

Bylaws



June 2023

**Union Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
1875 – 2023**

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
1118 Fourth Street Northwest
Elk River, Minnesota

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ARTICLE I. Name and Denominational Affiliation

Section 1. Name

The name of this corporation shall be UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Elk River, Minnesota.

Section 2. Denominational Affiliation

Union Church shall be a local church of the United Church of Christ as described in Article IV of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE II. Affirmation and Covenant

Section 1. Affirmation of Faith

Union Congregational Church embraces the Christian faith and follows its practices as expressed in the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith. It acknowledges as its sole head, Christ Jesus, Son of God. It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the word of God in the scriptures, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God. In accordance with the teaching of Christ Jesus and the practice prevailing among progressive Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

Section 2. Our Covenant

We are a diverse community built on the foundation of God's love as shown to us in the life, teachings, and promises of Christ Jesus. Relying on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we seek to deepen our love of God and our neighbors. As an Open and Affirming congregation, we welcome all and exclude none. We

commit ourselves to being active and compassionate witnesses to God’s mission in this world, especially to those people that society has neglected.

With patience and respect, this faith community covenants with one another mutual support as we pray, worship, and gather in fellowship. We joyfully accept the responsibility of initiating the spiritual journeys of children, youth, and adults through engaging programs that preach messages of God’s love, grace, forgiveness, and acceptance. We are all called to minister to each other in the spirit of God’s unconditional love.

As an Earthwise congregation, we covenant with the Earth and pledge to be good stewards of God’s beloved creation.

As a Justice-Seeking congregation, we covenant with other like-minded peoples and organizations, to further live into the teachings and examples of Christ Jesus through prayer, advocacy, and action.

Section 3. Mission Statement

Union Congregational Church seeks to create a celebrating, covenanting, affirming and justice seeking faith community that inspires people to unite and create a peaceful, loving world.

ARTICLE III. Membership

Section 1. Membership

- a. Members** of Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, at the adoption of these bylaws, shall be baptized persons received: (a) affirmation of faith, (b) letter of transfer from another church, (c) confirmation, or (d) reaffirmation of faith. Members shall be formally received by the congregation during worship upon recommendation of the Minister.
- b. All regularly active participants** in the life of the church, whether received through membership or not, shall also be approved for all membership privileges.

c. In-Active Members are non-voting members, are not reported to the conference and have not been removed from the rolls. They are members who have not attended, supported or communicated with the church for two years. An in-active member can be reinstated to active upon request to the Minister.

Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities of Members

a. Members shall have the privileges to vote, to serve on ministry teams and boards and other church groups, enjoy fellowship, and receive ministerial services.

b. Members shall be responsible for regular worship attendance, participation in the life and work of the church, attend congregational meetings, and provide financial support.

Section 3. Termination of Membership

a. Membership may be terminated upon the member's request.

b. Membership may be transferred to another church upon request from the member transferring.

c. Members will be removed from the rolls due to death.

d. Members will be removed from the rolls due to no communication for five years.

e. A former member may be reinstated upon request to the minister.

ARTICLE IV. Government and Organization

Section 1. Authority of Local Church

The government of the church shall be vested in its members. The congregation shall have the highest decision-making authority. This shall include the authority to:

- a.** Govern affairs of the church; for legal and financial purposes, including the signing of documents to buy, sell, borrow or lend, outside normal operating budget expenses. The church will be represented and committed through the signatures of any two of the persons serving as church Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, or Financial Secretary upon congregation approval.
- b.** Call ministers and hire other professional staff as deemed appropriate.
- c.** Elect Council, Ministry Team members, and other Elected positions.
- d.** Acquire and maintain real property.
- e.** Establish and revise bylaws.
- f.** Withdraw from the United Church of Christ.

