

# **BYLAWS FOR THE EAST WOODSTOCK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY**

## **ARTICLE I. Name and Affiliation**

The corporate name shall be the East Woodstock Congregational Church and Ecclesiastical Society. Correspondence, Contracts, notices of meetings and services may be signed simply as The East Woodstock Congregational Church. This church is a member of the United Church of Christ.

## **ARTICLE II. Purpose**

The purpose of this church shall be: to worship God; to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ; to celebrate the sacraments; to provide Christian instruction; to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the CHURCH Universal; to render loving service towards humankind; and, to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

## **ARTICLE III. Policy**

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head, and places its temporal affairs in the hands of its members, as they shall act from time to time under His guidance. This church believes in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul, and the right of private judgment. This church holds to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control. It cherishes the fellowship which binds it to other churches in the United Church of Christ and acknowledges its commitment to, and participation in, those voluntary relationships with that body set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church adopted July 3, 2017, in Philadelphia.

## **ARTICLE IV. Doctrine**

**FAITH** - This church recognizes the Bible as its sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the undisturbed right to interpret the scriptures according to the dictates of conscience under enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. While members of clergy are not required to subscribe to a creed, the following statement of faith is an expression of things most surely believed among us:

“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 declared through 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.” (taken from the UCC Website)

**COVENANT** – Guided by the Holy Spirit, we covenant with the Lord and with one another, and agree to walk together in the ways of the Lord made known, or to be made known, to us. The mission of the church is to gather as the people of God to worship and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We strive to carry on His teaching of love through our support and compassion for all people in our community and throughout the world.

**SACRAMENTS** –

- The Lord's Supper: The invitation to partake of the Lord's Supper shall be such as to include all sincere followers of Jesus Christ.
- Baptism: This church recognizes the various forms of baptism as valid and holds that the conscience of the believer should determine the form for each individual,

## **ARTICLE V. Membership**

This church will welcome into its membership those who propose to live a Christian life and desire to covenant with this congregation on its work and worship. The membership shall consist of those baptized persons who have been approved by the Diaconate. They shall join the church by: (1) confession of faith; (2) presentation of a satisfactory letter of transfer from another church; or (3) reaffirmation of faith. They shall be received according to the form of reception to membership determined by the Diaconate.

Members are expected to live a Christian life, depending upon the grace of God and cooperation of their fellow members; to attend worship services regularly; to share in the organized work of the church; to support the church financially under the principles of Christian stewardship in systematic giving; and to spread the Gospel by personal testimony and support of the missionary and benevolent program of this congregation.

There shall be three classifications of membership:

1. Active – Those who actively participate and support the church,
2. Associate – Those who are active here (as above) but wish to also maintain membership elsewhere, shall have all the rights and duties of active members except the right to a letter of transfer to another church,
3. Retaining – those who are not active (as above) but retain membership here.

Membership in one of the first two categories is a prerequisite to election as an individual officeholder or member of a board or committee.

Any member, upon their own request and vote of the Diaconate, may be granted transfer to any stated

Christian Church. Their name shall be dropped from the membership roll of the church.

A member whose address has been unknown for two years or who, for the same period, despite kindly reminders, has not communicated with the church or who stated their lack of interest, shall be placed in the Retaining Membership class by the Diaconate.

## **ARTICLE VI. Meetings**

SECTION I. The annual Meeting shall be held in January on a date determined and announced by the Church Council prior to December 1 of each year. Arrangements for an emergency postponement shall be made by the moderator, pastor and council chair.

SECTION II. Special meetings shall be called by the Clerk of the church at the request of the minister, or the church council, or upon written application of any 5 church members. The call shall specify the purpose of the meetings and notices shall be printed in the Church bulletin each of the two Sundays proceeding the meeting.

SECTION III. Notice of meetings called for the purpose of altering established policies, transfer or expenditure of significant monies or other major matters shall be given by mail at least ten days prior to the meeting. The notice shall provide details on the issues involved.

SECTION IV. In an emergency the time of the notice may be shortened by a telephone or e-mail poll of the Church Council; a majority approval is required. Further, at this church meeting, the shortening of the notice must be unanimously approved by those present.

SECTION V. Quorum - At all church meetings, 25 members constitute a quorum.

SECTION IV. Meetings for the purpose of providing a "sense of the congregation" as guidance for the Church Council and officers may be held without previous notice where such notice is impractical.

## **ARTICLE VII. Officers**

The officers of the church shall be the Pastor, Moderator, Church Council Chair and Vice Chair, Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, Historian, Chair of the Society Committee and such other Committee Chairs as the church may determine. All officers must be members of the church and may not be paid non-ordained staff.

**THE PASTOR:** shall be an ordained minister or provide evidence that he or she will become ordained within a reasonable period of time, and shall attain full and regular standing in the Association to which the church belongs. The Pastor shall have charge of the worship services of the church, and shall carry on a ministry of preaching, pastoral care and leadership. As ordained leader of the congregation, the Pastor will be a member but not chair, of all boards and committees and is entitled to be present at any meeting of any church sanctioned group; except meetings of the congregation during which the Pastor's term or salary is under discussion, if the church so votes and/or in an executive session of the Church Council.

When a vacancy in the office of Pastor shall occur, the church shall elect a Pastoral Search Committee of no less than 7 or no more than 12 members. They shall seek the advice of the United Church of Christ

and/or other appropriate sources for assistance. Election as Pastor must be by at least a two-thirds vote of those members of the church present and voting, and the term of office shall be of indefinite duration with termination by the congregation or the Pastor on sixty days notice, except that retirement shall occur in the year the Pastor reaches the age of 65 unless elected for a one-year extension which may be repeated annually.

If the church and Pastor agree, the Windham Association of the CT Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be invited to meet as a Council to install him or her. In the exercise of the office, the Pastor shall seek and consider the advice and assistance of the Diaconate.

**MODERATOR:** The Moderator shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. He or she shall preside at all business meetings of the church. He or she shall be elected for a term of two years and may not serve successive elected terms. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be only until the next annual meeting.

**COUNCIL CHAIR:** The Council Chair shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the church. In the absence of the Moderator, the Council Chair shall chair the Church meetings. The Council Chairperson shall be elected for a term of two years and may not serve successive elected terms. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be only until the next annual meeting.

**COUNCIL VICE CHAIR:** The Vice Chair of the Council shall be elected at the annual Meeting of the church to serve for a term of two years. He or she shall chair the council meetings in the absence of the Chairperson and assist in implementing the functions of the Council.

**THE TREASURER:** shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for a term of one year. The Treasurer shall receive and expend all church funds as charged by the Society committee, record the income and expenses of the church, administer Trusts, legacies and investments as the church may hold, make such reports as the church or Society Committee may so direct and make a complete yearly statement of income and expenses, and the balances on hand, at the Annual Meeting.

**ASSISTANT TREASURER:** shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. He or She shall assist the Treasurer when there is a need, He or She shall be kept aware of the bookkeeping system and financial status of the church. He or She shall have the authority to act as the Treasurer in the Treasurer's absence. The Society Committee shall have the oversight of the relationship between the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer.

**THE COLLECTOR:** shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for one year. The Collector shall establish policy and procedure for the collection functions of the church in collaboration with the Treasurer and approved by the Society Committee. The Collector shall keep records of all money, gifts, pledges, and offerings and shall deposit such monies in the church account. All records which the Collector shall keep of individuals' contributions may be destroyed after seven years. All records of deposits (the Collectors report) shall be part of the permanent record of the church.

