

Bylaws of The First Church in Weymouth

Article I Name & Object

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

Article II Polity & Doctrine

A. This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head and finds in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Holy Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline. This Church is independent in respect to its internal organization and regulation of its affairs, yet recognizes and sustains the relations of mutual counsel, fellowship, and covenant with other churches in the Congregational tradition, and seeks the promotion of peace with all churches of our Lord.

B. The government of this Church is vested in its body of believers, to wit, the Congregation. It is subject to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as evidenced by its Certificate of Incorporation dated January 26, 1911 and its Charter issued by the Secretary of the Commonwealth on September 27, 1911. This Church is registered with the Internal Revenue Service and exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as part of the Group Ruling issued to the United Church of Christ dated June 10, 1964 and numbered 1665.

C. 1) This Church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of his/her own conscience under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The following statements of faith and principles, therefore, are not a test but an expression of the spirit in which the Church interprets the Word of God.

2) The Creed: We believe in God as the only living and true God, in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, and in the Holy Spirit as the enlightener, sanctifier, and guide of God's people. We believe also in the Holy Scriptures as a revelation from God; as such we embrace them, promising to make it our careful, conscientious, and persevering endeavor to regulate our conduct agreeably to their requirements.

3) The Covenant: We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known to us or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all humanity, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brother/sisterhood, depending, as did our forebears, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. We work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

Article III Membership

A. Persons who request membership and are approved by the Diaconate may become members by confession or reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer from another church, or by the rite of Confirmation celebrated at The First Church in Weymouth.

B. The public reception of new members shall take place at the Sunday Worship Service and shall include an affirmation of faith and an assent to The Covenant contained in Article II, Section C 3. If a new member is unable to attend a public reception, the Diaconate may approve a private reception of that person into membership conducted by the Clergy and at least two members of the Diaconate.

C. A member may choose to terminate his/her own membership by means of a letter of transfer to another church, or by requesting in writing to the Diaconate a release of that member's covenant obligations to the Church. In such cases the Clerk shall issue the letter of transfer or release, as applicable, and advise the Diaconate.

D. The Church may initiate termination of a person's membership, and such action requires a nine-tenths vote. Offenses public or private shall be governed by the instructions of Matthew 18:15-17.

Article IV Officers

A. The officers of the Church shall be the Clergy, the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, and the Auditor. All officers, except the Clergy, shall be elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of three years or until their successors are elected. These officers shall perform the duties prescribed by these bylaws and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Church. The term "Clergy" here and throughout these bylaws shall include any and all Pastors and Associate Pastors.

B. 1) The Pastor shall be called as Pastor and Teacher to The First Church in Weymouth and its community by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a special meeting of the Church duly called for the specific purpose of electing the Pastor.

2) The Pastor shall, along with the Diaconate, have responsibility for the spiritual care of the Church and parish. The Pastor shall preach the Word of God, lead the Congregation's Worship, provide pastoral care and guidance for those in need, officiate at the celebration of the Church's sacraments and rites, and provide the necessary teaching and guidance of those entrusted with the religious education of the Church.

3) The Pastor is responsible for facilitating communication among the Church's boards and committees and assisting them in the setting of priorities and goals. The Pastor shall serve ex-officio as a member of all boards and standing committees.

4) The Pastor or the Church may terminate the Call. The Church may exercise this provision only by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a special meeting of the Church duly called for the specific purpose of terminating the Call, but only after all reasonable and Christian approaches to resolving difficulties have failed. If the Church does so terminate the Call, the Pastor shall be given thirty days notice.

C. 1) The Associate Pastor shall be called as Associate Pastor to The First Church in Weymouth and its community by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a special meeting of the Church duly called for the specific purpose of electing the Associate Pastor.

2) The Associate Pastor shall work with the Pastor and Diaconate, shall share responsibilities for the spiritual care of the Church and parish, preach the Word of God, lead the Congregation's Worship, provide pastoral care and guidance for those in need, officiate at the celebration of the Church's sacraments and rites, and provide the necessary teaching and guidance of those entrusted with the religious education of the Church. Specific duties of the Associate Pastor will be determined by the Pastor and Diaconate.

3) The Associate Pastor shall assist the Pastor in facilitating communication among the Church's boards and committees and assisting them in the setting of priorities and goals. The Associate Pastor shall serve ex-officio as a member of all boards and standing committees.

