

The Constitution and By-Laws of the West Suffield Congregational Church

West Suffield, CT
Organized November 10, 1743
Incorporated May 11, 1922
Voted membership in The United Church of Christ
April 30, 1961
Revised June 1967, further revised and adopted January 1989

ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE

1. NAME:

The name of this Church shall be “The West Suffield Congregational Church”, a member of the United Church of Christ, and a corporation according to the laws of the State of Connecticut and located in West Suffield, Connecticut.

2. MISSION STATEMENT:

We, as a community in Christ, shall provide and administer opportunities for worship, education, fellowship and outreach. It is our mission to serve individual, local, national and world needs as a reflection of God's love. We will nurture each other and welcome and affirm all people as brothers and sisters of Christ.

ARTICLE II: FAITH AND COVENANT:

1. FAITH:

This Church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of humankind. It acknowledges as brothers and sister, in Christ, all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own, the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. One expression of this faith is found in the statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ adopted at the Second General Synod in Oberlin, Ohio, July 5-9, 1959 and by this Church, April 30, 1961.

2. COVENANT:

West Suffield Congregational Church will be in covenant with the United Church of Christ and we shall sustain that relationship described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ, adopted July 1961, relating to local churches. This church shall be a member of the Hartford Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in its entire affairs subject, however, to the laws of the State of Connecticut.

ARTICLE III: GOVERNMENT

1. POLITY:

The Government of this Church is congregational, being vested in its members, who exercise the right to control all its affairs, subject, however, to the laws of the State of Connecticut relating to non-profit corporations. This Church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the Constitutions and by-laws of the United Church of Christ adopted July 4, 1961 relating to the Local Churches (Article IV).

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership in this Church shall be open to any person regardless of race, economic or social standing, sexual or gender identity, orientation or method of expression who has been Baptized or has made public Confession of Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or who reaffirms that faith or who comes by letter of transfer of membership from another Christian Church.

2. Members shall pledge themselves through time, talent and financial support to the Church; to fulfill their duty to attend the regular worship of the Church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian Life; to share in the life and work of the Church; to attend meetings of the Church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

3. Termination of Membership;

a. Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of transfer to another church, upon the members own request is entitled to receive it. The right to vote is canceled and membership is terminated upon issuance of such letter.

b. No member shall be deprived of Church privileges except by recommendation of Diaconate and majority vote by Church Council.

ARTICLE V: SERVICES AND MEETINGS

1. WORSHIP:

Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday except when temporarily suspended by vote of the Church Council.

2. THE SACRAMENTS:

Communion: The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at the morning service a minimum of six (6) times a year and at such other times as the Pastor of the Church and the Church Council may deem advisable.

Baptism: Baptism shall be administered to those who have not received the Sacraments at the time of their admission to the Church, and to infants whose parents promise to bring up their children in the love and knowledge of the Lord.

3. BUSINESS MEETINGS:

a. The date and time of the Annual Meeting of the West Suffield Congregational Church shall be determined by the Pastor and the Church Council. The Annual meeting will be held in the month of January for the election of officers, reviewing of annual reports of officers, departments and organizations, and to adopt the goals, annual budget and transact any other business that may properly come before such meeting.

b. Special Meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Church Council, or upon written request of any ten (10) voting members of the Church.

c. Call of the Annual Meeting or of Special Meetings shall be given from the pulpit at the Sunday morning service for two Sundays preceding the meeting or by one written notification to active membership ten days prior to meeting date. The Annual Report or Agenda of the Special Meeting will be presented at the time of the call.

d. A quorum for the transaction of any legal business shall consist of twenty (20) members entitled to vote.

ARTICLE VI: GOVERNING BODY:

1. The Governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled in our Church Meeting, guided by Robert's Rules of Order, under the leadership of the Moderator. The vote of a majority of members present at the Church Meeting shall be the action of the Church, provided a quorum of twenty (20) is present.

2. The Church Council shall be the governing body between Church Meetings. It shall have charge of the overall program of the Church and serve as general coordinating body. Its members shall be active members of this Church. The Moderator of the Church shall be Chairman of the Church Council. Fifty percent (50%) of voting Council members shall be a quorum. In case of failure to reach quorum, Moderator shall be empowered to transact necessary Church business until next scheduled Council meeting when actions shall be approved. Vacancies in any of the Council positions, except that of the Pastor, shall be filled by majority vote of voting members of Council until the next Annual Meeting.

3. MEMBERS OF COUNCIL:

Ten (10) Members of Council shall consist of:

- a. Pastor with voice, no vote
- b. Moderator with voice, no vote except to break a tie
- c. Treasurer with vote
- d. Senior Deacon with vote
- e. Chairman of Financial Committee with vote
- f. Clerk with vote
- g. Faith Formation Chairperson with vote
- h. Missions Chairperson with vote
- i. Position 1. Council/Committee Liaison with vote
- j. Position 2. Council/Church Relations with vote

For the elections at the Annual Meeting, the nominating committee shall be the Council.

Nominated persons shall be members of the Church in good standing.

The voting members of Council shall determine the eligibility of candidates for recommendation to elected Church Council positions and present such nominations at the Annual or Special meetings. Additional nominations for elected positions may come from the floor at such meetings.

ARTICLE VII: OFFICERS:

The legal officers of this Church shall consist of the Moderator, the Treasurer, and the Clerk. Two of these three officer's signatures shall be necessary to sign legal documents of the Church.

1. THE PASTOR:

a. DUTIES: The Pastor shall be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Church with the assistance of the Diaconate and shall seek to enlist people as followers of Christ, preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, have care of all services of public worship, and manage the ministerial activities of the Church in cooperation with the various boards and committees. The Pastor shall be a member of all boards and committees. The Pastor shall be responsible for the disbursement of the Discretionary Fund in conjunction with the Senior Deacon of the Diaconate.

b. CALL OF THE PASTOR:

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Diaconate to appoint a Pulpit Ministerial Search Committee to seek candidates for pastoral vacancies. The Ministerial Search Committee will consist of at least five (5) but no more than nine (9) church members representing the diversity of the current membership.

2. As soon as notification of, or actual pastoral vacancy occurs, it shall be reported to the Regional Minister of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ by the Church Clerk.

3. In filling a vacancy or in securing supply ministers for the period of vacancy, the Diaconate or its appointed Pulpit Ministerial Search Committee may seek the council of the Associate Minister of the Connecticut Conference Regional Minister.

4. The Pulpit Ministerial Search Committee may request the Regional Minister to secure relevant information about any minister whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy.

5. Any minister may confer with the Regional Minister concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the minister's request, the name shall be submitted by the Regional Minister for consideration by the local Pulpit Ministerial Search Committee.

6. The Pulpit Ministerial Search Committee shall present to the Church, upon recommendation of Diaconate and approval of the Church Council, the name of the candidate it recommends to fill a vacancy. A favorable vote of the Church Council constitutes a Call.

c. CALL:

In the Call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the salary, the agreement of the Church to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Minister's Health Insurance program, and other terms agreed between the Candidate and the Committee. The Minister, the Church, the Hartford Association of CTUCC, and the Regional Minister shall receive a copy of the Call.

d. INSTALLATION:

When a minister accepts a Call to this Church, the Church shall join with the minister in requesting the Hartford Association to sit as an ecclesiastical gathering for the purpose of installing or recognizing the pastor. A report of this service shall be signed by the proper officer of the Association and by the Regional Minister. The Pastor shall become a member of the Church and of the Hartford Association at the first opportunity.

e. TERM:

The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, three months' notice or other mutually agreeable time shall be given by either party.

f. TERMINATION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP:

When either party decides to terminate the relationship, the termination shall be by majority vote and recommendation of the Diaconate to the Church Council and a majority vote of a Church Meeting, and notice of such termination shall be sent by the Church Clerk to the Regional Minister and to the Committee on Church and Ministry of the Hartford Association for appropriate action.

2. MODERATOR:

The Moderator shall preside over all regular and special meetings of the Church, using Robert's Rules of Order as a guide. No Moderator shall serve for more than five consecutive years. In any absence, a Moderator Pro-Tem shall be elected to preside at the meeting. The Moderator shall be Chairperson of the Church Council and shall be elected by the Church yearly. In absence of Council quorum, the Moderator shall be responsible for the business, financial and legal activities of the Church.

3. TREASURER:

The Treasurer shall receive all moneys generated from operation of the Church, and other moneys of the Church, and give receipts for them and shall deposit funds received in a bank or other suitable depository. The Treasurer shall be elected annually and may not serve for more than five consecutive years. The Treasurer shall have custody of all papers relating to the property of the Church. The Treasurer shall pay the bills of the Church, verbal or written, and shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and give such bonds as necessary. The Treasurer shall make a monthly report to the Church Council on the status of the individual budget items and all outstanding bills.

4. ASSISTANT TREASURER:

The Assistant Treasurer shall collect offering envelopes and keep accounts of all pledging units for the budget of the Church. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected annually and may not serve for more than five consecutive years. The Assistant Treasurer shall turn over tallied receipts to the Treasurer. The Assistant shall give a Quarterly Report to the Financial Committee of all pledging units along with membership status.

5. CLERK:

The Clerk shall keep a faithful record of proceedings of the Church and the Church Council, of which the Clerk shall be a member and its secretary. The Clerk shall be elected annually and may not serve for more than five consecutive years. The Clerk shall keep a registry with addresses of the members of the Church and give notices of all meetings when such notices are necessary.

6. AUDITOR:

The Auditor shall not be the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer or a member of the Financial Committee. The Auditor may be a non-member, shall examine and verify the financial accounts of the Church including those of the Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer, and any other account set up by the Church Meeting. The Auditor shall be appointed annually by Council.

ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES:

1. DIACONATE:

The Diaconate shall be open to all active church members in good standing and of good moral character. They shall, with the Pastor, guide the spiritual life of the Church. The Diaconate shall schedule and oversee services of worship, including music. They shall assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. They shall assist the Pastor, if necessary, in;

a. Advising the congregation of matters of faith and morals when such become subjects in the Church.

b. Conducting a program of evangelism, reaching out to welcome and invite new members into the Church.

c. Shall be concerned for the nurturance, care and spiritual support of members.

One of their numbers shall be presented to Council for nomination as Senior Deacon at the annual meeting to be elected by church members. The Senior Deacon's responsibility shall be to preside at meetings of the Diaconate and such further responsibilities as the Diaconate may determine. It shall also be the Senior Deacon's responsibility to confer with the Pastor as to the confidential disbursement of the Discretionary Fund. Monies for this fund are to be provided by designated offerings as determined by the Diaconate and approved by the Church Council.

The Diaconate and Pastor may appoint a Committee on Pastoral Relations who shall be in communication with the Pastor and other ordained personnel regarding pastoral needs and those of the Pastors family. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be made up of Church members, and shall have at least one member of the Diaconate in its number; but need not be made up exclusively of Deacons.

A member of the Diaconate who has served many years may be elected Deacon-Emeritus, and upon such election shall be for life to all the privileges of an active member of the Diaconate. This title may only be conferred by vote of a Church Meeting, upon recommendation of the Diaconate and the Church Council.

The Diaconate will keep an accurate account of worshipers at regular and special services of the Church and will receive the offerings.

2. FAITH FORMATION COMMITTEE:

The Faith Formation Committee shall consist of the Pastor, the Faith Formation Chairperson, who sits on council, and as many Church members as appropriate..

This Committee shall have general supervision and provide direction of the educational work of the Church. Under the general guidance of this Committee will come such organizations as the Church School and youth fellowship groups. The Committee shall provide responsible nursery child care during regular and special Church services.

The Committee will assist the Church School Superintendent in recruiting teachers and have full power of appointing and removing teachers of the Church School. This Committee shall submit a proposed budget to Church Council for its programs. Monies received by the Church School in envelopes or offerings shall be tallied and turned over to the Church Treasurer as Church income. Monies raised by auxiliary groups for the benefit of the Faith Formation Committee must be reported to the Church Treasurer along with a report of its disposition.

3: FINANCIAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

The Financial Investment Committee (FIC) shall consist of two (2) or more, appointed by council. They shall, at least annually, educate the membership of the Church as to the Spiritual concept of Stewardship. They shall have charge of all invested funds only as authorized by State laws governing the investment of trust funds. The member/members of the (FIC) shall give such bonds as the Church may require. They shall make a yearly report at the Annual Meeting.

4. CHRISTIAN MISSION COMMITTEE:

The Christian Mission Committee shall consist of one or more members, working through the Christian Missions Chairperson, who sits on Church Council.

5. DELEGATES TO THE HARTFORD ASSOCIATION--ANNUAL MEETING OF UCC/INTERFAITH COUNCIL:

Delegates shall be active members of the Church and appointed by Council, as necessary.

6. SCOUTING CHARTER REPRESENTATIVE:

The Scouting Charter Representative is to be elected yearly at the Annual Meeting of the Church. The SCR will coordinate Boy Scout Troop 66 and Cub Scout Pack 266 with the Pastor and/or the Council.

7. VACANCIES:

Vacancies which may occur on the Church Council and Committees shall be filled by Council for the balance of the year.

ARTICLE IX: PROPERTY

1. The Church may in its corporate name sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest or otherwise and own, hold, invest, reinvest or dispose of property both real and personal, for such work as the Church may undertake and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purpose of the Church; it may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objects and purposes of the Church.

Any property of the Church valued by Council at TWO HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS (\$250), or more, deemed surplus or unnecessary, must be disposed of by an open bidding process posted in Church Newsletter, Church bulletin board, and to general public through local newspaper for 30 days. Bidding process will be coordinated by Church Treasurer.

2. Upon dissolution of the Church, its assets and all property and interests of which shall be then possessed, including any devise bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. (This is not required by the General Synod and it is to be understood that the United Church of Christ stands firmly on Article 21 of the Constitution of the UCC, but under the Internal Revenue Service regulations, if there is not a specific disavowal that the assets on dissolution will be distributed to the membership, the Church will not qualify as an exempt organization. See Internal Revenue Code Sect. 501 (c) (3).)

ARTICLE X: AMMENDMENTS

This Constitution and By-Laws may be altered, amended or repealed by a vote of two-thirds (2/3rds) of the members of the Church in attendance and voting at any properly called Church business meeting, such modification having been included in the call.

Please print this page and return to: *WSCC, 1408 Mountain, Rd., West Suffield, CT 06093*

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Constructive Feedback/Comments:
