organized Groups

Groups representing First Congregational United Church of Christ of Hendersonville must act in accordance with the Church's core values and regularly reaffirm their purpose and accountability to the congregation and leadership.

4.4 Public Statements

Public statements—verbal, written, or posted—that appear to represent First Congregational United Church of Christ of Hendersonville require prior approval from the Pastor and/or Council.

4.5 Fiscal Year

The Church's fiscal year must align with the calendar year.

Article 5: PASTORAL CHANGE

Throughout all stages of pastoral change—Departure, Search And Call, and Transition decision-making—Church leaders must collaborate with the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ and when needed with the national UCC, adhering to UCC guidelines to ensure a fair, ethical, and discerning process. See the *United Church of Christ: Guide to Pastoral Search And Call* and the *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the UCC*.

5.1 Pastoral Departure

Pastoral departures, by resignation or termination, must comply with United Church of Christ Ethical Guidelines and the Covenant of Closure, and include the following requirements:

- *Resignation.* A Pastor who voluntarily resigns (for retirement, a new call, or personal reasons) must provide three months' written notice to the Council. The departure date will be set jointly by the Pastor and Church Council. The resignation will also be reported to the UCC Conference.

- *Termination.* Pastoral termination initiated by the Church or its governing Council requires a congregational meeting, a three-fourths (3/4) affirmative vote of Enrolled Members present and voting, and submission of the Pastor's resignation within 10 days of the affirmative vote of termination. Notice of termination will be sent to the UCC Conference.

5.2 Settled Pastor Search Committee

The Moderator must present eight congregants to the Church Council for a Pastoral Search Committee—seven as members and one as an alternate. The alternate member participates fully in all Search Committee activities but may vote only if replacing an absent member.

Pastoral nominees must be submitted to a Special Congregational Meeting for congregational vote of approval.

The Search Committee collaborates with the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ and any retained consultants to identify qualified ministers, verify their credentials (including Privilege of Call requirements), interview candidates, and conduct appropriate inquiries.

5.3 Transition Leadership Team

The Church Moderator must present eight congregants to the Church Council to form a Transition Leadership Team responsible for all aspects of pastoral transition, including mentoring related groups.

The Transition Leadership Team must conduct its business openly and transparently and develop and follow a transition plan in collaboration with the United Church of Christ as specified above. The Team's duties include, but are not limited to, the following functions:

- Select an interim pastor. (The interim pastor cannot be considered for a settled pastor position.)
- Before initiating Search And Call for a new pastor, establish a process for congregants to review and articulate the Church's goals and vision, as required by the United Church of Christ.
- Plan any events to honor the outgoing pastor.
- Update the congregation on all aspects of the transition.

5.4 The Call

Once the Search Committee has selected a finalist — having heard them preach at least once, it will negotiate the compensation and terms of the Call. The Committee, together with Church Council, the Southern Conference of the UCC, and the candidate, will then schedule a *Candidate Sunday*, when the candidate will lead worship. Immediately after, a Special Congregational Meeting must be conducted for the Committee to recommend the candidate and for Enrolled Members to vote on the Call.

A Pastor must be called for an indefinite term upon receiving a ninety percent (90%) affirmative vote of a quorum (70%) of Enrolled Members present and voting at the duly called Congregational Meeting.

The Pastor, Church, and UCC Conference must each receive a copy of the Church’s *Terms of Call*, outlining the relationship between Church and Pastor including compensation, benefits, and participation in the UCC Pension Fund and Health Insurance program.

5.5 Installation

Upon election and acceptance of the Call, the new Pastor must become an Enrolled Member of this Church and be installed as settled Pastor according to United Church of Christ practices. The Church Clerk must notify and invite the United Church of Christ and UCC Conference offices to the installation service.

5.6 Additional Ministers

Additional settled ordained Ministers, whether full-time or part-time, must be called by a Congregational Meeting in accordance with Sections 5.1 through 5.5 above.

Article 6: CHURCH DISSOLUTION

The Church can be dissolved by a 2/3 majority vote of a quorum of 70% of Enrolled Members. Upon dissolution of the Church and payment of all obligations, all remaining assets—including any gifts, bequests, or grants; must be transferred to local nonprofit(s) or national agency(ies) as determined by a majority vote of Enrolled Members at a congregational meeting. No assets shall be distributed to Church members.

Article 7: BYLAWS AMENDMENT or REPEAL

The Church Council may appoint a task force every five years to review and recommend Bylaws revisions. Bylaws may be amended, added, or repealed at a congregational meeting called for that purpose, provided that:

- The full text of proposed changes is made available in the Church narthex and electronically at least two weeks before the meeting; and
- Changes are approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of a quorum of congregants present and voting.

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These Bylaws are amended as described herein on 00/00/0000 date.

Signatures

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