Although controlling its own affairs, Union Congregational Church shall cultivate the fellowship of other churches and cooperate in the larger work of the United Church of Christ as a member of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ and General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

Section 2. Church Council, Ministry Teams, and other Elected Positions

- a. Authority**--Between Annual Meeting and special meetings of the congregation, the work and ministry of the church shall be conducted through its council, ministry teams, and elected positions. All ministry teams shall have the authority to organize themselves, including the election of chairpersons and the creation and staffing of subgroups as needed. They shall prepare and submit annual budget requests and are expected to practice fiscal responsibility. Each ministry team shall submit a report for inclusion in the church's annual report.

- b. Eligibility**--All elected officers and ministry team members shall be members or active participants in the life of the Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ.
- c. Terms of Office**--All incoming Council, ministry team members, and other elected positions will assume office immediately following their election at the Annual Meeting and/or special meetings of the congregation. Terms are for two (2) years and two (2) additional terms may be served.
- d. Removal from Office**--If an individual in any elected position fails to fulfill the duties of the office, they may be removed from the position by a two-thirds vote of Council.

Section 3. Church Council

The church council shall meet monthly. The moderator shall chair the meetings. The meetings shall be open unless specific personnel matters will be discussed. The Church Council speaks for the congregation between Annual Meeting and other congregational meetings.

The business of the Church Council shall be to coordinate and prioritize the work and activities of the congregation, plan for the future, approve and interpret policies, implement the vision and support the overall mission of the church.

Members of the Church Council shall include the Moderator, Minister, Clerk, a representative from each Ministry Team, and three (3) elected at-large members of the congregation.

Rule by consensus shall be the effort whenever possible. Consensus will be considered valid with at least 3 voting teams represented for decisions without significant or expected controversy. In the event that consensus is not obvious, the issue will be tabled for more discussion, further investigation, or a vote will be held. Voting shall be as defined in the ministry grid. The ministry grid shall be reviewed at least annually. No member shall have more than one vote. Any member of a ministry team may represent their ministry team at Council for one vote per team. The moderator will have a vote in the event of a tie.

MINISTRY GRID

TB Moderator	V Faith Formation
XO Pastor	V Worship & Arts
NV Clerk	V Congregational Life
V Trustees	V At large members (3)

Church Council shall identify potential nominees for positions including Officers, Elected Positions, and Denominational Delegates. In the event of a vacancy of an Elected Position or Ministry Team member, Council may appoint a replacement to serve until Annual Meeting. In conjunction with the minister, the church council shall nominate members for the Pastoral Relations Committee to be elected at Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE V. Church Officers and Elected Positions

Section 1. Minister

The minister shall be called for an indefinite term of service. The duties of the minister shall be those which usually pertain to that office, namely the preaching of the gospel, the administering of the sacraments, and conducting public worship. The minister shall collaborate with all departments of the church. The minister shall care for the spiritual welfare of the whole congregation. The minister shall be an ex-officio member of all ministry teams and coordinate the daily work of other clergy and staff members. The minister shall be involved in wider church events as available.

Additional minister(s) may be called as deemed necessary by the congregation to support particular areas of specialization as well as supplementary ministerial services.

Section 2. Moderator

The moderator shall be elected at Annual Meeting. The moderator shall preside over the business meetings of the church and Church Council, shall work closely with the minister to oversee all church departments, and be an ex-officio member of all ministry teams. In the absence of the moderator, or by prior arrangement, the chair of the trustees shall act in lieu of the moderator if action or decision is urgently needed.

Section 3. Clerk

The clerk shall be elected at Annual Meeting and shall record the proceedings of Council and congregational meetings. The clerk shall keep a register of the church members with the dates of their reception and removal and a record of baptisms. Upon request, the clerk shall issue/receive letters of transfer to/from other churches. The clerk's annual report shall include all items required in the annual report to the Minnesota Conference.

Section 4. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall be elected at Annual Meeting and shall sit as a voting member of the trustees. They shall keep a record of all financial pledges, receive and deposit all funds of the church, and send quarterly statements of contributions. The financial secretary shall present an income statement for the annual report and serve as a consulting member of the stewardship committee.

Section 5. Treasurer

The treasurer shall be elected at Annual Meeting and shall sit as a voting member of trustees. They shall disburse church funds at the direction of the trustees, provide monthly statements to the trustees, and issue an annual statement to the church.

