

**Bylaws**  
**First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
**Olympia, Washington**

**INCORPORATION**

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Olympia, Washington, is a nonprofit religious body, governed by the congregation, and incorporated under the laws of the State of Washington. The decree of incorporation was filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State April 4, 1892, as recorded in Book 5, page 334, Domestic Corporations. The amended Articles of Incorporation were filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State January 23, 1975, under file number 244126, microfilm roll #1311, pages 266-269. The amended Articles of Incorporation, dated June 8, 1992, were filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State, alphabetically under churches.

**AFFILIATION**

This congregation is affiliated with the denomination known as the "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." The congregation participates in the affairs of the denomination by supporting and working through the national and regional agencies of this body to fulfill those aspects of the mission of Christ and His Church which are beyond the range of the local congregation.

**TRUST AGREEMENT AND DEED OF TRUST**

In order to protect First Christian Church's property from persons and groups who might seek to separate from the historical denominational affiliation, a Trust Agreement and a Deed of Trust have been signed describing the conveyance of ownership of the property to the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). (See Appendix A)

**ARTICLE I WHO WE ARE**

**Section A Welcoming Community**

We are a welcoming community who gathers in the heart of downtown Olympia. We confess that the institutional Church has, at times, harmed people by denying them God's unconditional love, but as a people of faith, we profess the worth and dignity of every person and recognize each one as created in the image of God. We differ in race, age, cultural background, ability, sexual orientation, physical condition, gender identity, family structure, and life circumstances. Together, we are on a spiritual journey as followers of the teachings of Jesus and his living example to do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly and thoughtfully with God. As we strive to reflect God's inclusive unconditional love, we invite all persons to journey with us as we engage in social outreach and wrestle with questions of faith.

## **Section B Open and Affirming**

We of First Christian Church in Olympia, Washington welcome all people into the full life and ministry of this congregation. We recognize, celebrate and give thanks for the many diverse gifts of God among us.

In covenant, we declare ourselves to be open and affirming of all God's children, and thus we celebrate God's love for people of all race, age, gender, marital standing, physical or mental ability, economic status, nationality, and sexual orientation or identity into the full life and ministry of this community of faith.

Our Mission Statement calls us to embrace an ever expanding community and a lifestyle of generosity and service. In covenant, we pledge to do our part in proclaiming that all people may know that any unjust discrimination is incompatible with Christ's Gospel of unconditional love.

## **ARTICLE II RITUALS AND TRADITIONS**

### **Section A Confession of Faith**

We recognize that a public Confession of Faith has been an important and prominent part of expressing a person's desire to join in fellowship and community of the congregation. While we continue to honor our denominational confession we understand that for many a public confession is a deterrent to participating fully within the community of faith, therefore a public confession of faith is not a requirement. We recognize the individual struggle to understand Jesus the man and Jesus as the risen Christ. We respect and support each other as we covenant together to seek to follow and to listen for how God is calling us together in worship, mission and community. If a person desires to make a public confession of faith by coming forward during worship they will be welcomed and affirmed.

### **Section B Baptism**

Keeping with the tradition of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), First Christian Church of Olympia practices baptism through immersion. We recognize all forms of baptism.

### **Section C The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of commemoration, thanksgiving and fellowship in which the congregation participates weekly as the central part of the regular worship

service. It is open to all who wish to partake. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated at other times and places in forms appropriate to the occasion.

## **ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

Being in a covenant relationship is a commitment to honor and support each other in our individual life journeys as we worship together and seek answers to life's questions. This commitment includes attendance in worship, involvement in learning, and support of the church's mission through personal involvement and financial giving.

## **NEW ARTICLE IV SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

It is our desire that First Christian Church be a safe place for all people; safe from any threat of abuse, where the infinite value of each person is honored and relationships are open, honest and respectful. This safe environment reflects the love of God as we understand it most fully through Jesus who is the Christ and provides a rich context for spiritual growth. We recognize that we live in a culture where violence, disrespect, and abuse are too common and there is a potential for them to find their way into our churches. It is with this understanding and a strong desire to create a safe place for persons who enter our building that First Christian Church will have in place a safe church policy.

