

Constitution  
And  
By-Laws

*Fairhill Manor  
Christian Church*

Updated 1/19/2025

# **Constitution**

## ***Preamble***

*We, the members of the Fairhill Manor Christian Church, a body governed by the congregation, in order to promote the work of the church in the spirit of Christ and thus advance His kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution.*

## **Article I.**

### **Section A. Name**

The name of the congregation shall be the Fairhill Manor Christian Church of Washington, Pennsylvania, affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This congregation shall participate in the life and work of local, state and national organizations, reporting to the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or its legal successors.

### **Section B. Purpose**

The purpose of this congregation is to worship God, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, evangelize people to faith in Jesus Christ, commit people to be active in the life and work of the church, help each other grow in grace and knowledge of Christ so that we may know and do His will, work for the unity of all Christians and engage in the common task of building the kingdom of God.

## **Article II. Membership**

Membership of this congregation, as a part of the Church Universal, shall consist of those: who are now members of the congregation, who unite by confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through baptism by immersion and personal commitment to Jesus Christ, and who unite by transfer of membership, making a reaffirmation of their faith and commitment to Christ. Persons may terminate their membership by requesting, in writing, the removal of their name from the membership roll.

## **Article III. Incorporation**

The incorporation for the congregation shall be in accordance with the decree of incorporation, number 1298, dated 2-16-1903, and recorded on page 158, Book No. 2 in the Circuit Court of Washington County in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Amended 7-27-64 as recorded on page 146, Book No. 14.

## **Article IV. Officers**

### **Section A. Elected Positions**

The following officers shall be elected by the congregation at a designated congregational meeting for a term as stated for each or until such time as a successor is elected and assumes office:

1. Moderator: shall serve for a term of one year and may be elected to serve for two additional terms.
2. Vice-moderator: shall serve for a term of one year and may be elected to serve for two additional terms.
3. Congregational secretary: shall serve for a term of one year and may be elected to serve for two additional terms.
4. Elders: shall be at least nine in number; at least three of the elders shall be elected each year for a term of two or three years.
5. Deacons: shall be at least eighteen in number, at least six deacons shall be elected each year for a term of two or three years.
6. Junior deacons: must be in grades 9 – 12 by January 1<sup>st</sup>, when their term of office begins. They may be re-elected for successive one year terms and may serve until December 31<sup>st</sup>, following their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but may not serve as board members for more than three consecutive years.
7. Trustees: shall be five in number, as fixed by the charter of this congregation; at least one of the trustees shall be elected each year for a term of five years.
8. Church clerk: shall be elected for a term of one year and may be elected for an unlimited number of additional terms.
9. Assistant financial secretaries: shall be at least four in number, shall be elected for a term of one year and may be elected to serve for an unlimited number of additional terms.
10. Church historian: shall be elected for a term of one year and may be elected for an unlimited number of additional terms.
11. Honorary officers: those whose service and consecration to the church merit this honor, may be retired from active responsibility, shall be known respectively as elder emeritus, deacon emeritus, trustee emeritus or disciples emeritus.

Any church officer or member of the general board, as defined in Article V, Section A, with the exception of the trustees, church clerk, church historian and honorary officers, after serving three consecutive years in any capacity, shall not serve again on the general board until one year after the expiration of their current term of office. An elder may not serve as a deacon and a deacon may not serve as an elder at the same time. The trustees, after serving five consecutive years, shall not serve again on the general board until one year after the expiration of their current term of office.

## **Section B. Duties of Officers**

The aforementioned officers have the following responsibilities:

1. The moderator shall preside at all regular and called meetings of the congregation and the general board. The moderator shall be an ex-officio member without vote of all ministries except the calling commission.
2. The vice moderator shall preside at all regular and called meetings of the congregation and the administrative board in the absence of or inability of the moderator. The vice moderator shall serve as the chairperson of the pastor's cabinet and as a member of the personnel committee.
3. The congregational secretary shall keep minutes of all regular or called meetings of the congregation and the general board, keep attendance at all regular and called meetings of the general board and see that copies are made available to the congregation and are on file in the church office.
4. The elders, in cooperation with ministries, shall promote the growth and welfare of the congregation, give spiritual oversight to the congregation, encourage regular attendance at the Lord's supper, visit the sick, provide communion to the homebound, instill moral and spiritual growth in the congregation, give thoughtful consideration to policies, encourage the missionary, evangelistic, educational and stewardship responsibilities of the congregation by example and word, serve at the Lord's table and perform other duties as assigned.
5. The deacons, in cooperation with ministries, shall cooperate with the elders in promoting the growth and welfare of the congregation, assist in greeting and ushering of worshipers, prepare and distribute the Lord's supper, assist in collection of offerings, assist in visitation projects, assist in preparation of candidates for baptism, give counsel and service in the business affairs and program activities of the congregation, cooperate in ministering to the needy and perform other duties as may be assigned.
6. The junior deacons shall assist the deacons in fulfilling their responsibilities.

7. The trustees shall supervise the Fawcett Estate Trust Fund, care for all properties of the congregation, including keeping all properties in proper condition, studying needs and making recommendations for improvements of properties, superintending the work of the custodian, caring for grounds and keeping properties adequately insured against possible loss or damage, and supervising all purchases of budgeted, non-budgeted and over-budgeted items.

The trustees shall have the responsibility of approving or disapproving all non-budgeted and over-budgeted purchases which shall be charged to Fairhill Manor Christian Church with final authorization by the general board. The trustees shall also have the responsibility of ensuring that all bills, whether budgeted, non-budgeted or over-budgeted, contain the purchaser's signature, verifying the receipt of goods or service (except for the responsibility given to the Stewardship/Finance Ministry in the January 2024 Giving Policy). The trustees shall also have the responsibility of approving or disapproving all purchase orders submitted.

The trustees shall have the privilege of expending money, not to exceed \$1,000.00 spent from the Fawcett Estate Trust Fund on any one purchase without the consent of the general board. In extreme emergencies, the trustees may exceed the \$1,000.00 limitation.

The trustees shall act as the legal agents of the congregation in all business matters under the direction of the general board and subject to the approval of the congregation and perform such duties as are required by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The trustees must give a written report of its activities and expenditures at each scheduled general board meeting.

8. The church clerk shall keep a complete record of the congregational membership; keep such vital statistics as births, deaths, baptisms and weddings; receive all applications for transfer of membership; issue such applications and serve as a member of the membership care ministry.
9. The assistant financial secretaries shall receive and make a record of all funds and deposit them in the proper congregational accounts and assist the financial secretary/treasurer in carrying out his/her duties. There shall be two assistant financial secretaries present on each Sunday to carry out such duties.
10. The church historian shall gather and preserve data pertaining to the history, life and work of the congregation, making various materials available for publication when appropriate, and shall serve as a member of the history ministry.
11. The honorary officers shall be relieved of all regular duties and serve as lifetime members of the general board with vote.

## **Section C. Non-Elected Positions**

1. The financial secretary/treasurer, who serves in a paid position, shall keep an individual account record for each contributor; send out statements as directed by the general board; make all payroll and tax deposits in a timely manner; serve as a member of the stewardship/finance ministry; prepare and sign all checks for disbursement of funds from purchase orders approved by the trustees; present reports at each scheduled meeting of the general board and present an annual report to the congregation.
2. One representative each from the Disciples Women's Ministry, Christian Men's Fellowship and a youth from the Christian Youth Fellowship, who shall be selected by their respective organizations shall attend meetings of the general board; vote on all actions; look after the interests of their organizations; report activities of their respective groups to the general board and keep their organizations informed concerning actions of the general board.

## **Section D. Election of Officers**

1. A calling commission of four elders, three deacons, and two members of the congregation, who are not members of the general board, shall be appointed by the moderator, approved by the general board, and announced to the congregation at least eight weeks prior to the annual congregational meeting, to nominate candidates for offices of the congregation. The calling commission shall meet regularly to pray, identify the gifts needed, tasks to be done and people who have the gifts for the office to which they are being called.
2. All suggestions from the congregation for nominees shall be in the hands of the calling commission in writing by October 15<sup>th</sup>. The commission shall: consider qualifications, secure consent from nominees, and prepare a slate consisting of one nominee for each vacancy. Nominations from the floor will be in order.
3. While the terms for elected officers and guidelines for service as set forth in the *Constitution* (Article IV, Sections A and D) and *By-Laws* (Article II, Section A, 2(a), and Article III, Section A, 1) are preferred for both the continuity of the church's ministries and the well-being of all who serve, the following procedure may be used when no member is available to serve for the recommended term in an open position:
  - (a) An open office shall be offered first to a non-incumbent nominee or volunteer for a modified term. The length of the modified term shall be in terms of years. It may be as short as one year and as long as one year less than normal term-length for that position. The term shall be agreed upon before the beginning of service. The officer may be elected for an additional term of one or more years annually, up to a total of the normal term-length for that position.

- (b) An open office shall be offered second to the incumbent in the position for an additional term of one year.
  - (c) No officer is required to remain in any office for any length of time.
- 4. The calling commission shall post a list of nominees two weeks prior to the annual congregational meeting and report its nominations to the congregation at the annual congregational meeting.
  - 5. When there is more than one nominee for a specific office, the election for that office shall be by secret ballot. In cases where only one nominee is listed for an office, election may be by acclamation with the congregational secretary being requested to cast a ballot for the nominee.
  - 6. Vacancies in any office of the congregation shall be filled for the unexpired term by nomination of the moderator in consultation with the pastor and associate pastor(s) and election by the general board.
  - 7. At the conclusion of its appointed duties, the calling commission is dismissed.

#### **Section E. Election of Honorary Officers**

Fairhill Manor Christian Church has four categories of honorary offices. They are Elder Emeritus, Deacon Emeritus, Trustee Emeritus and Disciple Emeritus. For each office, it is suggested but not required, the nominee shall have served a minimum two full terms in the office for which they are nominated and have fulfilled the duties of that office above and beyond expectations. For elders a minimum of two terms or six years; deacon, a minimum of two terms or six years; trustee a minimum of two terms or ten years; disciple a total of ten years of service is required but that service can be in any combination of offices and/or positions. Any member of the congregation can nominate a person for any honorary office.

The following steps are required for someone to become an honorary officer:

- 1. A nomination will be made in writing, recommending an individual for a specific Honorary office.
- 2. The nomination shall include the name of the nominee and the nominator, terms/years of service and the reasons why the nominator believes the nominee should receive this honorary status.
- 3. The nomination will then be submitted to the elders.

4. If additional information is needed, the elders may request a meeting with the nominator to discuss the nomination.
5. The elders will then make a recommendation to the general board.
6. The general board will then make a recommendation to the congregation.
7. The nominee shall be notified of their honorary selection.
8. The congregation will then make the final decision on the nomination.
9. Upon approval, the nominee shall be honored, at a Sunday service, where formal recognition shall include the presentation of a certificate naming the nominee to their particular office as well as a lapel pin.”

## **Section F. Qualification of Officers**

1. Church officers shall be active members of the congregation of Fairhill Manor Christian Church. They shall have been an active part of the church universal for at least two years and shall have been a member of Fairhill Manor Christian Church for at least one year or may be recommended by the pastor, associate pastor(s), moderator, vice moderator to the calling commission.

## **Article V.**

### **Section A. The General Board**

1. The general board shall consist of the elected officers of the congregation as set forth in Article IV, Section A, except for the assistant financial secretaries. It shall also include a representative from the Disciples Women’s Ministry, from the Christian Men’s Fellowship, a youth representative of the Christian Youth Fellowship, the chairperson of the personnel committee and the chairpersons of all ministries. The minister, the associate pastor(s), the financial secretary/treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the board without vote, unless serving as an officer or ministry leader.
2. The general board shall perform its duties according to the authority granted by the congregation. All business meetings of the congregation and meetings of the general board shall be governed by Robert’s Rules of Order Revised. In keeping with the traditions of the Christian Church, the ultimate authority of the local church rests with the congregation. All groups shall be responsible to and report verbally and in writing to the general board and the congregation at their regular meetings. The general board shall be responsible to the congregation and shall provide an annual report each year.



