

**PREAMBLE, CONSTITUTION, AND BY-LAWS OF UNITED CHURCH
ON THE GREEN AND THE UNITED SOCIETY, NEW HAVEN**

Last Amended October 30, 2022

PREAMBLE

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here.

In a world where Christianity is too often associated with intolerance, exclusion, and hate, the mission of United Church on the Green is to proclaim Christ through faith, hope, and love. We are a community of many races, ethnic backgrounds, religious experiences, ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities. No matter where you are on your journey of faith, you will have a home here at United Church on the Green.

What We Believe

We believe in God's unconditional love and in the inherent goodness of all God's creation.

We believe in the liberating grace of Jesus Christ and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

We believe we are called into community:

To experience a God of Love,

To share in Christ's baptism and holy communion,

To embrace the joy and cost of discipleship,

To be in service to others,

To proclaim the good news to all the world and resist the powers of evil,

To join Christ in including everyone and excluding no one.

Called into being by the God of Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, this part of the Body of Christ called United Church on the Green shall be a progressive, inclusive community of faith existing to provide a place for all people to share in the worship of God in the congregational Christian tradition of the United Church of Christ, serve God and humanity, and grow in faith.

CONSTITUTION

Articles of agreement assented to and received by the Church of Christ founded and established in the United Societies of White Haven and Fair Haven, in New Haven, in 1796, and adopted by the United Church. *N. B.:* At its Annual Meeting June 14, 1990 it was voted that the actions of the congregation of United Church on the Green at its annual meeting, or at a duly-called congregational meeting, shall be deemed to be the actions of the Society for Men, the Society for Women and the Society for Children and Youth.

1. United Church on the Green, hereinafter referred to as the Church, is free and independent, subject to the government of Jesus Christ, the great head of the church, and is formed and gathered to celebrate God's grace, and through worship and study deepen in the faith of Jesus Christ, that we might pursue in the world a ministry of nurture and healing, peace and reconciliation, and serve the needs of our neighbors far and near.
2. Governance of the Church shall be vested in its Congregation, which has the right to control the Church's activities in all respects, subject to these Bylaws and the Church Constitution.
3. The members of this Church are to endeavor by their lives and conversation to reflect God's unconditional love for all people.
4. The children of professing Christians are entitled to the sacrament of baptism.
5. Baptism is not a requirement of membership in the Church. Adult persons, upon professing the faith of the Church and entering into covenant with it, are entitled to all the privileges of membership.
6. Membership in the Church shall not be terminated, suspended or reinstated except as set forth in the Church bylaws, below.
7. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the Church shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law) or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law).

Upon the dissolution of the Church, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future tax code), or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed by the Superior Court of the county in which the principal office of the Church is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

8. No alteration or amendment of this Constitution and Bylaws shall take place unless by a two-thirds vote of active and associate members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting, provided such amendment shall have been proposed in writing to the Minister(s), Moderator, or the Clerk not less than thirty (30) days before such meeting, and that the subject matter of such amendments shall have been included in the notice of the meeting. "Present" members are those who (a) are physically present at the meeting, (b) those who are attending via digital, electronic, or virtual means which allow real time communication to and from remote locations, e.g. via computer video, and (c) those members who have cast an absentee vote.

BYLAWS OF UNITED CHURCH ON THE GREEN

I. OFFICERS

The officers of the Church shall be the duly called Ministers and the Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. All officers must be active members of the Church.

II. CONGREGATION AND MEMBERSHIP

1. The Congregation as a whole is the highest authority for United Church on the Green. The Congregation delegates much of its authority to the Leadership Board, which then acts on behalf of the Congregation. The Congregation retains authority for:
 - Approval of changes to the Constitution and Bylaws,
 - Calling (and removal) of clergy,
 - Election of officers and members of the Leadership Board,
 - Approval of mission priorities set by the Leadership Board,
 - Approval of the budget,
 - Approval of purchase or sale of church real estate, land, buildings and property of historical value, e.g., Revolutionary silver artifacts, *et cetera*.
2. Persons bringing letters of recommendation or transfer from other Christian Churches may become Members of the Church. At the discretion of the Senior Minister, persons wishing to become Members of the Church shall participate in a membership class. They may then be received at any worship service (in person or remotely) by giving assent to the Articles of Faith and Covenant of this Church.
3. Students or others in temporary residence here who are members of Christian churches elsewhere may become Associate Members in this Church.
4. Persons who divide their residence among several places, may maintain Membership in this Church and other Churches in the places of their other residences. No distinction shall be made among members in regard to their place of residence or domicile.