## **ARTICLE V STRUCTURE**

### **Section A The Congregation**

#### **1. Authority of Congregation**

- a. The congregation has authority to approve and revise the annual budget, call ordained staff, elect congregational Board officers, and approve Bylaws revisions.
- b. The congregation may delegate other responsibilities and authority to the Board.

#### **2. Congregational Meetings**

- a. An annual business meeting of the congregation will be held prior to the beginning of the fiscal year for the purpose of reviewing and adopting the proposed budget, receiving reports, and acting upon recommendations. The date, time, and place will be determined by the Board.
- b. Special meetings of the congregation will be determined by the Board and called by the Moderator of the congregation. The Moderator will call a special meeting upon receipt of a petition signed by at least ten percent of the congregation. These meetings will be set within a thirty day time frame with at least a two week notice.

- c. Notice for regular or special congregational meetings will be in writing and will contain the time, date, place, and purpose of the meeting.
- d. A quorum will consist of those in attendance after due notice for the meeting has been given.
- e. The agenda for congregational meetings will be confined to those matters directly related to the publicized purpose of the meeting.
- f. A simple majority of those present will be sufficient for the approval of any item of business excluding the calling of a pastor (see Article V Personnel, Section A Ordained Ministerial Staff, 2. Selection and Employment, e. "two-thirds majority").

## **Section B The Board**

### **1. Membership of the Board**

- a. Elected members of the Board will include: Moderator, Vice Moderator, Worship Coordinator, Word Coordinator, Deed Coordinator, Property Coordinator, Moderator of the Elders, and Moderator of the Deacons.
- b. The Pastor will be a member of the Board.
- c. The officers will be elected for a term of one year by the congregation at or prior to its annual meeting.
- d. The secretary to the Board will be appointed by the Moderator and function in a clerical capacity.

### **2. Authority and Responsibilities**

- a. The officers elected by the congregation will serve as the trustees of the corporation. They are given the power and authority to execute all legal documents and perform other necessary duties and responsibilities of the corporation.
- b. The Board has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the congregation on policies, programs and business matters intended to fulfill the purposes of the congregation.
- c. The Board will set up the necessary organization to fulfill the purposes of the congregation plus other responsibilities delegated to it by the congregation.
- d. The Board, through the Moderator, will refer to the congregation any decision appealed by ten percent of the participating members of the congregation.

- e. Chairs of special committees, task force groups, representatives to community organizations, and a church historian may be chosen as needed by the Moderator and approved by the Board.
- f. Board Coordinators will appoint the members of their committees.
- g. Duties of elected officers are listed in the Standing Rules.
- h. Delegates to the regional and national Disciples' assemblies will be appointed by the Moderator and approved by the Board.

### **3. Succession in Office**

The Moderator, Vice Moderator and Coordinators may serve up to three consecutive one year terms in their elected positions.

### **4. Meetings**

- a. Regular meetings of the Board will be called by the Moderator at a place, time, and date determined by the Board.
- b. Special meetings of the Board will be called by the Moderator.
- c. Notice of all regular or special meetings of the Board will be given to all members of the Board prior to such meeting stating date, time, and place, and purpose.
- d. All interested members of the congregation may attend meetings of the Board, listen to the discussion, and, upon invitation by the Moderator, express their thoughts and opinions. They may not make a motion or cast a vote.
- e. A quorum will consist of a minimum of five members in attendance after required notice has been given.
- f. Board meetings will be conducted by consensus rules adopted by the Board guided by a consensus model. (see Appendix B)

### **5. Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year will be July 1 to June 30.

## **Section C Spiritual Leaders**

1. The spiritual leaders will consist of Elders and Deacons. Junior Deacons may be appointed by the Moderator of the Diaconate.
2. The spiritual leaders will be elected for a term of three (3) years (approximately one third of each group each year) by the congregation at or prior to its annual meeting.
3. The Moderator of the Elders or Diaconate may approve a one-year hiatus to an Elder or Deacon wishing to take time off within a term of service.

4. The life-time honorary title of Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus may be bestowed by a vote of the congregation upon any person who has served faithfully, continuously, and conscientiously but is unable to continue due to age, health or disability.

## **Section D Auxiliary Groups**

Auxiliary groups (e.g. Disciples Women's Ministries, Disciples Men's groups, youth groups etc.) will be organized under their own rules, elect their own officers, and report as needed to the Board.

## **Section E Consideration for Election as Board Officers, Elders, and Diaconate will be given to members best fulfilling the following criteria:**

1. A covenantal relationship in the congregation with regular attendance and participation in the worship services and mission of the church.
2. Willingness and ability to fulfill the duties assigned to that office.
3. Regular contributor to the financial support of the congregation and its mission.

## **Section F Election Process**

1. The Nominating Task Force will consist of the Pastor and at least three other members from the congregation appointed by the Board. This task force will select a chair from among its members.
2. The Nominating Task Force will provide opportunity for the congregation to suggest names of participating members as nominees for all offices to be filled.
3. The Nominating Task Force will secure the consent of each person whose name is to appear on the final ballot. "Write-in" votes must have the consent of the nominee.
4. The Nominating Task Force will prepare the proposed slate of officers and oversee the preparation of the ballot for the annual election. The proposed slate will include nominees for First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Foundation directors submitted by the Foundation Board.
5. The Nominating Task Force will oversee the process of counting all ballots and will announce the results.

## **Section G Vacancies and Resignations**

1. In case of a vacancy or resignation in the office of Moderator of the congregation, the Vice-Moderator will complete the unexpired term of Moderator and a new Vice-Moderator be appointed by the Board.

2. When any other officer of the congregation resigns, or when such an office is declared vacant by the Board, such vacancy will be filled by the Board. The appointed person will serve until the next annual election.

## **ARTICLE VI PERSONNEL**

### **Section A Ordained Ministerial Staff (Pastor, Associate Pastors, etc.)**

#### **1. Authority and Responsibility**

A job description for each ministerial staff member will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing of such person which will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, plus the terms of the call (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation, and termination procedures). This document will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Relations Committee. Members of the Pastoral Relations Committee will be appointed by the Pastor and the Moderator.

#### **2. Selection and Employment**

- a. A Search Task Force will be selected by the Board. The membership of the Search Task Force will not exceed seven (7) persons and shall be representative of the entire congregation.
- b. The Search Task Force will utilize the services of the Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for information on prospective candidates.
- c. The Search Task Force may consider information on several prospective candidates at one time. However, it will be the policy of the Board and the congregation to consider only one prospective candidate at a time, either accepting or rejecting the recommendation of the Search Task Force.
- d. The Search Task Force will first recommend a prospective candidate to the Board. Upon acceptance by the Board by consensus, the Board will then recommend the candidate to the congregation.
- e. The recommended candidate will be presented to the congregation through the model of consensus building. The candidate must be accepted by a two-thirds majority of the congregation members present in a congregational meeting before an official call may be extended.

#### **3. Termination Procedures**

Ministerial staff are called for an indefinite period of time which may be terminated by either the congregation or the staff member upon sixty (60) days written notice. This termination period may be altered by mutual agreement.