**THE CLERK:** shall keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the church and of the Church Council of which he or she shall be a member, with vote, and its Secretary. He or she shall keep a register, with address, of the members of the church, with dates and modes of their reception and removal; also a record of baptisms, marriages and deaths; conduct correspondence and perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office of Clerk or Secretary of an assembly. The Clerk shall be elected by the

church for a term of one year and be eligible for re-election.

**ASSISTANT CLERK** shall perform all duties of the clerk on an as-needed basis. He/she shall be elected by the church for a term of one year and be eligible for re-election.

**THE HISTORIAN:** shall keep a faithful record of important events in the life of the church, maintaining a scrapbook of newspaper clippings and a file of pictures taken at ordination, installations, and anniversary celebrations, building dedications, and other occasions, and either writing or causing to be written an account of the ongoing history of the church. The Historian, who shall be elected by the church for a one-year term with eligibility for re-election, shall be a member of the Church Council ex-officio, with vote.

In order to encourage a broad participation in church affairs, and to limit the demands on any members, no one person shall concurrently hold any two of the following offices: Chair of the Council, Senior Deacon, Chair of the Society Committee and Treasurer.

### **ARTICLE IX. Boards and Committees**

The church shall elect the following boards and committees, all of whose members must be members of the church. Any member may serve a maximum of six (6) consecutive years on the same committee, at which time the member shall take a one year hiatus before returning to the same committee. Spouses shall not serve on the same committee. Committees may include others to support their work understanding that these additional persons will not be voting members of the committee. Ex-officio board and committee members shall abstain from voting and making formal motions. With the exception of the Society Committee in cases of emergency, no board or committee of the Church shall spend in excess of \$500.00 on non-budgeted items without approval of the church.

**THE DIACONATE** shall consist of nine members, no more than six of the same gender, with three being elected each year for three-year terms. The mission of the diaconate is to support and assist the minister in the spiritual leadership of the church and be responsible for the logistical aspects of worship. They are responsible for opening Sunday service, serving communion, and assisting with baptisms and other logical aspects of worship. The deacons shall be concerned for the nurture, care and guidance of members including meeting with new members and visiting members at home. They shall have charge of the supply of the pulpit during the absence or disability of the Pastor or during any interim between pastorates. Annually they shall review and verify the membership roles.

**THE CHURCH COUNCIL** shall consist of the officers of the church and a representative from each of the boards and committees listed in this article. Each recognized fellowship organization shall be represented on the council. It is the responsibility of each board, committee or organization to designate its representative to the council from its membership. The council shall have responsibility for the coordination of all program activities of the church, shall have power of the church between meetings of the congregation including the authority to elect delegates, install and ordain councils, and other ad hoc inter-church bodies. The council shall meet at least six times a year. The Council may fill vacancies in boards and committees of the church who will serve until the following Annual Meeting. The Council recognizes special interest and fellowship groups such as the Library Committee, the Hospitality Committee and the Ladies' Benevolent Society.

**SOCIETY COMMITTEE** shall consist of 9 members elected by the church. The term of office shall be three years with three members elected each year. The mission of the Society Committee is to create, preserve, and operate an attractive and durable temple of worship and associated church holdings for the followers of Jesus Christ who gather together to observe reflect, and act upon his teachings. Following church policy, it acts as an administrative body to set rules of use of the church properties, to propose budgets, manage expenditures, and investments, and establish personnel policies for the un-ordained staff. A pleasant worship environment is created and maintained through frugal, creative, and wise use of parishioner's gifts, to the greater glory of God.

The committee shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer property without specific authority given by a vote of the church. The Treasurer is a non-voting ex-officio member of the Society Committee.; the Chairperson shall act as agent for the Society Committee in routine matters and as charged by The Society Committee. The Chairperson shall serve until the following annual meeting. The secretary shall be elected by the Society Committee from its membership and serve for a term of one year. The secretary shall keep the business records of the Society, Committee and shall act as administrative assistant to the chairperson.

**THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE** shall consist of at least 6 members elected by the church. The term of office shall be three years with two members elected for three years. The mission of the Christian Education Committee is to help children and adults grow in the Christian faith through Sunday School, inter-generational and community-based events, and outreach programs. The Director of Christian Education shall be an ex-officio member of the Christian Education Committee.

**THE YOUTH MINISTRY COMMITTEE** shall consist of at least six members interested in youth guidance and activities who are elected by the church. Terms of the members should be for three years with two persons elected each year. The committee may work in cooperation with the youth ministry committees of other churches. They shall offer guidance to the Director of Youth Ministry and help the youth ministry programs.

**THE COMMITTEE ON MISSION** shall consist of at least six members elected by the church. The Committee shall elect a chairperson annually from among its members. The mission of the Missions Committee is to assist others less fortunate than ourselves. The Committee serve as the outreach arm of the Church to assess the needs of members of the community, the church, and the world; and to gather and distribute gifts accordingly. They partner with the congregation to share the joy and grace of generous giving.

**THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE** shall consist of at least 6 members elected by the church for a term of three years, with two members elected each year. The Committee shall encourage and challenge the church membership to grow in their management of resources and sharing of personal time, talents, and treasure to achieve God's purposes. They will place emphasis on the annual appeal for funds to support the financial needs of the church and its outreach efforts, and will work to increase planned giving and assist in capital campaigns. The committee shall communicate with the Society Committee to coordinate the management of all endowment activities.

**THE MUSIC COMMITTEE** shall consist of at least 5 members elected by the Church. This committee shall promote the establishment and encouragement of a choir or choirs and provide for the care of the organ, the purchase of music, and the provision of other equipment necessary for its program. It shall

nominate an organist and choir director and such other professional musicians, as the church deems necessary for appointment by the Council. Ex-officio members of the Music Committee shall be the directors of the choirs.

**THE AUDIT COMMITTEE** shall consist of two church members who shall not be authorized signatories of any church account or members of the Society Committee. The church members should have an understanding of accounting and finance. The term of office shall be three years with one member elected on an alternating year. At the close of each fiscal year they shall review the church's books and report to the Church Council prior to the Annual meeting.

**THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE** shall consist of at least three members who shall be nominated by church Council and elected by the church membership for three years with one member being elected each year. After serving one full term, a member of the Nominating Committee shall be eligible for re-election after skipping one 3 year term. This committee shall choose from among the members of the congregation those it deems best qualified to fill committee and leadership vacancies. The Committee will present the slate of officers and committee members at the annual meeting and will welcome nominations from the floor of the meeting.

**THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE** This committee of 6 members shall be elected by the church for a term of three years, with two members being elected each year. The Pastoral Relations Committee will meet at least quarterly in private sessions with the Pastor. Publication of names, meeting date and purpose should invite church members to offer pertinent comment to committee members prior to each meeting. It shall assist the church and the Pastor in their relationship to each other. It shall confer with the Diaconate concerning this relationship whenever it is deemed necessary. It shall remain in communication with the Pastor regarding his or her needs and those of his or her family. It shall make recommendations to the Society Committee concerning the Pastor's Salary, expenses and other contract items. The committee will report verbally to the governing board of the church and provide a written annual report to the congregation.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEES** may be appointed by the church at any time as needs arise.

#### **ARTICLE IX. Termination of the Organization**

The assets of the corporation have been accumulated over many years by contribution from members, many of whom are deceased. Dissolution shall not profit the remaining members. In the event of dissolution of the church, property and assets shall be distributed among the remaining Congregational Churches of Woodstock, Connecticut, prorated by Membership of these churches or, in the event this is impossible, to such church or other religious or charitable organizations as shall be determined by the Superior Court of Windham County.

#### **ARTICLE X. Amendments**

Amendments to these Bylaws may be made at any duly called and constituted corporation meeting, by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present, public announcement of the text of the proposed amendment having been made two weeks prior to the meeting. Requests for By-law changes must be submitted to the Church Council.