Section 6. Property Manager

The property manager shall be elected at Annual Meeting and shall sit as a voting member of trustees. They shall be the main contact for coordination of outdoor building or property issues. The property manager may coordinate special indoor projects as needed. They shall recommend the yearly budget for outdoor property expenditures and operating costs of outdoor projects and maintenance.

Section 7. Historian

The historian shall be elected at Annual Meeting and shall seek to preserve and summarize the church's life to give identity to the church. They will be responsible for conveying an accurate and understandable picture of the church to future generations.

Section 8. Denominational Delegates

The number of delegates apportioned by the conference, and one youth delegate, shall be nominated to represent the church at the Minnesota Conference Annual Meetings and other ecumenical and denominational gatherings.

Section 9. At-Large Members

Three at-large members of the church shall serve on the church council and shall be elected at Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VI. Elected Ministry Teams

Section 1. Worship & Arts

The Worship & Arts ministry team shall be composed of members to be elected at Annual Meeting. This ministry team will include Diaconate and Liturgical Arts.

a. Diaconate members shall be responsible for logistics related to worship services. Duties include opening and closing the building, and planning and coordinating communion. When pulpit supply is necessary due to the absence of the minister, the Diaconate shall work with the minister to provide worship leadership.

b. Liturgical Arts members, in coordination with the minister, shall be responsible for the decorating of worship space and Fellowship Hall.

Section 2. Trustees

The Trustees ministry team shall be composed of members to be elected at Annual Meeting. Trustees consist of up to nine (9) persons: Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Property Manager, a representative of Personnel, a representative of Memorial, and up to four (4) at-large members. One at-large member will be elected annually by the trustees to serve as chairperson.

a. The Trustees shall oversee and maintain the church property and manage the financial resources of the church. The trustees shall study the church's financial needs and resources, consulting with other ministry teams, to draft an annual budget for presentation to the congregation. The trustees shall undertake financial reviews of all cash accrual accounts on an annual basis, the depth and date of which shall be left to the discretion of the trustees and/or Council. There will be a \$400 limit on all work done without a bid or quote. All financial records of the church shall be retained for seven (7) years. The trustees shall maintain contracts for all vendors. The trustees shall be responsible for educating membership regarding the stewardship of assets through planned giving, oversee

investments in accordance with guidelines established and approved by the congregation, and approve disbursement of funds in coordination with Council.

All capital expenditures require congregational approval. The trustees have authority to approve any budgeted expenditures up to 10% in excess of a budgeted line item without Council approval. In the event of an emergency, where urgent action is required to protect church property, the Moderator, Treasurer, and Chairperson of Trustees, in consultation with the Minister, with consensus have authority to approve the necessary expenditures.

In coordination with the minister, the trustees shall establish a stewardship committee to plan and conduct an annual pledge campaign to encourage responsible giving.

b. The Personnel Committee shall be composed of three (3) members to be elected at Annual Meeting. Personnel shall establish job descriptions, employment policies, maintain employment records, and evaluate performance of church staff members, consulting with the minister, and the appropriate ministry team.

c. The Memorial Committee shall be composed of at least three (3) members elected at Annual Meeting. The Memorial Committee shall select a treasurer, a corresponding secretary, and a recording secretary. They shall receive, acknowledge, and record memorial donations. They shall distribute funds according to policy and oversee the maintenance of the Memorial Register.

Section 3. Faith Formation

The Faith Formation ministry team members shall be composed of members to be elected at Annual Meeting. Faith Formation shall be involved in the faith and spiritual formation of children, youth, and adults and will work closely with the minister to coordinate the church calendar.

Section 4. Congregational Life

The Congregation Life ministry team shall be composed of members to be elected at Annual Meeting. Members shall enhance the life and livelihood of the church, living into the teachings of Christ Jesus, through coordination of interactions, activities, outreach, and events.

