

Bylaws

Article I. Name

The First Congregational Church of Plainfield, Incorporated.
A member of the United Church of Christ, Connecticut Conference, Windham Association

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church is to bind together followers of Jesus Christ by providing for the public worship of God and fulfilling the functions of a church as set forth in the following covenant which is shared by all its members.

Article III. Mission Statement

We are a caring and faithful people of God, empowered by Jesus Christ to seek justice and peace. The First Congregational Church of Plainfield, United Church of Christ, pledges its talents and gifts to serve God, the Christian family and the community. The lessons from the Bible will touch our lives as we worship together, celebrating the teachings and presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. We welcome and accept all people with warmth and friendship as disciples of Christ, in witnessing through love and forgiveness. We are an energized congregation sharing the good news through our commitment to Christian Education for all ages.

Article IV. Covenant for Working Together

While speaking, we will communicate directly to each other using the first person. We will ask questions for clarification in order to confirm that we have understood correctly and ask others to do the same. We will be as honest as we can with each other. We will strive together to understand and speak from factual information, rather than leaping to conclusions based on assumptions or speculation. We will speak to each other with respect. We will affirm the merit in each person's idea or concern before we note its weaknesses. We will listen to one another's point of view, respect it, try to understand it, but we don't have to agree.

Article V: Statement of Faith, United Church of Christ

We believe in you O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and our God, and to your deeds we testify:
You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.
You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. You judge people and nations by your righteous will declare through the prophets and apostles.
In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.
You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.
You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

Article VI. Membership

A. Qualifications

This church welcomes anyone who wishes to follow in the teachings and service of the Lord Jesus Christ, publicly accepts the covenant of the Church and complies with all church policies.

Membership can be granted in one of three ways:

- Affirmation of faith by coming before the Pastor, Board of Deacons and Membership Board to share their Christian faith experience
- Letter of transfer from another Church
- Baptism and Confirmation

The congregation acting, as the body of Christ, will affirm each new member by extending the right hand of fellowship.

B. Rights

Church members may vote in the congregational meetings of the Church, hold office and serve on committees and boards.

C. Responsibilities

Members are expected, to the best of their ability, to:

- Attend worship service on a regular basis.
- Contribute financially to the support of the church and benevolences.
- Participate with time and talents to support the life and work of the Church.
- Show evidence in their daily life of a Christian lifestyle.

D. Termination:

Any member desiring to leave this Church will be removed from the roll. If they wish to join another Church they will be entitled to a letter of transfer.

