

First Congregational Church of Pittston Pittston, Maine

Member Church of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference

By-Laws

As adopted on January 20, 1990,
Revision January 2002
Revision June 12, 2010
Revision February 18, 2017

ARTICLE I: NAME

This church shall be called the First Congregational Church of Pittston.

ARTICLE II: COVENANT

The covenant by which this church exists as a distinct body, in which every member accepts, is as follows: acknowledge Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord; and accepting the holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice; and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian Fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of His Kingdom in the world; we do now, in the sight of God, and invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as set forth by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to orderly administration of the affairs of the church, and to walk together in brotherly love.

And this we do depending upon the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us with His blood, and of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide.

ARTICLE III: CHARACTER

SECTION I: POLICY

Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Congregational churches, and it is in fellowship with all churches which acknowledge Jesus the Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

SECTION II: DOCTRINE

It receives the Scripture as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in accord with the belief of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

SECTION I: QUALIFICATIONS

Its membership consists of such persons as confessed Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, and who,

- (1) After due examination as to their Christian experience, and if coming from other churches, as to their letters of dismissal and recommendation, or satisfactory substitutes thereof,
- (2) After a proposal from the pulpit on some Lord's Day, and
- (3) Having been baptized, enters into the church's covenant and subscribes to its bylaws, and is formally received into its fellowship by acclamation of the congregation.
- (4) A member should understand that he/she is under the church's spiritual care. The church may sometimes believe it is appropriate and even necessary to exercise at least some degree a Biblical church discipline. This discipline will be exercised according to the principles in the Bible as found in such passages as: Mt 18:15 – 17; 1st Cor 5:1 – 13; 2nd Cor 2:5 – 11; Gal 6:1 – 2; 2nd Tim 3:16 – 17, but not limited to these passages. The purpose of such discipline, among other things, is the spiritual restoration of that member. The primary responsibility of this discipline will be in the hands of the Diaconate Board with the possible assistance of others. Any further responsibility will be in the hands of the active church members.
- (5) While all persons are welcome to join us in worship, in order to uphold Biblical standards, we must disqualify for membership any persons living within a homosexual relationship until and unless that person repents and leaves this lifestyle, at which time they will be otherwise eligible for membership. Likewise, in order to uphold the church's belief in the covenant of marriage a couple living together outside the sanctity of marriage will not be eligible for membership.

SECTION II: ORDINANCES

Marriages: all marriages performed in the meetinghouse or otherwise sanctioned by the church shall be between one man and one woman.

SECTION III: RECEPTION

The reception of members shall ordinarily be upon some Lord's Day when the Lord's Supper is administrated.

SECTION IV: DUTIES

Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, and also to attend habitually the services of this church, to give regularly for its support, to contribute to its charities whenever desirable, and to share in its organized work.

SECTION V: RIGHTS

Members who faithfully perform their duties as outlined in section IV and who do not hold letters of dismissal and recommendation shall be listed in the church roles as "active member". Members who do not meet the requirements of an active member, but who do not hold letters of dismissal and recommendation, or who have had their membership terminated, shall be listed on the church roles as "inactive member". The clerk shall after due consultation with such an individual(s) as may be appropriate, shall recommend the membership status of each individual. At least thirty (30) days prior to making any recommendation to the church for its action, the clerk shall have the responsibility of ensuring that each individual is notified in person, if practical, as well as in writing, of the intended recommendation. Such notification shall include the reasons for these actions and the date of the meeting at which the vote would be taken, and an invitation to respond prior to the meeting. The individual shall be notified in writing of the vote of the church.

Individuals who habitually attended services and inactive members are encouraged to attend and participate in business meetings of the church, but only active members who have attained the age of eighteen (18) shall have the right to vote on any matter concerning its activities.

SECTION VI: TERMINATION

The continuance of membership shall be subject to the following:

- (1) Any active or inactive member who desires a letter of dismissal and recommendation to any other evangelical church is entitled to receive it upon his written request. In case of removal to another community he should promptly make such request. This letter shall be valid as a recommendation for only one year from its date, and this restriction shall be stated in the letter.
- (2) If a member desires to join a religious body with which the church is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the church may, at his request, give him a certificate of his standing and terminate his membership.
- (3) If an active or inactive member requests to be released from his covenant obligations to the church for reasons which the church may finally deem satisfactory, after it shall patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship, such request may be granted and his membership terminated.
- (4) The church may also, after due notice and hearing, and kindly effort to make such action unnecessary, terminate the membership persons for the space of two years non-resident, or for the same space of time for not contributing to its support according to the system prescribed by the church or in some way satisfactory there-to.
- (5) Should a member become an offense to the church, the church reserves the right to terminate the membership.
- (6) The membership of no person shall be terminated (except by letter) at the same meeting when the recommendation for such action is made.

SECTION VII: RESTORATION

Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the church, if for any offense, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation, or if on account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

SECTION I: THE PASTOR

A pastor is to be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The pastor may be installed by a council of pastors if the church and pastor so desires.

The pastor shall have the general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the congregation. He shall preach the Word and have in his care the stated services of public worship, and shall administer the sacraments.

When a vacancy occurs in the office of pastor, the clerk shall call a meeting of the church for the purpose of selecting a search committee which shall be responsible for the examination of candidates and recommending to the church for its vote a person to fill the vacancy.

For a vacancy in any other position, the nomination committee shall recommend to the church for its vote a replacement who shall serve the remainder of the term of the person being replaced.

SECTION II: THE CLERK

A clerk, who is a voting member of the church, is to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until his/her successor shall be chosen and qualified.

The clerk shall keep a complete record of all the transactions at all business meetings of the church, which shall be read for approval at the next annual business meeting. He/she shall keep a register of their names with dates of admission and dismissal or death, together with a record of baptism. He/she shall also notify all officers, members of the committees, and delegates of their election or appointment. He/she shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendation voted by the church, reserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated in these bylaws. The clerk shall be sworn if required by law of the state.

SECTION III: THE DIACONATE

The diaconate is composed of up to six men and women who are voting members of the church. At each annual meeting two Deacons shall be elected for a term of three years. Within 30 days of the annual meeting the Board shall elect from among its members a chairman and a vice-chairman and shall notify the clerk for recording in the church records.

The diaconate shall provide for the Lord's Supper and aid in its administration, and shall care for the needy, calling upon the treasurer by vote as a board, at their discretion, for any funds in his/her possession held for these purposes. They shall examine and present candidates for administration to the church, shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in any absence of the pastor, and shall decide on objects for regular or special

collections when the church has not acted thereon, and shall be responsible for the spiritual interests and welfare of the church and all of its organizations. They shall make a written report at each annual meeting of the matters under their charge.

SECTION IV: THE TREASURER AND ASSISTANT TREASURER

A treasurer and assistant treasurer, who are voting members of the church, are to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until another shall be chosen in his/her stead.

A treasurer shall keep separate accounts of all monies received by him/her for the support of public worship or any department of the church work to be paid out on the order of the trustees or any other persons or committees authorized by the church therefor, excepting that the treasurer may restrict the disbursement of funds pending on the approval of the trustees if he/she believes that in account is insufficiently funded to cover the requested disbursement. The treasurer shall submit a periodic report of all income and expenditures to the trustees. The frequency of this report shall be determined by the trustees; however, it shall not be less than quarterly.

All the treasurer's accounts shall be distinct from all other accounts, and all deposits made, and all checks drawn by him/her shall be in the name of the church.

He/she shall make an annual written report in detail of his/her receipts and expenditures, properly audited by an audit committee appointed by the trustees.

The assistant treasurer shall assist the treasurer and in his absence assume his duties.

SECTION V: THE SUPERINTENDENT AND ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

A superintendent and assistant superintendent of the Sunday School, who are voting members of the church, are to be chosen at each annual meeting. The term of each shall run from July 1 of the year in which they are elected through June of the following year.

The superintendent of the Sunday School shall have the general oversight and direction of the Sunday School, and shall conduct its affairs upon such general plans and in such methods as may be approved by the diaconate.

He/she shall, at the annual meeting of the church, present a written report of the work of the school during the year, with such recommendations as he/she may deem wise.

SECTION VI: THE TRUSTEES

No fewer than three (3) trustees, who are voting members of the church, are to have, under the direction of the church, charge of its financial and business affairs, two (2) of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting except for every third year, when one shall be elected, to serve for three years. Within thirty (30) days of the annual meeting the board shall select from its members a chairperson and shall notify the clerk for recording in the church records.

The trustees are authorized to expend up to two thousand (\$2,000.00) dollars for any one purpose or project upon the vote of a majority of its members. The expenditures of money in excess of two thousand (\$2,000.00) may only be authorized by a vote of the church members.

Emergency repairs necessary for the protection or safety of church property may be authorized by the trustees without regard to the two thousand (\$2,000.00) limitation. In such cases the trustee shall notify the church of expenditure and the reason for it at the next regular worship service or meeting of the church members, whichever occurs first.

SECTION VII: THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

A budget committee is to be elected at each annual meeting. The committee shall consist of two trustees, one of whom shall serve as chairman, two deacons, the treasurer of the church, and two other voting members of the church.

The budget committee shall prepare and present for approval at each annual meeting of the church a written itemized budget and income projections for the ensuing year.

SECTION VIII: ELECTIONS

All the officers and committees named in the above sections shall be elected by either ballot or show of hands. All elections shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast by the members present who are qualified to vote.

SECTION IX: THE MUSIC COMMITTEE AND OTHER COMMITTEES

The church may also establish other committees as it may deem advisable.

ARTICLE VI: PROPERTY AND FINANCES

The trustees shall have the responsibility for the actual care of the place of worship, it shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. They shall have the general charge of its finances other than monies contributed for any charitable or benevolent or missions objects, shall authorize and direct the treasurer as to the payment and investment of monies under their control and shall appoint an audit committee of not more than three members, not more than one of whom may be a trustee, and one of whom shall have suitable financial training or experience. They may, at their discretion, call meetings of the church for matters which they are concerned. They shall make at the annual meeting, a detailed report in writing of the transactions of more than two thousand (\$2,000.00) dollars made during the year.

This body shall hold in trust any property so required to be held by the laws of the state.

ARTICLE VII: ORGANIZATIONS

The church regards as integral parts of itself all organizations authorized by the church and formed for the purposes of ministration and which use the facilities of the church property. The church shall expect a written report from each at its annual meeting.

ARTICLE VIII: MEETINGS

SECTION I: FOR WORSHIP

(1) Public services shall be held statedly on the Lord's Day.

- (2) The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on such regular dates as the church may from time to time determine, and unless otherwise ordered, upon the first Lord's Day of each month beginning with January.
- (3) Other religious meetings may be appointed by the pastor or the diaconate, at their discretion, or by vote of the church.

SECTION II: FOR BUSINESS

- (1) At any of the regular meetings for worship, the church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of the members or the dismissal of the members to other churches and upon the appointment of delegates to councils and conferences of churches, but not upon any other business.
- (2) The pastor may, and shall, when requested by the church, call from the pulpit special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice.

Special meetings of the church shall also be called by the clerk upon the application of any three adult members specifying the object thereof, and which notice shall be read at the public services on the Lord's Day next preceding the day fixed for such meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given.

- (3) The annual meeting of the church shall be held within 30 days of the end of the church fiscal year. The day shall be determined by the diaconate and announced by the clerk. The annual reports shall be presented and officers elected and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the bylaws. This meeting shall be called by the clerk in a manner specified in Section II, Sub-section 2.
- (4) At all meetings called by the clerk, a chairman shall be chosen by a vote of those present.
- (5) At all business meetings one-third (1/3) of the voting members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENTS

These bylaws shall be amended by approval of three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at either an annual meeting of the church, or a meeting specifically called for the purpose and attended by one-third of the active voting members of the church, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call.

No change shall be made in Articles II and III, entitled "Covenant" and Character", except at an annual meeting, and by a three-fourths vote of all active voting members of the church, said proposed change having been laid before the church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action, and read from the pulpit on the Lord's Day next succeeding such proposal.

ARTICLE X: PERIODIC REVIEW

These bylaws shall be reviewed at least once every five years to ensure that they are in conformance with the beliefs and usage of the church. This review shall be completed by the diaconate or, at its discretion, a committee appointed by them, and a report and recommendation shall be presented to the church for its actions.

ARTICLE XI: POLICY

The clerk shall maintain a "Policy Manual" for the purpose of recording and organizing items of policy which affect the ongoing operations of the church.

Items of policy, having been approved by a simple majority of the voting members present at an annual meeting, or a special meeting (Article VIII, Section 2, paragraph 2) of the church, shall be incorporated in the "Policy Manual".

The text of such policy shall be read or distributed at the call if it is to be acted on at a special meeting.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy statement is intended to be a directive only; to establish a standard for the distribution of any monies raised by a church sponsored event. It is not intended as an addition to the Bylaws, but simply as clarification.

(1) January 22, 1994

As directed by the Bylaws, Article VI, the trustees+ shall be responsible for the distribution of any monies raised by a church sponsored function including, but not limited to, dinners, bake sales, craft fairs, lawn sales, etc.

This suggested policy directive will not affect any monies raised by or donated to the church by any group or individual, such as ~~the Community Daughters~~, the Youth Group, or any church committee. Any committee or individual raising money to be donated to the church shall indicate the intent of use of the funds prior to the function.