#### **4. Termination by the Congregation**

- a. Ministerial staff may be removed from their positions for any one or a combination of the following reasons: inadequate revenue in the church budget, continued neglect of duty, conduct deemed detrimental to the church, insubordination and unauthorized absences.
- b. In the event it becomes necessary to terminate the service of a ministerial staff member for any of the above reasons, the Board will meet at the earliest possible date for a hearing on the matter.
- c. The Board will have the authority to terminate the employment of ministerial staff. However, such action may be appealed to the congregation by the staff member being terminated according to the provisions calling for such a congregational meeting.
- d. Whenever it becomes necessary to consider terminating the services of a ministerial staff member for any cause, the individual may be immediately suspended with pay by the Board.
- e. Resignations by ministerial staff will be submitted in writing to the Board and announced to the congregation by the Moderator.

#### **Section B Professional Staff (music director, organist, etc.)**

##### **1. Authority and Responsibilities**

- a. A job description for professional staff will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing for that position and will be reviewed annually.
- b. The job description will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, the person to whom they report, and the terms and conditions of employment (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation, and termination procedure).

##### **2. Selecting, Employing, and Termination**

- a. The task force charged with selecting and recommending for employment of professional staff will be appointed by the Vice Moderator. This task force will consist of the Vice Moderator, senior Pastor, and other interested persons from the congregation.
- b. The task force will be responsible for preparing a job description, screening applicants for the position and recommending the employing of the selected person.
- c. The recommendation of this task force will be presented to the Board by the Vice Moderator for approval by consensus.

- d. The Vice Moderator will coordinate, in consultation with the senior minister, all personnel actions having to do with selection, employing, counseling, or dismissal of professional staff members.
- e. The Vice Moderator, in consultation with the senior minister, will have authority to immediately suspend (with/without pay) a person until such time as the Board can take action.
- f. The Board, in consultation with the senior minister, will be responsible for reviewing the termination of the person and recommending final action.
- g. Appeals of terminations, suspensions or other disciplinary actions will be heard by the Board.

## **Section C Support Staff (Administrative Assistant, Custodian, etc.)**

### **1. Authority and Responsibilities**

- a. A job description for each support staff member (whether full-time or part-time) will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing for that position, and will be reviewed annually. This job description will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, plus the terms and conditions of employment (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation and termination procedure).
- b. The job description shall indicate the person, committee or board to whom the staff member is directly responsible. This person or body shall be authorized to make work assignments, evaluate performance, and (if necessary) recommend the termination of the staff member's employment.
- c. The Vice Moderator will have coordinating responsibility of personnel matters involving the support staff.

### **2. Selecting, Employing, and Terminating**

- a. The task force charged with selecting and recommending for employment of support staff will be appointed by the Vice Moderator. This task force will consist of the Vice Moderator, Senior Pastor, and other interested persons from the congregation.
- b. The task force will be responsible for preparing a job description, screening applicants for the position, and recommending the employing of the selected person.
- c. The recommendation of this task force will be presented to the Board for final approval by consensus.

- d. The Vice Moderator will coordinate, in consultation with the senior Pastor, all personnel actions having to do with selection, employing, counseling, or dismissal of non-ministerial staff members.
- e. The Vice Moderator, in consultation with the minister, will have authority to immediately suspend (with/without pay) a person until such time as the Board can take action.
- f. The Board will be responsible for reviewing termination of the person and recommending final action.
- g. Appeals of terminations, suspensions, or other disciplinary actions will be heard by the Board.

## **ARTICLE VII INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES**

To the extent permitted by law, this corporation will indemnify and exonerate its officers and employees from all judgments, amounts paid in settlement and all reasonable expenses (including attorney fees), resulting from or caused by any act undertaken by or any omission not undertaken by any such director, officer or employee when in good faith carrying out the business of the corporation or acting in its behalf.

## **ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS**

1. These Bylaws may be amended or repealed by a majority of the members of the congregation present at any regular or special congregation meeting, provided that notice of intention to make, amend or repeal these Bylaws at such meeting will have been included in the publicized purpose for the meeting.
2. Usually such amendments will have been studied and accepted by the Board before being referred to the congregation for final approval. The only exception to this procedure will be upon presentation of a petition for amendment signed by ten percent of the participating members and calling for a congregational meeting for consideration of same.
3. A task force will review these Bylaws and present amendments or revisions to the Board as necessary. The Board may refer proposed amendments from other sources for review by the Bylaws Review Task Force.

