

A Resolution Authorizing the Implementation of a new Governance Structure for Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

WHEREAS the Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ (hereafter “Union”) is a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, and

WHEREAS each Local Church of the United Church of Christ retains the right to “retain or adopt its own methods of organization, worship and education; to retain or secure its own charter and name; to adopt its own constitution and bylaws;” and otherwise govern “the management of its own affairs” (see *The Constitution of the United Church of Christ*, ¶17), and

WHEREAS being a church of Congregationalist heritage and polity, the ultimate authority for governance of Union is vested in the gathered membership of the congregation, determined to live out our mission as expressed in our [Statement of Purpose](#), and

WHEREAS the Leadership Council embarked on a Strategic Visioning Process in 2021 to identify necessary changes to Union to ensure sustainability and success for decades to come, which resulted in a Resolution to approve a Foundational Vision and 7 Key Commitments, and

WHEREAS the Vision and Commitment to 'Adopt a more nimble and sustainable congregational governance model that allows members to devote their energy to mission and spiritual growth' and accompanying 6 Commitments was approved by the Congregation on April 10, 2022, and

WHEREAS the Leadership Council appointed at its May 11, 2022 meeting (under the provisions for Ad-hoc Committees in our Bylaws) a Governance Task Force charged with developing a proposal that would enable Union to “adopt a more nimble and sustainable congregational governance model that allows members to devote their energy to mission and spiritual growth,” and

WHEREAS the need for a governance and ministry structure for Union Congregational Church that clearly delineated the roles, responsibilities, decision-making authority and accountability of the Congregation, Governing Body, the Clergy, the Executive Director, Ministries and Committees, in discerning and carrying out Union’s mission ([Statement of Purpose](#)) had become evident, and

WHEREAS the Governance Task Force has engaged in a wide-ranging process of study and discernment over the past 9 months, including information gathering from other congregations that have pursued similar governance changes, exploration and review of literature on church governance best practices, investigation of volunteerism trends both at Union and in a broader societal context, and

WHEREAS the Governance Task Force engaged in in-depth information sharing and communication with the congregation, inviting feedback in each communication, through 2nd Hours and presentations in September, December, and January and February and written articles in *Dimension*, the Annual Report, and through 4 in-depth articles in January, all of which

are available on the loveunionsjourney.com website, and

WHEREAS the Governance Task Force has developed a comprehensive governance and ministry leadership framework for Union, embodying a new governance paradigm in a way believed to appropriately fit the culture and context of Union, and

WHEREAS the Leadership Council at its February 2023 meeting officially endorsed the overall framework for governance and ministry structures that have been developed by the Governance Task Force

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Congregation of Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, hereby officially authorize the initiation of implementation of the overall framework for governance and ministry structures, developed by the Governance Task Force and endorsed by the Leadership Council, consisting of:

- A Philosophy and Principles of Governance for our Congregation (attached), including a Principle that the Governing Board, Clergy and Executive Director will operate within a consultative, collegial, and inclusive environment.
- The concept of explicit powers reserved for the congregation and delegation of all other matters to the governance structure.
- An expansion of the explicit powers reserved for the Congregation to include the approval of Annual Mission Priorities each year, as well as approval of any changes to the mission ([Statement of Purpose](#)).
- Quarterly congregational meetings to solicit feedback from the Congregation on strategic questions and missional priorities.
- A Governing Board of 9 voting representatives, consisting of 4 officers (Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer and Secretary), 4 At-Large members, and 1 Youth member (High School Junior or Senior), all of whom would be members of Union. Clergy and the Executive Director would serve on the Governing Board with voice but no vote.
- A focus by the Governing Board on mission discernment, strategy development, and the development and adoption of written policies.
- Standing Committees, appointed by the Governing Board, to support the Governing Board and work collaboratively with the Executive Director.
- Ministry Teams, who DO the ministry of the church.
- A flexible, voluntary structure for ministry teams.
- Delegation of authority and primary responsibility for day-to-day operational aspects of Ministry to Clergy, who oversee Union's Ministry Areas and Ministry Teams, with oversight from Governing Board. Clergy, in turn, delegate primary responsibility for day-to-day Ministry Team operations to the Ministry Teams, while retaining oversight

responsibility for Ministry Teams.

- A Leadership Discernment Standing Committee responsible for nominating Governing Board officers and members, and identifying and recruiting Ministry Coordinators for the Worship and Music Ministry Area, the Justice and Community Engagement Ministry Area, and other Ministry Areas as needed, and supporting the congregation in discerning their own spiritual gifts as they seek to participate in Union's many ministries, guided by our [Statement of Purpose](#).
- Delegation of authority for day-to-day campus, financial, and personnel operations to the Executive Director.
- Limits on Clergy and Executive Director authority through Governing Board approved Personnel and Financial policies with respect to hiring, dismissal, evaluation, and financial oversight. In addition, Clergy and Executive Director are evaluated by the Governing Board.
- Accountability to Union's mission ([Statement of Purpose](#)) for all.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we request any changes to the Bylaws necessary to implement the new governance framework be prepared and brought to the Congregation for approval at an Annual June Congregational Meeting 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nominating Committee begin discerning candidates for the proposed Governing Board in preparation for election at the June Annual Meeting, 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we authorize the Leadership Council, Clergy, Executive Director, Staff, and current Team chairs to transition ministry and operations functions from existing Teams and Committees into new ministry structures and standing committees beginning March 1, 2023, understanding that these transitions are likely to be phased in over several months; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governing Board will allow two years to gain experience with the new Governance Structure, and during that time, create a process for feedback and evaluation of the new Governance Structure and propose, as needed, further amendments to Union's Constitution and Bylaws, reflecting feedback and experience with the model.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we as a congregation recognize that the process of transitioning between paradigms for governance and ministry leadership is likely to result in moments of confusion or lack-of-clarity, and that throughout this process we commit ourselves to hold each other and our identified leaders in grace and forbearance, and to always seek after the mind of Christ and the furtherance of God's mission through our church.

Appendix:

The Governance Philosophy and Principles

- In the United Church of Christ, the local church is the basic unit of organization.
- The Congregation is the ultimate decision-making authority.
- The mission of our Congregation, as expressed in our [Statement of Purpose](#), is the ongoing purpose and focus of our church organization, and is approved and supported by the Congregation.
- Explicit communications and feedback loops between the Congregation and the Governing Board are essential to successful governance and to our collective faithfulness to our mission.
- Governance is exercised by a Governing Board comprised of church members elected by, and accountable to, the Congregation.
- The Governing Board is responsible to the mission of the church, partnering with the Clergy and the Executive Director to achieve the church mission through effective policies, delegated authority and resources.
- The Governing Board, through its policies, delegates to the Clergy, Staff, and Ministry Teams the authority, power, and resources to carry out the work of the church.
- The Governing Board, Clergy and Executive Director will operate within a consultative, collegial, and inclusive environment.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE *Adopted by the Congregation February, 2018*

As Christians and as members of Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, we believe it is our purpose and calling to...

- **grow** in relationship with God and neighbor through communal worship, fellowship, mutual respect, prayer, and service;
- **empower** each other, across generations, to discern Christian truth and meaning using a variety of sources;
- **welcome** and celebrate God's people, and affirm the many images of the Divine manifested in differing abilities and disabilities, ages, gender expressions, gender identities, sexual orientations, faith traditions, social and economic classes, ethnicities, colors, races, immigration statuses, and nationalities
- **minister** to others using our spiritual gifts and financial resources ethically, mindfully, and creatively;
- **work** to recognize and relieve systemic oppression, individual suffering, poverty, and isolation, through dialogue, action, and partnership with other religious and secular organizations;
- **honor** the environment as God's sacred creation, worthy of praise and protection;
- **reflect** the love and grace of God in all that we do, joyous in Christ and grateful in the Spirit.