3. It shall be the responsibility of the general board to formalize the ministries and committees as set forth in Article VII of the Constitution and Articles II and III of the By-Laws, consider and recommend general policies to the congregation, administer the life and work of the congregation directly and through the ministries and committees with annual reports to the congregation, perform its duties according to the guidelines granted in this Constitution and By-Laws and perform duties designated to it by action of the congregation.

## **Article VI. Congregational Actions**

### **Section A. Duties and Responsibilities of the Congregation**

1. The congregation shall: approve an annual budget, elect officers, conduct ministerial action as required and decide property issues.

### **Section B. Procedure for Buying, Acquiring and Selling Property or Borrowing Money**

1. The procedure for buying, acquiring and selling property or borrowing money shall be as follows:
  - (a) The trustees shall formulate all proposals, reducing each proposal to a resolution to be presented to the general board.
  - (b) If the general board rejects the resolution, the trustees shall draw up a new resolution, which will meet the approval of the general board, or drop the resolution entirely.
  - (c) If the general board accepts the resolution, it shall go to the congregation for its approval.
  - (d) If the congregation rejects the resolution, the trustees will draw up a new resolution, which will meet both general board and congregational approval, or drop the resolution entirely. If the congregation approves the resolution, then, and only then, can the trustees make binding contracts to carry out the resolution.

## **Article VII. The Pastor and Associate Pastor**

### **Section A. Duties**

1. The pastor of the congregation shall perform the duties which usually pertain to that office, and as spiritual administrator of the congregation shall be an ex-officio member of the general board without vote, as well as an ex-officio members of all ministries and committees. The pastor shall be notified of the date of meetings of all ministries and committees at least three days in advance of the meeting.

2. The associate pastor(s) of the congregation shall perform the duties which usually pertain to the office with special emphasis on education and youth. The associate pastor(s) shall be an ex-officio member of the general board without vote, as well as an ex-officio member of all ministries and committees. The associate pastor(s) shall be notified of the date of meetings of all ministries and committees at least three days in advance of the meeting.

## **Section B. Selection of the Pastor and Associate Pastor(s).**

1. The pastor and/or associate pastor(s) shall be chosen by the congregation as herein after provided:
  - (a) A representative committee of six members, nominated by the moderator and elected by the general board, shall serve as the pastoral search committee and shall be responsible for recommending a prospective pastor and/or prospective associate pastor(s) to the general board. This committee shall consist of one elder, one deacon, one member from the congregation, one member from the Disciples Women's Ministry, one member from the Christian men's fellowship, one member from the Christian youth fellowship. The committee shall elect a chairperson at its first meeting.
  - (b) The general board shall consider the recommendation of the pastoral search committee. The recommendation of the pastoral search committee must be accepted by at least two-thirds of the general board members present and voting. If such recommendation is approved, the general board shall recommend the prospective pastor and/or prospective associate pastor to the congregation for vote. It shall be the policy of the congregation to consider only one prospective pastor and/or prospective associate pastor at a time, accepting him or her or rejecting him or her before considering another.
  - (c) The congregation shall vote by secret ballot on the recommendation of the general board for the prospective pastor and/or associate pastor. Seventy-five percent of those members present and voting shall be necessary for approval.
  - (d) The term of ministry shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated by either party upon ninety days written notice. A written statement setting forth the salary to be paid and other conditions of the call shall be made in triplicate, one copy for the pastor, or associate pastor, one to be posted to the congregation and one for the church office.

## **Section C. Resignation**

1. Voluntary resignation of the pastor and/or associate pastor(s) shall be submitted to the general board in writing. A consultation of the pastor, and/or associate pastor(s), the

elders, the moderator and vice moderator prior to bringing this matter to the general board is encouraged.

2. Following action on the resignation by the general board, the moderator shall announce the action to the congregation.
3. The congregation, the pastor and associate pastor(s) shall remember that their relationship is more than a mere contract and both shall conduct themselves accordingly in the spirit of Christ.

## **Article VIII. Meetings**

### **Section A. Meetings to be held**

1. The church year will begin on January 1.
2. The congregation shall hold an annual congregational meeting on or before the second Sunday following the November regular general board meeting of each church year, a congregational meeting on or before the third Sunday of January and special meetings as required.
3. The annual congregational meeting shall be to elect officers whose terms commence on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the succeeding church year and to approve the budget for the succeeding year.
4. The congregational meeting in January shall be to present the reports of the previous church year and such other business as may be required.
5. The special meetings shall be called by the moderator or vice-moderator, upon request of the general board or upon written petition of at least twenty members of the congregation.

### **Section B. Notice**

1. Notice of all regular and special congregational meetings shall be given at a regular Sunday service of the congregation at least one week in advance of the meetings.

### **Section C. Rules of Order**

1. All congregational and general board meetings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order Revised.

### **Section D. Minutes**

1. Minutes of the congregational meetings, the general board meetings and the trustees meeting shall be filed in the church office.

## **Article IX. Amendments**

1. This Constitution may be amended at any general board meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, provided that a written copy of the amendment has been distributed at least two weeks before the vote is taken. Following approval by the general board, the amendment must then be presented at a congregational meeting and be approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, provided that a written copy of the amendment has been distributed at least two weeks before that vote is taken.

## **By-Laws**

### **Article I. The General Board**

#### **Section A. Duties of the General Board**

1. The general board shall hold its regular meeting bi-monthly (January, March, May, July, September and November) on or before the fifteenth day of the stated month.
2. The general board shall hold special meetings as needed on call of the moderator, vice moderator or on request of at least ten members of the general board. The request shall be made in writing to the moderator or vice-moderator.
3. The general board shall consider fifteen members of the general board as constituting a quorum. Routine actions shall pass with a simple majority of the members present and voting. All other actions shall be covered by Robert's Rules of Order Revised.

### **Article II. Administration of the Programs of the Church**

#### **Section A. Ministries**

1. The administration of the programs of the church shall be delegated to the following ministry teams under the supervision of the general board:
  - (a) Stewardship/Finance
  - (b) Worship/Spiritual Life
  - (c) Christian Education
  - (d) Evangelism/Outreach
  - (e) Membership Care
  - (f) Fellowship

(g) History

2. At least three members, in addition to the chairperson, shall be placed on each ministry. It is strongly encouraged that no person shall serve on more than one of the Ministries listed in Article II, Section A. 1 of these By-Laws. The membership of each ministry shall be selected in the following manner, taking into consideration those members delegated to certain ministries by the Constitution, Article IV, Sections A & B:
  - (a) The moderator, vice-moderator, secretary, pastor, and associate pastor(s) shall constitute a committee to select the respective ministry leaders subject to the confirmation of the general board. Each ministry leader shall be a voting member of the general board, shall be chosen for a term of two years and shall not succeed him or herself.
  - (b) The respective ministry leader, in consultation with the pastor, associate pastor(s) and moderator, shall select the members of each ministry.
3. Each ministry shall organize itself to conduct the business for which it is responsible, meet regularly and report to the general board. Approval of any business shall be by fifty percent of the members of the ministry, plus one. Each ministry shall administer its program in cooperation with the other ministries.

**Section B. Responsibilities of the Ministries**

1. The responsibilities of the ministries shall be as follows:
  - (a) The stewardship/finance ministry shall develop within the membership an understanding of the full meaning of Christian financial stewardship so that each person in the congregation may build upon his/her character, be spiritually enriched and give thanks to God through support of the ministries of the church. This ministry shall also be responsible for promoting regular financial stewardship education, supervising the preparation and underwriting of the church budget, keeping accurate records, and promoting and managing the Gifts, Memorials and Bequests Policy of the church.
  - (b) The worship/spiritual life ministry shall work with the pastor, the associate pastor(s), the music director and the musicians of the church to encourage high standards in all areas of worship; become involved in planning and carrying out all regular and special worship experiences; secure, schedule and monitor the greeters and ushers; and assist in strengthening the spiritual life of the congregation.

(c) The Christian education ministry shall work with the pastor, the associate pastor(s) and staff in developing, administering and managing an effective program of Christian education and discipleship for the children, youth and adults of the congregation.

(d) The evangelism/outreach ministry shall cultivate a spirit of mission and concern for others on the part of the entire congregation. Also, this ministry shall create, promote and manage year round programs of outreach and missions that enable our congregation to live out Jesus' call to loving neighbors and carrying out the Great Commission.