5. Persons who wish to support the church's mission, to regard the church as their church home, or to participate in the activities of the church, but do not desire to become or remain a Member, may elect to become a Friend of the Church by notifying the Senior Minister. A Friend of the Church shall have all the privileges of membership except that the Friend shall not vote at congregational meetings and may not sit on the Leadership Board nor be a Church Officer.
6. Members shall be classified as Active or Inactive. Active Members are those who conform to the minimum requirements of activity as prescribed by the Leadership Board. Members who for a reasonable period, as determined by the Moderator in consultation with the Senior Minister, have not participated in church activities or contributed to its support, may be declared Inactive Members by the Leadership Board or its designated representative(s). While Inactive Members they shall not be eligible to vote at Church meetings. Inactive Members may request reinstatement as Active Members by written request to the Clerk or Moderator, which request shall be granted.
7. The Clerk, in coordination with the Senior Minister, the Moderator, and/or their designees, shall conduct a census of membership, including assessment of activity status, not less often than every four years and shall accurately maintain and update membership information in the directory.
8. A Member of the Church may resign by submitting a resignation in writing to the Senior Minister, Moderator, or Clerk either at the Church office or via email.
9. If the conduct of a member or other participant in Church gives cause for concern for the physical or moral safety or wellbeing of other members or participants or for the integrity of the Church as a community and an institution, the Leadership Board shall take steps to ensure such safety and integrity. The Leadership Board may consider restrictions on participation, revocation of membership, and/or other actions. In deciding on actions, the Leadership Board shall be guided both by prudence and by Christ's instructions to love all persons and to forgive.

Prior to acting, the Leadership Board shall review relevant evidence, and upon finding just cause, may vote to restrict the person's participation or membership. Disciplinary action by the Leadership Board to terminate or suspend the status of any Member of the Church may be appealed as follows:

- The individual who was the subject of the action may request an appeal by submitting a written request to the Clerk or Moderator within thirty (30) calendar days following the date when the person was notified of the action.
- A disciplined Member shall have the right to present evidence pertaining to the subject matter of the disciplinary hearing. Upon request by the Appellant member, the Leadership Board shall close the hearing on the appeal to the public and other Church members with the exception of those presenting evidence relevant to the hearing. After hearing evidence, the Leadership Board shall consider the appeal and render a final decision on the appeal within a reasonable time.

III. MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

1. Absent exceptional circumstances, the Annual Meeting of this Church shall be held no more than forty-five (45) days before the beginning of the Church fiscal year, presently July 1. At this meeting the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Moderator, and the Senior Minister shall present formal reports, and financial reports and the proposed budget shall also be presented. There shall be informal reports by the leaders of committees, ministry teams, and organizations associated with the Church. Officers, Delegates, and Leadership Board members shall be elected. The Congregation shall vote on the annual church budget that takes effect July 1 and runs through June 30. A meeting for conversation for the good of the congregation will be held in the autumn of each year.
2. Special business meetings of this Church may be called by the Moderator or by the Senior Minister. A special meeting may also be called by any Member upon the presentation to the Clerk or other elected officer of the Church of a Petition for Special Meeting signed by at least twenty percent (20%) of the active church membership.
3. Notice of the Annual Congregational Meeting or of any special meeting of the Church shall be widely published. At least fourteen (14) days before the time set for such meeting, a written notice shall be sent by mail or by electronic transmission to each Member at the address on file with the Church office. One notice to a family living at the same residence shall be sufficient. The notice shall include the time and place of such meeting and the purposes for which it is to be held.

4. At all business meetings of the Church, the Moderator, or a duly designated member appointed by the Moderator, shall preside. In the absence of the Moderator or a designated member, the Treasurer shall preside.
5. Upon motion, in all Congregational meetings and all Leadership Board meetings, the meeting shall be governed by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.
6. Active Members of this Church and Associate Members shall be entitled to vote. The Leadership Board may adopt procedures for absentee voting.
7. At Congregational Meetings, all matters shall be decided by a majority of the members of the Church present and voting except as pertains to Amendments (see Constitution, Article 8 and Bylaws Article IX). "Present" members are those who (a) are physically present at the meeting, (b) those who are attending via digital, electronic, or virtual means which allow real time communication to and from remote locations, e.g. via computer video, and (c) those members who have cast an absentee vote.

IV. BAPTISM

Baptism may be administered upon request to unbaptized persons aged sixteen (16) or older on the confession of their faith in Christ, and to children where one or both the parents, or someone standing in place of a parent, are ready to covenant with God and the Church that such children shall receive Christian training.

V. ARTICLES OF FAITH AND COVENANT

Unbaptized persons who profess the faith of this Church and enter into covenant with it are consequently entitled to all the privileges of Membership.