## **APPENDIX A**

Trust Agreement and Deed of Trust

## **Appendix B Consensus Model**

### **Guiding Principles**

"Every decision we make is something we have to work with, so it seems essential to us that we understand and have a commitment to the things we decide. We recognize that consensus decision-making, while it generates high-quality decisions, takes a lot of time and energy. Some decisions are simply not worth the effort. So we developed a way to test whether an issue was important enough to warrant taking the extra time to develop consensus while the decision was being discussed."

There are certain skills the participants must share for the process to be most effective.

1. The participants must be willing and able to listen carefully to what others are saying.
2. The participants must be trusting and brave enough to speak their minds.
3. The participants must care about the group's welfare as well as their own
4. The participants must, when necessary, be willing to shed personal attachments to pet ideas.

The five steps are a framework and need not be followed to the letter. They have proven to be helpful in focusing discussion.

1. Preparation
2. Generating proposals
3. Developing concrete and viable proposals
4. Decision Making
  - a) a poll to determine how the group feels about the proposal
  - b) a vote where those who are uncomfortable with the proposal have a chance to discuss their feelings and where the group can decide on whether or not to override the consensus process and vote on the proposal
5. Implementing and reviewing.

## **1. PREPARATION**

All participants should be familiar with the topic, but if not, the facilitator can plan an agenda, and estimate time limits for discussion. When participants have agreed about these, they can continue to step 2.

## **2. GENERATING PROPOSALS**

When there is not a specific proposal, this step allows open discussion of issues and generation of alternatives, including possible effects and implications of various actions.

## **3. MAKING PROPOSALS CONCRETE**

Take ideas and create one or more proposals. Find how group feels about budget, resources, division of labor, goals, assumptions, etc. Distinguish questions of principle from those of practical details. See who is willing to work if proposal is accepted.

## **4. DECISION MAKING**

- A) taking a poll to discover how the group feels about the proposal.
- 1) the facilitator states the proposal
  - 2) the facilitator takes a hand count on the following:

Who likes the proposal?  
Who can live with the proposal?  
Who is uncomfortable with the proposal?

Consensus may be reached at this point.

3) these steps are repeated if there are multiple proposals on a particular topic. Interpretation of the results includes looking for a balance. If most are 'uncomfortable' or 'can live with it', the proposal should probably be scratched. Discussion is encouraged. The sense poll identifies those who are willing to support and work on a proposal, and who is apathetic or willing to go along. A person may state "uncomfortable" if they want to say more about the topic. The proposal with the most positive poll results is usually the one most likely to be implemented. The decision can be moved to a vote if the group decides to override the consensus process.

B) taking a vote. Find out what the "uncomfortables" are uncomfortable about, and see if the group is willing to decide by majority rule.

1) those who are uncomfortable are asked to state their reasons why

2) vote on the question: "Should we implement this decision over the stated objection of the minority, when a majority of us think that it is workable?" "Yes" means one favors majority rule, "no" means postponing the decision.

If there are more "yes" votes, the proposal passes. If more "no" votes, the proposal is defeated, and the group is faced with several options:

a) generate a new proposal, taking into account the objections of the "uncomfortables"

b) continue discussing until enough people change their minds.

c) accept that the issue can't be decided at this time or should be rejected.

## **5. IMPLEMENTING AND REVIEWING**

Be sure everyone is clear on precisely what was decided. Then answer the questions:

What is to be done?

Who is to do it?

What criteria will be used to determine when the job is done?

Will the decision need to be reviewed?

**Adapted from Martha's Rules of Order**

Martha's Rules of Order were developed as an alternative to Robert's Rules of Order as a method for group decision making. They were established at Martha's Co-Op in Madison, Wisconsin in the 1970s.