4) The Associate Pastor or the Church may terminate the Call. The Church may exercise this provision only by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a special meeting of the Church duly called for the specific purpose of terminating the Call, but only after all reasonable and Christian approaches to resolving difficulties have failed. If the Church does so terminate the Call, the Associate Pastor shall be given thirty days notice.

D. The Moderator shall serve as chair for all meetings of the Church, shall serve as chair of the Church Council, and shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees.

E. The Clerk shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the Church and of the Church Council. The Clerk shall ensure a register of Church members is maintained and up to date and shall present a written report of such to the Church at the Winter Annual Meeting.

F. The Treasurer shall keep an accounting of all monies received by the Church. The Treasurer shall keep accounts of funds donated or deposited for special purposes and expend money in accordance with the approved budget of the Church, or as otherwise directed by the Church, by the Trustees, or by the Church Council. The Treasurer shall present a written report at both Annual Meetings and any other written reports as requested by the Church Council or Trustees.

G. The Financial Secretary shall keep an accounting of all monies contributed at Worship Services and report the amounts received monthly at each meeting of the Trustees. The Financial Secretary shall present a written report to the Church at both Annual Meetings, and shall provide donors with statements.

H. The Auditor shall examine the records and all reports of the Treasurer and of the Financial Secretary. The Auditor shall report the results of these examinations in a written report presented at the Autumn Annual Meeting.

Article V Meetings

A. There shall be an Autumn Annual Meeting of the Church on the fifth Sunday following the end of the fiscal year (September 1 to August 31). At this meeting all financial reports are due as required by these bylaws. The Trustees shall present at this meeting a proposed Church budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

B. There shall be a Winter Annual Meeting of the Church on the fifth Sunday after December 31. At this meeting are due reports from officers, boards, and committees as required by these bylaws, including the nominating committee's report for the purpose of conducting elections.

C. Special meetings of the Church shall be called by the Moderator upon the written request of the Diaconate, of the Trustees, of the Church Council, of the Clergy, or of seven members of the Church. The purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the written notice.

D. Written notice for all meetings of the Church shall be posted in the vestibule beginning with the second Sunday Worship service immediately preceding the meeting, and such notice shall be read aloud at the same two immediately preceding Sunday Worship Services.

E. A quorum for meetings of the Church shall be twenty-five members.

F. The Church Council shall conduct the approval of minutes for any meeting of the Church at the Council's immediately succeeding meeting, and shall deliver such minutes to the Church office for filing.

Article VI Boards

A. 1) There shall be a Board of Deacons (known as "the Diaconate") consisting of all Deacons, Senior Deacons, and all Clergy ex-officio. The Diaconate shall have general supervision over the spiritual affairs of the Church including all matters pertaining to its Worship Services. The Diaconate shall meet every other month in odd-numbered months, and five Diaconate members shall constitute a quorum. Special meetings of the Diaconate may be called by the Diaconate chair or any Clergy. The Diaconate shall elect a chair and a secretary at the first meeting following the Winter Annual Meeting, shall prepare an annual budget proposal and submit it to the Trustees by June 1, and shall present a written report at the Winter Annual Meeting. The secretary of the Diaconate shall ensure minutes of Diaconate meetings are delivered to the Church office for filing.

2) Deacons shall be elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for a term of four years and shall be twelve in number. Any Deacon who has served twelve years (consecutive or non-consecutive) shall, at his/her request, be designated as a Senior Deacon. Senior Deacons continue as members of the Diaconate with full privileges and rights of participation as long as they continue as members of the Church and desire to remain on the Diaconate.

3) The Diaconate shall assist the Clergy in promoting the spiritual interests of the Church and in ministering to the welfare of the parish. The Diaconate shall extend hospitality and welcome to new members and visitors, and shall promote the bond of fellowship between members of the Church and of the community, and shall assist the Clergy in extending aid and comfort to the sick and to those in need.

4) Services of Worship shall be held on each Sunday, and at other times as determined by the Diaconate, and Communion shall be observed on the first Sunday of each month. Exceptions to either provision shall be determined by the Diaconate, but for a period not to exceed one month; exceptions of longer than one month may only be determined by the Church. The Diaconate shall be responsible for conducting Worship Services in the absence of the Clergy. The Diaconate shall be responsible for the administration of the Communion Service, shall assist in its preparation and celebration, and shall care for the Communion silver and accessories.

B. 1) There shall be a Board of Trustees (known as “the Trustees”) consisting of ten elected members, plus the following ex-officio: the Clergy, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, and the Finance Committee Chair. Elected members shall be elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of four years. The Trustees shall meet monthly and five Trustees members shall constitute a quorum. Special Meetings of the Trustees may be called by the Trustees chair, by the Treasurer, or by any Clergy. The Trustees shall elect a chair and a secretary at the first meeting following the Winter Annual Meeting and shall present written reports at both Annual Meetings. The secretary of the Trustees shall ensure minutes of Trustees meetings are delivered to the Church office for filing.

2) The Trustees shall have charge of the financial affairs of the Church and shall be its legal representative in business matters in accordance with such votes as the Church or Church Council may pass. The Trustees shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real estate unless specifically authorized by vote of the Church. The Trustees shall be authorized to hire non-Clergy paid staff of the Church and determine or approve rates of pay unless such amounts have been fixed by vote of the Church. The Trustees shall be authorized to create and direct financial campaigns. The Trustees shall have custody of the properties of the Church and shall be responsible to the Church for their care and maintenance, and shall secure the services of a Church Custodian. The Trustees shall direct and supervise the care of the Church buildings.

3) The Trustees shall form an Endowment Committee, including at a minimum the Treasurer ex-officio and one other Trustee, to handle the Church’s Endowment Fund, securities of the Church, and the trading of stocks as directed by the Trustees.

a. There shall be an Endowment Fund, designated as the “Endowment Fund of The First Church in Weymouth”, consisting of gifts, bequests, and other such devices that may be made, as well as monies and securities placed in the Endowment Fund at the direction of the Trustees.

b. The principal of the Endowment Fund, except as otherwise provided for in these bylaws, shall be held in trust in perpetuity for The First Church in Weymouth, and for any successors or successors in interest, and shall be invested as a trust fund by the Trustees in such securities as may be lawful investments. Only the income of the Endowment Fund shall regularly be used for purposes of the Church. Expenditures of the principal of the Endowment Fund may only be authorized as follows: such use must first be approved by a vote of two-thirds of the entire membership of the Trustees, and subsequently approved by a nine-tenths vote of the Church.

c. The Endowment Committee shall present a written report to the Church at its Autumn Annual Meeting and shall provide for an annual audit of the Endowment Fund to be conducted independently of all persons on the Endowment Committee.

4) The Trustees shall prepare the annual Church budget, for presentation at the Autumn Annual Meeting, after receiving and considering all proposals from the boards and committees of the Church.

5) Only the chair of the Trustees is authorized to sign legal contracts for the Church. In the chair’s absence, by majority vote, the Trustees may authorize another Trustees member to sign such contracts.

C. 1) There shall be a Church Council consisting of all officers of the Church, the chair of the Diaconate, the chair of the Trustees, the chairs of all standing committees, the Sunday School Superintendent, the Youth Director, two at-large members elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of four years, two Senior Deacons appointed by the Pastor for terms of four years, and two members appointed by the Moderator for terms of four years. The Church Council shall, between meetings of the Church, act for the Church in all secular matters not otherwise provided for in these bylaws. The Church Council shall meet each month except July and August, and five Church Council members shall constitute a quorum. Special meetings of the Church Council may be called by the Moderator, or by any Clergy, or by four Church Council members. The Church Council shall present written reports at both Annual Meetings. The Clerk shall ensure minutes of Church Council meetings are delivered to the Church office for filing.

2) The Church Council shall facilitate and maintain communication among all officers, boards, committees, and organizations of the Church, and shall ensure such are meeting regularly and performing duties in accordance with the bylaws of the Church.

3) The Church Council shall, at its November meeting, appoint an ad-hoc nominating committee for elections held at the Winter Annual Meeting and not otherwise provided for in these bylaws. This nominating committee shall solicit input from each group that has vacancies, to assess interest and solicit recommendations, and shall present their report in writing to the Church at the Winter Annual Meeting.

4) The Church Council shall, annually at its March meeting, appoint an ad-hoc scholarship committee to solicit, receive, and act upon requests for monies distributed from the Scholarship Fund. The scholarship committee will normally award scholarships at the Children's Day Worship Service.

5) The Church Council shall appoint an ad-hoc committee to conduct a pastoral performance review of each Clergy member in the years ending in '0' and ending in '5'.

Article VII Committees

A. The standing committees of the Church shall be the Christian Education Committee, the Finance Committee, the Missions and Outreach Committee, and the Publicity Committee.

B. 1) The Christian Education Committee shall have ten elected members elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of three years, plus ex-officio the Sunday School Superintendent and the Youth Director. Following the Winter Annual Meeting they shall organize themselves by determining a method of meeting regularly and elect a chair.

2) The Committee shall study the needs and objectives of the Church, and plan programs that assist in the formation and sustenance of the Christian education of persons of all ages in the Church. They will organize any sub-committees needed to develop their programs and make their work effective.

3) The Committee shall establish and maintain a Sunday School, the purpose of which is to build a Church Family identity, develop an appropriate sense of Worship, and to begin Bible education for the children and young people of the Church. To that end, the Committee will administer the operation of the Sunday School, setting up such organization as may be effective to carry out the School's purpose. The Committee shall collaborate with the Sunday School Superintendent who shall be responsible for: enlisting qualified teachers for the Sunday School, planning training programs for teachers and leaders, promoting attendance at training conferences, and studying available curriculum materials and selecting those to be used.

4) The Committee shall collaborate with the Youth Director, who will work closely with the Sunday School and is responsible for enlisting qualified advisors for Youth Groups. The Committee will ensure all training and program participation meet applicable law regarding teachers, leaders, and advisors working with youth (e.g. CORI reports).

5) The Committee shall prepare its annual budgets and proposals and submit them to the Trustees by June 1. They shall also present a written report at the Winter Annual Meeting.

C. 1) The Finance Committee shall have ten elected members, elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of three years. Following the Winter Annual Meeting they shall organize themselves by determining a method of meeting regularly and elect a chair, who is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

2) The Committee shall arrange for the counting and depositing in a designated bank all monies received by the Church, and for advising the Treasurer and Financial Secretary of such amounts by such accounts as the Treasurer may specify.

D. 1) The Mission and Outreach Committee shall have ten elected members elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of three years. Following the Winter Annual Meeting they shall organize themselves by determining a method of meeting regularly and elect a chair.

2) The Committee shall encourage Church members to examine their own commitment within the Church and beyond that to the universal church and their relation to it. They shall help to promote among members a desire to share, through time, talent, and treasure, some of the burdens borne in all walks of life by others, both groups and individuals. They shall develop programs and activities designed to assist the congregation in applying the mandate to "love thy neighbor" to our parish, our community, and our world.

3) The Committee shall prepare its annual budgets and proposals and submit them to the Trustees by June 1. They shall also present a written report at the Winter Annual Meeting.

E. 1) The Publicity Committee shall have five elected members elected at the Winter Annual Meeting for terms of three years, plus ex-officio the Church Secretary. Following the Winter Annual Meeting they shall organize themselves by determining a method of meeting regularly and elect a chair.

2) The Committee shall have general oversight of the publicity for the actions, programs, and affairs of the Church. They shall provide for the regular publication of a church newsletter, and for the creation and maintenance of a Church website.

3) The Committee shall prepare its annual budgets and proposals and submit them to the Trustees by June 1. They shall also present a written report at the Winter Annual Meeting.

Article VIII Vacancies

A. 1) When the office of Pastor or Associate Pastor has been vacated, the Church shall choose a Search Committee. A Search Committee for the office of Pastor shall consist of nine elected members; a Search Committee for the office of Associate Pastor shall consist of eight elected members plus the Pastor ex-officio. The Search Committee shall choose a candidate from among those qualified persons it interviews and examines and present that candidate to the Congregation for Election and Call in accordance with Article IV of these bylaws.

2) The Diaconate shall be responsible for filling the pulpit during the vacancy, by means of selecting an interim Pastor or interim Associate Pastor as applicable, or by other temporary arrangements.

B. The Church Council shall have the authority to fill mid-term vacancies of officer positions, and of elected board and standing committee positions, and when exercising this authority shall consider recommendations from the board or committee having the vacancy.

Article IX Dissolution

In the event that The First Church in Weymouth ceases to exist, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this Church shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation which is like-minded with this Church and its Congregational identity, and which is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and/or religious purposes, and which has established its tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3). Such an entity shall be determined and chosen by majority vote at a meeting of the Church.

Article X Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Church in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Church may adopt.

Article XI Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Church by a two-thirds vote, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at the immediately preceding Church Council meeting, and is included in the written notice of the Church meeting at which it is to be considered.

**Note: these bylaws were adopted by the Church on May 7, 2017*