N.B. The members of United Church on the Green have historically covenanted to and with each other with the following colloquy, which we retain in connection to our forebears:

Form of Admission:

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22: 37–40, New Revised Standard Version Updated)

Purpose:

“Dearly beloved, called of God to be God’s children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here so that, in the presence of God and God’s people, you may enter into the fellowship and communion of Christ’s Church.”

Affirmation for admission by profession of faith:

“Do you attest that you do truly repent of your sins; you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; you consecrate yourself unto God and your life to God’s service; you accept God’s Word as your law, and The Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Guide; and trusting in God’s grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God’s holy will and to walk with this Church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ?”
[Affirmative response required.]

Affirmation for admission by letter:

“Dearly beloved, having before made public confession of your faith in Christ, and having transferred to this Church your Covenant relation of membership, do you now promise to wait diligently upon its ordinances, to study its peace and prosperity, and to walk with us in the faith and hope and love of Christian discipleship?” [Affirmative response required.]

Reception:(By the Assembled Congregation)

“In the name of the Lord Jesus, we the members of this Church bid you welcome to its fellowship. We pledge to you our sympathy and our help that you may ever more increase your knowledge and love of God. And we pray God that all of us, being united in the faith, may come to that fullness of life which God has prepared for those who love God.”

Benediction:

“May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord be gracious to you; and may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.”

VI. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

While this Church regards itself as free and independent, subject only to the government of Jesus Christ, it acknowledges the obligation and rejoices in the privileges of fellowship and cooperation with other Churches, and of seeking counsel from them and of giving counsel to them in cases of difficulty and importance. Through covenant relationships this Church participates in local, regional, and national settings of the United Church of Christ.

Members in regular standing in other Christian Churches and all others who are seeking the life and spirit of Christ are to be welcomed with this Church at the Lord's table.

VII. ELECTIONS

1. Officers, Leadership Board Members, and Delegates are authorized by vote of the congregation. Nominations shall be presented by a Nominating Committee, composed of members selected by the Leadership Board in consultation with the Senior Minister, but additional nominations may be made from the floor. Persons nominated must be active members of the Church. Elections shall take place at the Annual Meeting.
2. Ministers shall be called by vote of the Congregation upon recommendation of a special Committee, the members of which shall be nominated by the Leadership Board and elected by the Congregation at a meeting called for that purpose by the Moderator.
3. The Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer shall be elected every two years.
4. The Leadership Board shall be composed of the Officers of the Church plus six Board Members elected by and from the Congregation for two year terms (staggered so that three members are elected each year). Of these, the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the six Board Members have voting privileges. The Moderator may vote in case of a tie. The Assistant Treasurer may vote in the absence of the Treasurer. The Senior Minister does not vote. Board Members may be re-elected, but may serve no more than four years consecutively. A quorum for meetings of the Leadership Board is a simple majority of voting members. For purposes of determining a quorum, the Moderator shall be included if present. Given a quorum, a simple majority of voting members present is required for Leadership Board decisions.

5. Delegates to the Conference shall be chosen each year as prescribed by the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. Delegates to the New Haven Association of the United Church of Christ shall be chosen each year as prescribed by the New Haven Association.
- 6 For purposes of these Bylaws, the term “*ex officio*” pertains to a person who holds office by virtue of the person’s position in another office. In the event that the person ceases to hold the qualifying office, that person’s status as an “*ex officio*” member of other bodies ceases. For purposes of determining a quorum, an *ex officio* member of a body shall be counted if the member has the right to vote on that body.

VIII. FUNCTIONS OF OFFICERS, COMMITTEES, AND DELEGATES

1. The Moderator shall call regular and special congregational meetings, shall preside over them, and function as the chief lay officer of the Church. The Moderator shall call and preside over meetings of the Leadership Board. The Moderator shall vote in the event of a tie vote of the Leadership Board. The Moderator shall serve as an *ex-officio* member of all committees and ministry teams. The Moderator shall serve for a term of two years.
2. The Clerk shall keep a fair and accurate record of all doings of the Church. The Clerk shall record the minutes of each meeting of the Leadership Board, of which the Clerk is a voting member, and all Congregational meetings. The Clerk shall maintain a document that shall include each Policy approved, adopted, or promulgated by the Leadership Board and/or Congregation (distinct from the Church Staff Policy Manual). The document shall be made available to Members and Staff in the church office and to Members on the “members only” portion of the Church website. The Clerk shall present a summary review of said Policies to the Leadership Board annually. The review shall be noted in the minutes of the Leadership Board Meeting at which it was presented. The Clerk shall ensure that a Census of Members and Friends is performed not less than every four years. The Clerk shall serve for a term of two years.

3. The Treasurer shall have the charge of all receipts, including income from invested funds, and shall disburse them at the direction of the Leadership Board, of which the Treasurer is a voting member, the Senior Minister, the Finance Committee or other authorized committee of the Church. All funds and securities of the Church shall be placed in the custody of a trust and/or investment company or a bank having a trust department. Such bank, trust, or investment company shall account to the Treasurer for all funds and securities and shall receive the income therefrom, and shall turn all income over to the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall serve for a term of two years.
4. The Assistant Treasurer shall act as Treasurer during the absence or incapacity of the Treasurer, and shall assist the Treasurer as needed. When acting in the absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer may vote on the Leadership Board. The Assistant Treasurer shall serve for a term of two years.
5. Delegates shall carry out within the Church all such projects as shall be required of them by the programs of the organizations to which they are delegated, and shall make reports to the Congregation or the Leadership Board about their activities.
6. The Leadership Board is the governing body of the United Church on the Green, and its fiduciary duty is to the Church's mission. The Leadership Board is responsible for the high-level governance tasks of the Church. Within the limits set by the Bylaws, the Leadership Board has the discretion to establish policies that define how the Leadership Board will go about its work. The Leadership Board shall create and maintain a collection of policies approved by vote of the Leadership Board and/or the Congregation. The Clerk shall present a summary of the policies document to the Leadership Board annually. The Leadership Board may delegate to the Staff the responsibility and authority for managing the work of ministry, freeing the Leadership Board to focus on governance/ mission tasks. In carrying out its work, the Leadership Board may establish standing and *ad hoc* committees and task forces as it sees fit. Members of such committees and task forces may be selected by the Leadership Board from Members, Associate Members, Friends of the Congregation and volunteers who attend worship regularly.

In the event of a vacancy among Officers or Leadership Board members caused by resignation or any other cause, the Leadership Board shall, after consulting with the Senior Minister, Moderator, and other appropriate persons, elect a person to fill the vacancy until the next Annual Meeting.

Each member of the Leadership Board owes a fiduciary duty to the Church Mission, as does the Leadership Board itself. Officers, Leadership Board members, Ministers employed by the Church, and certain volunteers and Staff members determined by Policy, shall annually prepare and file a Conflicts of Interest statement in a form determined by the Leadership Board.

The Leadership Board shall meet at least eight times a year. Except for executive sessions, meetings shall be open to members of the Church and others to attend as observers without voice or vote. The Leadership Board may recognize individuals to participate. The Leadership Board may convene in executive session to discuss sensitive matters, such as personnel or legal issues. Executive session includes the Leadership Board, *viz.*, individual Board members, the Senior Minister, Officers, and any persons invited to participate. In rare instances, the Leadership Board may limit an executive session to the Leadership Board only, as determined by the nature of the issue.

Meeting minutes shall be available to Church Members upon request after they are approved by the Leadership Board at its subsequent meeting. Any Board decisions reached between meetings shall be affirmed and noted in the minutes of the next Leadership Board meeting. Minutes shall include, at a minimum, a record of those present and decisions made. A copy of the approved minutes shall become part of the permanent Church records and shall be published in the members only section of the Church website. The Leadership Board, in its discretion, may cause said approved minutes to be published in the public section of the Church website.

7. The Senior Minister is the head of Staff and as such has responsibility for and authority over the work of the Staff, including any other clergy called by the Church. The Senior Minister reports to the Leadership Board and is evaluated by the Leadership Board. The Senior Minister organizes the work of the staff, assigning responsibilities and establishing lines of reporting, supervision, and evaluation. The Senior Minister, in consultation with other staff members, establishes Staff Policies as needed to define how work is to be done. The Senior Minister shall be a non-voting member of the Leadership Board and all Committees, *ex officio*.

Much of the work to carry out the mission of United Church on the Green is performed by ministry teams, each consisting of a team leader (who may be either a church employee or a church member) plus volunteer team members. The Senior Minister shall create teams as needed, determine the scope of each team's responsibilities, and approve team members. A team leader shall serve for a one year period and may be reappointed as leader for

not more than two consecutive years. Team leaders shall be appointed by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Moderator and any existing nominating committee.

IX. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of active and associate members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting, provided such amendment shall have been proposed in writing to the Minister(s), Moderator, or the Clerk not less than thirty (30) days before such meeting, and that the subject matter of such amendments shall have been included in the notice of the meeting. "Present" members are those who (a) are physically present at the meeting, (b) those who are attending via digital, electronic, or virtual means which allow real time communication to and from remote locations, e.g. via computer video, and (c) those members who have cast an absentee vote.

X. THE UNITED SOCIETY

The officers of the United Society shall be the same as the corresponding officers of the United Church. The Society's Committee, which is the Investment Committee of the United Society, shall be the same as the Finance Committee of the United Church and shall perform the same duties for Society investments as it does for Church investments.