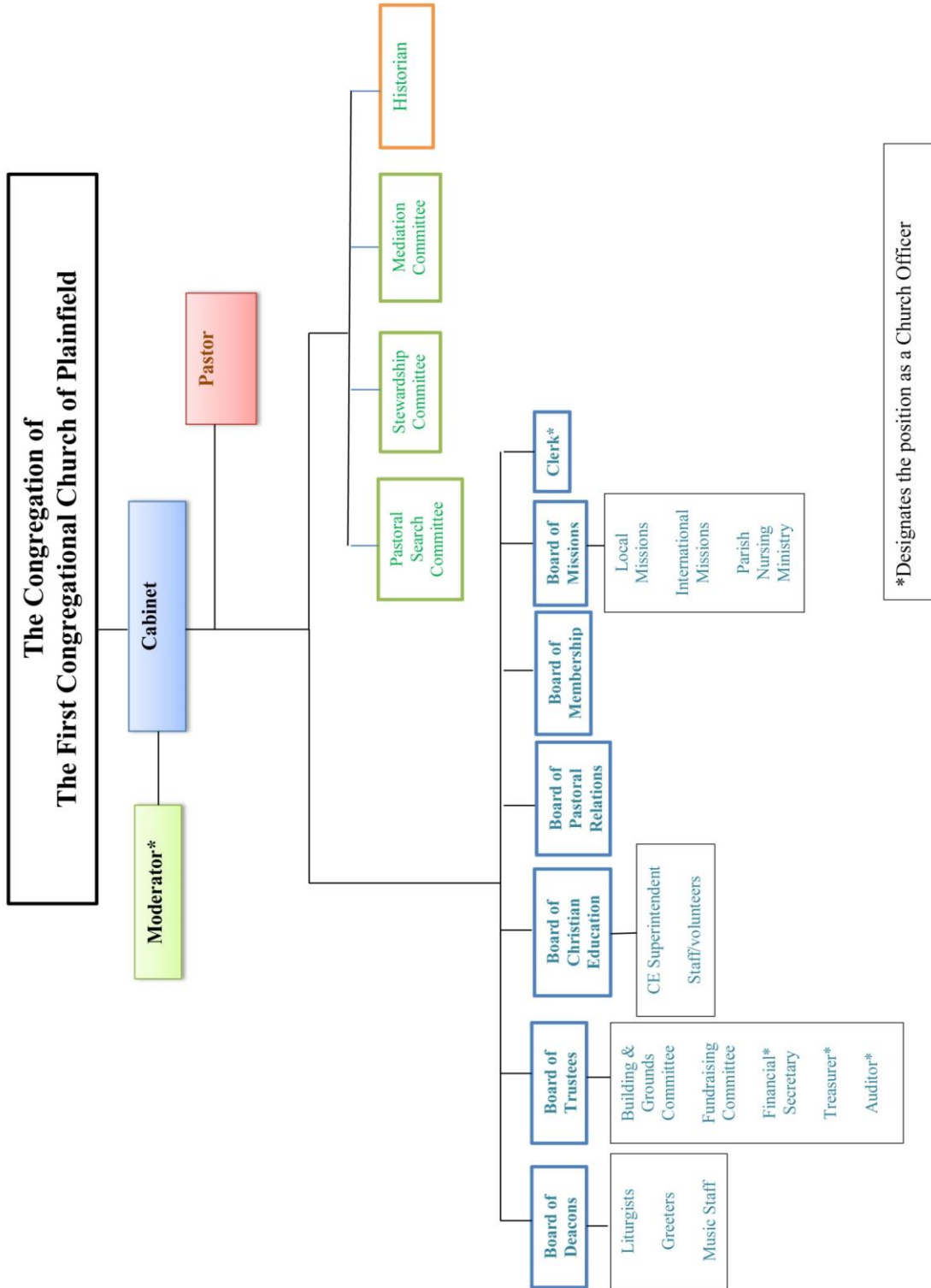
In matters of Church discipline, the Board of Deacons shall appoint a panel of four(4) deacons to examine and settle the matter, following the rule of Matthew 18:15-17. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Deacons and vote of the Church Cabinet, membership may be terminated.

E. An Inactive List:

Members whose addresses cannot be obtained or who have ceased to communicate with the Church or support it for a period of one year may be transferred to an Inactive List. Deacon Board, Membership Board and Financial Secretary may have input on the member transferred to the Inactive List.

Article VII. Church Administration

A. Organizational Chart



B. General Administration

1. Governing Body

- a.** The First Congregational Church of Plainfield is the governing body of this Church. The membership assembled in a properly called Congregational meeting shall be eligible to vote. A quorum shall consist of at least fifteen (15) members. The vote of a majority of members present at the meeting shall be the action of the Church.
 - b.** All meetings held by this Church will utilize Robert's Rules of Order unless otherwise stated.
 - c.** Congregational Meetings
 - i.** The annual meeting of the Congregation will be held the last Sunday of January each year.
 1. To hear the annual reports of officers, boards and committees.
 2. To transact business and make plans for the new year.
 3. To hold elections for all vacancies on each Board.
 4. To elect the following officers: Financial Secretary(ies), Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer.
 - ii.** Conduct at least two(2) other Congregational Meetings annually to update the Congregation.
 - iii.** Special Congregational Meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Cabinet, or the Boards specifying the objective of the meeting. The meeting purpose shall be announced at least one (1) week prior to the meeting date.
 - iv.** Church bylaws may be amended at any Congregational meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present. A thirty (30) day notice of the Congregational meeting to amend the bylaws shall be given to the Congregation. The proposed bylaws changes will be made available in writing at least two (2) weeks prior to said meeting.
 - d.** The membership of The First Congregational Church of Plainfield will elect all of the members of each Board and the Financial Secretary(ies), Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer.
- 2. Pastor/Minister** - the Pastor/Minister shall be chosen and called by the Congregation. She/he shall be a voting member of the Cabinet, and serve as an advisory member of all boards and committees, and entitled to attend any meeting except when a conflict of interest is being discussed, such as salary or tenure.
- 3. Cabinet** – the Cabinet is the governing body of the Church Boards and Committees. The Cabinet is comprised of the chairpersons from each board. The Cabinet acts as a communication vehicle for all boards and committees, and to facilitate the coordination of all activities of the Church. Voting members of the Cabinet are composed of the chairperson of each of the Boards, the Clerk, and the Pastor. The Cabinet will elect their chairperson who also serves as the Moderator and an officer of the Church. The Cabinet shall present qualified candidates to fill vacancies among the officers and boards at a congregational meeting for approval. The Cabinet will meet at least nine (9) times per year. Five voting members shall constitute a quorum (a quorum is needed for a vote). Members of the Cabinet shall be in attendance for seventy percent (70%) of the meetings. If a member of the Cabinet is unable to attend a scheduled meeting, the

chairperson will ask an alternate member of that board to attend and vote in their stead. Missing two consecutive Cabinet meetings may result in another member of that Board being assigned. The Cabinet may form additional committees as needed for specific purposes.

Committees/Appointments of the Cabinet

- a. **The Pastoral Search Committee** – The Pastoral Search Committee is charged with seeking and recommending a new pastor/minister. This Committee should number no less than five (5) and no more than eight (8) members and they will be nominated by the Cabinet. They should be a representation of our Congregation, new as well as seasoned members, men and women. They will be voted on by a majority vote of the members present at a congregational meeting called in order to act on these nominations. The Congregation will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote to approve a new Pastor/Minister.
 - b. **The Stewardship Committee** – The Stewardship Committee will be formed with a minimum of three people appointed by the Cabinet to solicit contributions from the Congregation for time, talent and treasures.
 - c. **The Mediation Committee** – The Mediation Committee is designed to assist the pastor to resolve concerns of members. If there is a concern, the Pastor will attempt to resolve the concern. If the Pastor is unable to resolve the concern, the Pastor will assign three impartial members to further evaluate and make recommendations for the situation. These recommendations will then be reviewed by the Cabinet for the best interest of the Congregation as a whole. If the concern of the person involves any Cabinet member, then that Cabinet member will excuse themselves from the decision process. Due to the uniqueness of each situation that may arise, the members of this Committee will be selected and convened as needed.
 - d. **The Historian(s)** – The Historian(s) shall be appointed by the Cabinet. The Historian shall keep a record including newspaper clippings and pictures of important events in the life of the church including but not limited to installations, anniversaries, dedications, fundraisers and other such occasions. The Historian shall gather information to be used to update church's web site. The Historian shall provide commentary for the Church newsletter to share the historical activities of the church with the congregation.
4. **Church Boards** - The members of all Boards, unless otherwise specified will have three (3) year terms. A Board member may serve for no more than two (2) consecutive terms or until a successor, who is duly qualified and elected, is found. All boards will elect their own chairperson. The chairperson may elect a co-chair. The Responsibilities of each chairperson of each board includes the following:
- Ensuring that the bylaws of the Church are followed.
 - Notifying the Cabinet when the Board has vacancies to be filled.
 - Providing information on Board activities and updates on a regular basis for input into the Cabinet and Congregational Meetings.
 - Ensuring that the Board membership includes a reasonable combination of new members and experienced members.
 - Schedule and hold meetings on a regular basis.
 - Documenting Board and subcommittee operational guidelines and ensuring that those guidelines are followed.

- Ensuring the minutes of the meetings are documented and recorded.
- Board members will attend church regularly and actively participate in activities and fundraisers.
- All Board Chairpersons are voting members of the Cabinet.
- No Board may have a majority of its members from any one family.
- Members of any Board must be present to vote.
- All Boards report to the Cabinet.
- Each Board may have up to two alternates.
- Any Board member must recuse themselves on any vote where there is a perceived conflict of interest.

- a. **The Board of Deacons** – The Board of Deacons shall be comprised of a minimum of six and maximum of eleven members and two (2) alternate members. New and additional term deacons will be elected at the annual meeting of the Church. A Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Secretary shall be elected from its members. The Chairperson shall preside at the Board of Deacon meetings and oversee administration of the Board of Deacons. The Chairperson will also serve on the Cabinet. The Vice-Chairperson shall take the place of the Chairperson during their absence. The Secretary shall keep minutes of meetings and handle correspondence and other related clerical matters.

Members of the Board of Deacons shall take heed of the high calling and honorable character of their office, honoring the Church, maintaining order in the house of God and ministering to the spiritual needs of the congregation. The deacons shall assist the pastor in the preparation and administration of the Lord's Supper, as well as baptisms, weddings and funerals. They will assist with the care of the poor, the sick, the sorrowing and the stranger. They shall participate in the confirmation and the reception of new members and their admission process. The Board of Deacons will assist with evangelism; reaching out to welcome and invite new members into the Church. With the pastor, they shall have oversight of the spiritual interests of the Church. The deacons are in charge of care and custody of all sacramental items. They shall have the responsibility of the supply of the pulpit during the absence or disability of the Pastor or during any interim between pastors.

The Board of Deacons is also responsible for the liturgists, greeters, music staff and the Decoration Committee.

- b. **The Board of Trustees** - The Board of Trustees shall consist of seven members and two alternates. They shall be elected by the Congregation and shall hold in trust the assets of the Church and have charge of its financial and business affairs. They shall help to raise funds for the support of the Church, endeavor to pay all expenses in a timely manner, present and maintain a budget of approved expenses, and provide an annual report of all financial activity. The Pastor/Minister, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Moderator and the Auditor are ex-officio members of this board.

The Board of Trustees will meet at least nine times each year and members must attend at least two-thirds (2/3) of those meetings in person. Any member who does not attend two-thirds (2/3) of the meetings may be deemed to have resigned. Five members shall constitute a quorum (a quorum is needed for a vote or to conduct business). The board members must also participate in at least one of the subcommittees of the board (i.e. fundraising or buildings and grounds) or participate in the financial activities of the church (i.e. financial secretary, treasurer, or auditor). Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Chairperson or the Co-chairperson of the Board.

The Board of Trustees responsibilities include:

- i. Provide for the care and management of all church property, equipment, and furnishings
- ii. Create and maintain an environment conducive to the spiritual, educational, and fellowship needs of the Church in a manner reflecting effective stewardship of the Church's property.
- iii. Maintain, improve, and service all buildings, grounds, furnishings, and equipment, and preparation for any potential property-threatening catastrophic events and response to any property casualties experienced.
- iv. Provide for adequate property casualty and liability insurance coverage for the Church's properties, programs and personnel. An annual review of the various policies will be made by the Trustees.
- v. Present any non-emergent expenditure, unbudgeted expense that is more than one thousand (\$1,000) or any non-emergent expenditure that is over budget by more than twenty percent (20%) to the Cabinet for a vote or may be brought to the Congregation for a vote to approve the expenditure.
- vi. Expend funds in case of emergencies without presenting it to the cabinet or the congregation.
- vii. Acknowledge gifts received for the Church.
- viii. Shall not borrow nor contract any debts nor encumber the church property except by order of the Congregation at one of its regular business meetings or at a special meeting.
- ix. Oversee the performance of duties by the Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Fund Raising Committee and Buildings and Grounds Committee.
- x. Only buy, sell, mortgage, or transfer real property **with** specific authority given by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the church members present and voting at a Congregational meeting.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee is a subcommittee of the Trustees and is chaired by a board member. The committee shall consist of a minimum of four (4) members. The chairperson will recruit other members to assist them in the duties and maintenance of the church building and grounds and will convene a meeting at least quarterly. Their responsibilities include:

- Assist the board in maintenance and upkeep of the grounds and the building.
- Provide guidelines for maintenance upkeep.
- Record maintenance and improvements to the building and grounds.

The **Fundraising Committee** is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. This Committee shall consist of at least four (4) members whose chairperson is a member of the Board of Trustees. Responsibilities include:

- Generate and solicit ideas for fund raisers.
- Seek volunteers to sponsor events and organize events and oversee the execution of the events.
- Work under the guidance of the Trustees who shall review the ideas of the committee, consider the income potential, the expenses and the risk, and either approve or disapprove the ideas.

c. **The Board of Christian Education** – The Board of Christian Education consists of four (4) members the Superintendent and three other members. The Superintendent is selected by the Pastor with input from the Board of Deacons. The members shall include a representative from youth ministry and a representative from adult education. Christian education teachers will be included as participants at Board of Christian Education meetings. This Board is responsible for:

- i. Setting school policy.
- ii. Adopting a mission statement.
- iii. Choosing and implementing of curriculum.
- iv. Work cooperatively with the Pastor to discern the needs of the Church and the children attending.
- v. Work cooperatively with the Pastor to define the structure of the Church School Program in relationship to the attendance and role of teachers.
- vi. Support the needs of ministry to youth and adults within its function, budget and fundraising.
- vii. Prepare an annual budget and submit the request to the Board of Trustees.

d. **The Pastoral Relations Board** - The Pastoral Relations Board supports and helps to maintain an open and healthy relationship between the Pastor and the members of the Congregation by facilitating communication and understanding between them. When conflict occurs between the Pastor and the Congregation, the Board can act as a reconciling agent. Disagreements must be addressed and negotiated as soon as possible. Constructive and caring communication in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust is essential to the work of the Board. The nurture of the Pastor by this Board brings about a healthy congregation and creates a climate in which the spiritual life and mission of the members are strengthened. The Board is an advocate for the Pastor regarding compensation and benefits. The Board encourages the Pastor to plan time for personal recreation, exercise, relaxation, spiritual development, and personal relationships. The Board meets at least quarterly and will have five (5) members. Member selection comes from a list of members submitted by the Pastor and a list of members submitted by the Cabinet. Two members are selected by the Pastor and three members are selected by the Cabinet. The Board reports its activity in general terms to the Cabinet in order to maintain confidentiality. The qualifications for members of this Board include:

- i. Christian character that commands the respect of the Congregation and the Pastor.
 - ii. Good listener, who is mature, patient and flexible.
 - iii. Ability to maintain confidentiality and is trustworthy.
 - iv. Ability to appreciate different points of view and to negotiate and reconcile differences.
- e. **The Board of Membership** – The Board of Membership is responsible to educate perspective members who are interested in joining our Church. The Board of Membership reaches out to the community to identify potential candidates for Church membership. This Board is responsible for updating and creating tools to assist in the recruitment and retention of members, including creation and maintenance of a Church directory and related brochures.
- f. **The Board of Missions** – The Board of Missions shall consist of five (5) members. The members of this Board shall represent and assist the organizations doing missionary work in the Church. The Board shall supervise all missionary work in the Church, including the Parish Nursing Ministry, Local and international mission efforts. The Board of Missions works with community, state, national and international missionary organizations. The Board identifies and makes recommendations for apportionment of funds and sets goals for the missionary budget where budgeting is deemed necessary.

5. Officers

- a. **Financial Secretary(ies)** – There will be at least two who are elected by the Congregation and are responsible for:
 - i. Collecting all income and offerings. At least two members, preferably at least one of which is a Board of Trustee member, shall count the cash from the offerings collected after church services.
 - ii. Maintaining contribution records of the income from pledges, cash, fund raisers and donations.
 - iii. Depositing income and reporting and summarizing account activity to the Treasurer and Auditor on a timely basis.
 - iv. Collecting pledge payments by individual and report their contribution to them if requested.
- b. **Clerk**
 - i. Document and keep a record of the proceedings of the Congregational meetings and the Cabinet meetings.
 - ii. Keep a record of the Church members by recording all changes as well as records of births, deaths, baptisms and marriages.
 - iii. Issue letters of transfer, give notices of all meetings when they are required.
 - iv. Prepare and process all correspondence which pertains to the office.
- c. **Treasurer**
 - i. Keeps accurate account of all receipts and disbursements.
 - ii. Pays funds as required for all routine and budgeted bills approved by the Congregation.
 - iii. Prepares year to date financial reports for Trustees, Auditor and Congregation.
 - iv. Presents a complete yearend report at the annual meeting.

- v. Completes all government tax forms.
 - vi. Transfers and withdraws funds on behalf of the Church.
 - vii. Invests funds of the Church as directed by the Board of Trustees.
- d. Auditor**
- i. Reviews the financial records of the Church from the Treasurer and the Financial Secretaries periodically.
 - ii. Conducts an annual audit of the records and reports of the Financial Secretaries and the Treasurer and of all other persons having custody of church property or funds to determine the true financial condition of the Church finances.
 - iii. Writes an audit report which will be included in the annual report.
- e. Moderator** - the moderator is the Chairperson of the Church Cabinet. The Moderator's responsibilities are as follows:
- i. Signs necessary instruments for and on behalf of the Congregation.
 - ii. Presides at all Congregational Meetings held for business purposes.
 - iii. The Moderator is an ex-officio member of all Boards and Committees of the Church.