(e) The membership care ministry shall develop, plan and oversee programs that cultivate a spirit of care and love within the congregation. This care and love is founded on the basis of unconditional love for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Also, this ministry shall work with the church clerk in managing an accurate record of congregational membership, and shall work with the other ministries to orient new members into the life and fellowship of the congregation.

(f) The fellowship ministry shall plan and implement fellowship programs and social activities sponsored by the church. These programs and activities should cultivate a spirit of togetherness among the participants. Also, if requested, the fellowship ministry may assist other church groups in the planning and serving of their respective social activities.

(g) The history ministry shall work with the church historian in the gathering and preservation of all data pertaining to the historical record of the congregation. Also, this ministry shall make various materials available for publication when appropriate.

2. In addition to the responsibilities listed, each ministry shall be responsible for publicizing to the church and the community its program and activities.

### **Section C. Pastor's Cabinet**

1. The pastor's cabinet shall constitute the associate pastor(s), the vice-moderator, as chairperson, the moderator, the chairperson of the elders, the chairperson of the trustees, the chairperson of the deacons, all ministry leaders and the chairperson of the personnel committee.
2. The pastor's cabinet shall hold meetings, if needed, at the call of the pastor.

### **Section D. Special/Standing Committees**

1. When needed to administer the work of the congregation, the moderator shall appoint, with the approval of the general board, such special committees as may be needed. The moderator shall also appoint a chairperson to the committee. These committees shall perform duties assigned and shall continue for such times as designated by the moderator.

Chairpersons of the special/standing committees will not be voting members of the board, nor will they be on the pastor's cabinet.

### **Section E. Auxiliary Organizations**

1. The purpose and responsibility of each of these groups, which include, but are not limited to, the Christian Men's Fellowship, the Disciples Women's Ministry and the Christian Youth Fellowship, shall be outlined in their own constitution and by-laws, or plan or procedure. These organizations shall cooperate with the ministries of the congregation, not only in planning and administering the total program of the congregation, but also in developing their individual programs in the best interests of the total program.

## **Article III. Administration of the Church**

### **Section A. Personnel Committee**

1. The personnel committee shall consist of the pastor, the associate pastor(s), the vice-moderator and four members selected by the calling commission and approved by the general board and congregation. The four members selected by the calling commission shall serve four year terms. The first year of implementation, they shall be elected as follows: one for a term of four years, one for a term of three years, one for a term of two years and one for a term of one year. Then, one per year thereafter. The calling commission shall appoint a chairperson to the personnel committee, who will serve no more than two consecutive years.
2. The general board shall instruct the personnel committee to select a candidate for any vacant staff position.
3. The responsibilities of the personnel committee shall be as follows:
  - (a) Recruit and thoroughly investigate, evaluate and recommend to the general board candidates for employment of all positions of the church staff. Upon approval of two-thirds of the general board, a candidate will be hired.
  - (b) Be responsible for developing and implementing an initial employment agreement, stating the terms and conditions of the employment, and also a job description for each position, and setting forth the general objective of that position. Copies of these documents shall be provided to the employee and put on file in the church office. These documents may be modified from time to time by mutual agreement and will be available for review upon request.

(c) At least once annually, interview all members of the church staff, except the pastor and associate pastor(s), make written job performance evaluations, and give such counsel as may enable the staff to better serve the interest of the church. Copies of job performance evaluations shall be provided to the employee and kept on file by the personnel committee for the duration of the employee's employment.

(d) To conduct an annual review of the pastor's and associate pastor(s) performance, provide for an annual review of compensation and benefits for each position and explain fully the reason for compensation/benefits recommendations.

(e) To conduct an exit interview with the pastor and/or associate pastor before his/her departure and provide for a pastor's farewell as the pastor and/or associate pastor leaves.

## **Article IV. Amendment**

### **Section A. Process of Amending By-Laws**

1. These By-Laws may be amended at any general board meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members, who are present and voting, provided that a written copy of the amendment has been distributed at least two weeks before the vote is taken. Following approval by the general board, the amendment must then be presented at a congregational meeting and be approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, provided that a written copy of the amendment has been distributed at least two weeks before that vote is taken.