- a. Growth and Membership Committee members shall develop strategies for growing and retaining membership, and enhancing our presence in the community.
- b. Congregational Care Committee members shall be responsible for coordinating congregational care and lay visitation.
- c. Hospitality and Fellowship Committee members shall coordinate hospitality for fellowship and coordinate social activities.
- d. Prophetic Witness Committee members, in the spirit of the gospel, shall foster local and global outreach, and address issues of justice through education, activities, actions, events, mission trips, service projects, and special offerings.

ARTICLE VII. Other Church Organizations

Section 1. Centennial Society

The Centennial Society of Union Church is an independent, but closely related fellowship, that serves the church and the wider community. The society is responsible for its own organization including election of officers and the management of its own projects and finances.

ARTICLE VIII. Calling of Ordained Clergy

Section 1. Search Process

Whenever the office of Minister becomes vacant, the Council shall appoint an Interim Search Committee who shall recommend a candidate for approval by

Council. A Permanent Search Committee shall be nominated by Council and elected by the congregation to select a permanent candidate. The number of members shall be determined by Council and shall represent a broad cross-section of the church. The committee shall work with the appropriate Minnesota Conference minister to facilitate the search process. The selected candidate shall be approved by Council for presentation to the congregation. A two-thirds vote of a meeting of the church called to elect a new minister shall be necessary for the call to be extended. As soon as practical after accepting the call, the new minister shall become a church member and be installed as the minister in cooperation with the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ.

A similar call procedure may be followed whenever a staff position is filled by an ordained Minister.

Section 2. Pastoral Relations Committee

There shall be a pastoral relations committee composed of five (5) or six (6) members who shall serve as a support and advisory group: to maintain an open and healthy relationship between called ministers and members of the congregation. They shall listen to and articulate and discuss with the minister the congregation's expectations and concerns.

Section 3. Termination of Services

Unless otherwise specified in the call agreement, termination of ordained or licensed ministerial services may be made by a sixty-day notice on the part of the minister or by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a regular or special church meeting with a sixty-day notice to the minister.

ARTICLE IX. Meetings and Business

Section 1. Worship

Public services for worship shall be held on Sundays and on weekdays as the church or Worship and Arts ministry team may determine.

Section 2. Sacraments and Rites

Communion shall be celebrated at such times as the church, or Worship and Arts ministry team in collaboration with the minister, determines. Baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals shall be performed as agreed upon by the minister and those receiving these services.

Section 3. Regular Meetings

The financial meeting of the church shall be held on the second Sunday in January or on a date Council may select, at which time the proposed annual budget will be submitted by the trustees for discussion and approval by the congregation.

The annual church life meeting will be held the first Sunday in June or on a date Council may select, at which time annual reports from all officers, ministry teams, and elected positions shall be presented; elections for officers, ministry teams, and elected positions shall occur.

All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 4. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the church may be called by the minister, Council, or any five members of the congregation. Notice of the meeting must be given at least

three days preceding the meeting. The notice of special meetings shall state the purpose of the meeting.

Section 5. Quorum and Voting

Twenty percent (20%) of the members of the church shall constitute a quorum for transaction of all business at any regular or special meeting of the church. Decisions of the congregation shall be made by a simple majority of those attending unless otherwise stated in these bylaws. Absentee ballots are not recognized with the exception of homebound votes.

Section 6. Homebound Voting

As a church we recognize and value the opinions of all our congregants. We also recognize that some of our members are unable to attend congregational meetings due to being homebound. These members may request and/or be offered a vote through the pastor in advance of a congregational meeting so that their voice may be heard. The pastor will carry the homebound member's vote forward (held in confidence) and it shall be counted. In the event the vote would have bearing on the pastor's position, the moderator or the trustees' chair would record the vote and carry that vote forward.

Section 7. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall close on December 31.

Section 8. Bylaws

The bylaws shall be reviewed every three years. The bylaws may be amended and re-adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the church, provided that a statement is included in the notice of the meeting.

Section 9. Organization Anniversary

The anniversary of the organization of the church will be the first Sunday in February.

ARTICLE X. Property

Upon dissolution of the church, its assets, and all real property and interests which it then possesses, including any 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 Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ.