

# **Constitution Of The United Church in Tallahassee - Tallahassee, Florida Congregational – UCC**

## **Preamble**

We, the members of this Christian church congregation, recognizing our common concerns, our common needs, and our common commitments, choose now to join formally together before our secular government, before our fellow men and women, and before God. Joining in affirmation of our covenant with this document, we seek:

- To affirm our Judeo-Christian heritage;
- To provide for the nurture and sustained life of our community;
- To express our commitment to the community at large;
- To provide for flexible and effective church governance; and
- To provide for an organization which has as its goal the furtherance of our church covenant rather than its own self-preservation.

To these ends we pledge ourselves and our community.

## **Constitution**

### **Article I – Name**

The name of this church shall be:

The United Church in Tallahassee  
Congregational – UCC  
Tallahassee, Florida

Hereafter, this body will be referred to as the church or the congregation.

### **Article II – Character of Common Life**

#### **Section 1. Covenant**

The covenant by which this church is constituted as a local congregation and which every member affirms is as follows:

We covenant with God and with each other to be a congregation of the United Church of Christ in this place, continuing always to work for a coming church which will be truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical. We will order our common life according to the insights of the Gospel as we have received it through the witness of scripture and church traditions, and as we experience the unfolding truth in our time. We seek to be a reconciling and caring

community, working in behalf of the liberation of all persons and groups and striving to foster patterns of individual and corporate responsibility. In our coming and going together we dedicate our efforts to the increasing among men, women, and children of the love of God and neighbor.

## **Section 2. Doctrine**

This congregation recognizes the doctrines and traditions of the Evangelical and Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches as fundamental components of our heritage. Yet our theological orientation is that of the Christian Church in general, and we acknowledge the right of each member to interpret conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, there is no historical or contemporary doctrinal system which we make a test of faith. All creed and confessions, including our church covenant, are interpreted as expressions of faith rather than definitions of correct opinion.

## **Section 3. Governance**

The government of this congregation is vested exclusively in its members, who exercise the right to control its affairs subject in legal matters to such regulations and obligations as may be required by reason of its incorporation under the laws of the state of Florida. This congregation is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation with the United Church of Christ and is in communion with all denominations and councils or churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. Further, in its affirmation of religious pluralism, this congregation cooperates with other biblical faiths, Eastern religions, and secular humanists in causes which serve the interests of common justice and basic human need.

### **Article III – By-Laws**

Consistent with the provisions of this Constitution, the members of this congregation shall adopt such By-Laws as they shall decide are necessary, and the work of the congregation shall be conducted in accordance with such By-Laws.

### **Article IV – Membership**

The congregation shall welcome into its membership any person who affirms the covenant of the church.

### **Article V – Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the annual meeting of the church, or at any special decisional congregational meeting duly called for such purpose.

# By-Laws

## Article I – Congregational Responsibilities

### Section 1. Responsibility of Members

The members of the congregation, in accord with the aforementioned principles, recognize their individual responsibilities to conduct the affairs of the church, to be informed regarding the ongoing commitments and activities of the congregation, to participate in needed committees as specified by the congregation, and to provide financial support for the church's program.

### Section 2. Congregation Meetings

There shall be congregational meetings as follows:

- a. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all meetings and determine their order of business, except as to quorums.
- b. In all meetings of the congregation, a quorum shall consist of one-third of the active members.
- c. All notices of meetings shall be provided to the active members no less than fourteen (14) days prior to such meetings by electronic or U.S. mail to the address provided the Clerk by such members. All such notices shall also be posted for reading by interested persons. Further notice of the meetings shall be provided during common worship services and in regular church publications.
- d. Meetings
  1. The Annual Meeting of the church shall be held in June at which meeting there shall be an election of the officers and members of the Board of Stewards; consideration of the written reports of the Pastor(s), officers, Board of Stewards, and all church organizations; and the transaction of such other business as shall be deemed necessary.
  2. The annual operating budget of the church shall be adopted at a congregational meeting held in January of each year.
  3. Special decisional congregational meetings may be called by the Board of Stewards or by petition to the Board signed by ten active members or by ten percent (10%) of the active members, whichever is greater. The Board shall call such meetings within three (3) weeks of the receipt of the petition.
  4. In order that the church members may be continually knowledgeable regarding activities of the congregation and of the actions of its committees, congregational meetings may be routinely held following worship services. Such meetings shall be deemed informational rather than decisional gatherings, and policies shall be adopted only as described in 3 above.

## **Article II – Membership**

### **Section 1. Method of Acceptance**

- a. The congregation shall receive into church membership any person who expresses a desire for membership and who, in the presence of the congregation, affirms the church covenant.
- b. We, as a congregation, shall join in celebration with those who choose to receive the sacrament of baptism.

### **Section 2. Associate Members**

Persons who are members of other churches may become members of this church without severing membership in another church. Associate members shall have all the privileges and incur all the duties of other church members.

### **Section 3. Participatory Status**

- a. All members and associate members shall be presumed to be active in status for the purposes of participating in church activities, voting, and assuming the responsibilities of membership
- b. Inactive Status
  1. Upon a showing of non-attendance or non-participation in other church activities for a period of six (6) consecutive months, or upon the request of the member, members shall be deemed inactive.
  2. A member may withdraw or transfer membership from the congregation upon written notice to the Clerk
- c. Membership status shall be determined by the Clerk and Moderator, the Board of Stewards, or the congregation.

## **Article III – The Pastor(s)**

### **Section 1. Call, Terms, Resignation, Vacancy**

The full-time Pastor(s) shall be called for an indefinite term by at least a two-thirds vote of the active members voting at the annual meeting or special decisional congregational meeting scheduled for such purposes. Special conditions, including the length of the call, may be part of the call, and shall be agreed upon by the Pastor(s) and the congregation. The congregation may at any time, by a two-thirds vote of the active members at a special decisional congregational meeting called for such purpose, request a pastor's resignation with the expectation that the resignation will be presented and become effective within sixty (60) days of the date of the request. A Pastor who desires to leave voluntarily shall provide the congregation with notice of

such desire no less than sixty (60) days prior to termination. When necessary, the congregation shall appoint a pulpit committee as provided hereafter.

## **Section 2. Duties and Status**

The Pastor(s) shall be responsible for overseeing the general church program, have direction over all services of public worship, and administer the activities of the congregation as authorized by the members in cooperation with the congregation officers, Board of Stewards, and church committees. The Pastor(s) or appropriate designee(s) shall be non-voting members of the Board of Stewards and all church committees. The Pastor(s) shall have the joint responsibility with the Board of Stewards in identifying and filling the personnel needs of the church. The Pastor(s) shall have primary responsibility in supervising and evaluating persons in the employ of the church. Decisions regarding termination of any person employed by the church shall be the joint responsibility of the Pastor(s) and the Board of Stewards.

## **Article IV – Officers**

The officers of this church shall be a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and a Financial Secretary. Except for the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary, no officer shall hold the same office for more than two (2) consecutive terms.

### **Section 1. The Moderator**

- a. The Moderator shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of two (2) years.
- b. The Moderator is the executive officer of the church and shall preside at all church meetings. The Moderator shall be a voting ex officio member of all boards and committees of the church. The Moderator shall serve as the chairperson of the Board of Stewards. In the absence of the Moderator, any meeting may be called to order by the Clerk, after which a moderator pro tempore shall be chosen as the first order of business.

### **Section 2. The Clerk**

- a. The Clerk shall be elected at the annual meeting of the congregation for a term of two (2) years.
- b. The Clerk shall keep a complete record of all business meetings of the church, which shall be read for approval at the next following meeting. Such written records or minutes shall be posted for the informational benefit of the congregation. The Clerk shall also keep a complete record of meetings of the Board of Stewards. In the absence of the Clerk from meetings, a Clerk pro tempore shall be named.
- c. The Clerk shall cause to be kept a register with addresses of the members of the congregation, the date of their membership, and changes in membership status. The Clerk shall also cause to be kept a record of baptisms, weddings, and funerals pertaining to the members of the congregation.

- d. The Clerk shall issue and receive letters of transfer, preserve on file all communications and official reports of the congregation, notify all persons elected or appointed to offices, boards or committees, give necessary notices of meetings, and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the laws of the state of Florida. The Clerk shall be responsible for the maintenance of all non-financial records and documents of the church.

### **Section 3. The Treasurer**

- a. The Treasurer shall be bonded for such amount as shall be determined by the Board of Stewards. The Treasurer shall ensure that there is a correct itemized account of all monies received and disbursed from congregational funds except the discretionary funds under the control of the Pastor(s). All accounts under the control of the Treasurer shall be kept distinct from any other account, personal or organizational. All check drawn by the Treasurer or Moderator shall be in the name of the United Church in Tallahassee, Congregational – UCC.
- b. The Treasurer shall make a monthly report of the status of the congregational funds and shall present such reports to the Board of Stewards at their regular meetings. Such reports shall also be posted for the benefit of the congregation. The Treasurer shall prepare the annual financial report showing the status of the congregational funds and shall present this report to the congregation in January together with any audits authorized by the Board of Stewards. The Treasurer shall be responsible for all financial records of the church.

### **Section 4. The Financial Secretary**

- a. The Financial Secretary shall be responsible for pledge activities and related records, counting the weekly offerings from worship services and other sources, and depositing same in the congregation accounts.
- b. The Financial Secretary shall be bonded for such amount as shall be determined by the Board of Stewards. The Financial Secretary shall assist the Treasurer in keeping a correct itemized account of all monies received into and disbursed from congregational funds except discretionary funds under the control of the Pastor(s). All accounts under the control of the Financial Secretary shall be kept distinct from any other accounts, person or organizational. All checks drawn from the Treasurer or Financial Secretary shall be in the name of the United Church in Tallahassee, Congregational – UCC.

## **Article V – The Board of Stewards**

### **Section 1. Composition**

A Board of Stewards, consisting of thirteen (13) members, shall be elected as a principal instrumentality for the implementation of the church's mission as defined and articulated by the congregation. The Board shall consist of the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the chairpersons of the seven (7) standing committees, and two (2) members-at-large. The members-at-large shall serve on the standing nominating committee for such positions

within the church as may require election by the congregation. The term of office for each member shall be two (2) years.

## **Section 2. Meetings**

The Board of Stewards shall meet monthly, at a time determined by the Board and announced to the congregation. Special meetings may be called by the Moderator. All meetings of the Board of Stewards shall be open to members of the congregation. Seven (7) member of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

## **Section 3. Functions**

- a. The Board of Stewards shall act as the central clearinghouse and coordinating instrument of the congregation's activities.
- b. The Board of Stewards, with the assistance of the Finance and Administration Committee, shall prepare a proposed annual operating budget for submission to the congregation. The annual operating budget shall include potential revenues and expenditures. Following the presentation to the congregation for the discussion of the proposed budget, the Board of Stewards shall present a recommended budget for final approval by the congregation in January of each year. The budget shall include any salary adjustments for persons in the employ of the church.
- c. The Board of Stewards may advise the congregation on matters of church policy when deemed necessary.
- d. At least annually, the Board of Stewards, upon advice from the Personnel Committee, shall review the salaries, benefits, and job descriptions of all persons in the employ of the church. The Board shall recommend any changes or adjustments regarding such employment to the congregation.

## **Article VI – Committees**

### **Section 1. Standing Committees**

- a. There shall be seven (7) standing committees whose functions shall be to work cooperatively with the Board of Stewards to implement the congregation's ministry. The chairperson of each of the standing committees shall be elected by the congregation at the annual meeting, and by virtue of that election, each chairperson shall be a member of the Board of Stewards. As the congregation deems appropriate, co-chairpersons may be elected for committees. In such event, it shall be the responsibility of the co-chairpersons to agree between themselves the manner in which the committee shall be represented on the Board of Stewards. Each committee is entitled to only one (1) vote on the Board of Stewards.
- b. Any active member of the church shall be deemed eligible to serve as chairperson or member of any of the standing committees.

- c. The seven (7) standing committees shall be as follows:
1. The Christian Education Committee, which shall establish a program of instruction in, and investigation of, our Judeo-Christian heritage, especially as it relates to contemporary life. It should creatively integrate the educational, ethical, and total life of the congregation with a view toward providing a comprehensive pattern of worship and nurture in Christian humanism for all ages.
  2. The Worship Committee, which shall work with the Pastor(s) in the planning and preparation of the common worship services of the congregation. The committee shall also work closely with the Christian Education Committee to integrate the liturgical and educational dimensions of the congregation's life. Music is considered to be a significant part of the church life and shall be incorporated into activities of the congregation whenever possible.
  3. The Community Action Committee, which shall have general charge and supervision over the development, conduct, support, and encouragement of projects and activities of local, regional, national, and worldwide scope of Christian and humanitarian service. Such projects and activities may be developed through cooperation with existing organizations and agencies or benevolence, missions, and other service, or by independent means.
  4. The Finance and Administration Committee, which shall be responsible for developing the proposed annual operating budget for presentation to the Board of Stewards and the congregation. The proposed annual operating budget shall be developed from the recommendations of the other standing committees, ad hoc committees, the Board of Stewards, and members of the congregation. The Finance and Administration Committee shall be responsible for informing the congregation concerning fiscal needs and policies and shall supervise all programs of stewardship education.

The Finance and Administration Committee shall also be responsible for oversight and organization of the administrative activities that support church functions, especially, but not limited to operations of the church office. There shall be a Personnel Committee of no fewer than four (4) members that serves as a subcommittee of the Finance and Administration Committee. Members of the Personnel Committee shall be recommended by the Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee and approved by the Board of Stewards. The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for handling recruitment, hiring, evaluation, disciplinary and termination procedures for all church employees with the exception of the Pastor. Such activities shall include participation of members of appropriate Standing Committees and the Moderator. In addition, the Personnel Committee shall recommend appropriate policies regarding personnel actions, benefits and other matters pertaining to the welfare of church employees.

5. The Membership Committee, which shall work cooperatively with the Pastor(s) to identify potential members and to interest them in the life and work of the church. The committee, also in cooperation with the Pastor(s), shall supervise publicity efforts of the church and develop new member classes and confirmation activities. The committee shall be responsible for planning all fellowship and social gatherings of the congregation.
6. The Building and Grounds Committee, which shall be responsible for the general maintenance and improvement of the property, buildings, and grounds of the church. The committee shall have prime responsibility over future development of the congregation's physical operations. The committee shall apprise the congregation of needed repairs and improvements in a timely fashion.
7. The Congregational Care Committee, which shall be responsible for the support and nurture of members of the congregation through presence, prayer and other types of assistance. The committee will work cooperatively with the Pastor and the Membership Committee to identify member needs.

### **Section 2. Special Committees**

- a. The Board of Stewards shall appoint a Pastoral Relations committee based on recommendations by the Pastor. The committee is the primary instrumentality through which church members can offer constructive feedback of professional performance and through which the Pastor of the church may voice matters concerning any aspect of their working relationships with members of the congregation. The committee can serve as mediator between the Pastor(s) and the congregation on matters of critical concern to the congregation. Membership on the committee shall be staggered in order to provide continuity and stability.

### **Section 3. Other Committees**

- a. The Nominating Committee, which shall serve to recruit and recommend members for election to the Board of Stewards and committee chairs.
- b. The Board of Stewards at any time, or the congregation at any regular or special meeting, may establish such ad hoc committees as shall be deemed necessary. Membership on standing committees shall not preclude membership on ad hoc committees.

## **Article VII - Fiscal Policy**

### **Section 1. Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the congregation shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

### **Section 2. Adoption of the Operating Budget**

Sole power to adopt the annual operating budget is vested in the congregations, as is sole power to authorize the expenditure of unbudgeted expenses in excess of five hundred dollars (\$500)

borrowing monies, or buying, selling, mortgaging, leasing, transferring, or conveying of any realty or interest therein in the name of the church. The Board of Stewards shall have the authority to approve the expenditure of unbudgeted expenses of less than five hundred dollars (\$500)

### **Section 3. Priorities of Expenditures**

In keeping with the congregation's commitment to social outreach in time and energy, so with the budget: The budget will be so organized to support church life in such a manner that we can devote at least one-half of our church life to social outreach.

As we use the budget to support church staff and church facilities, they will likewise be committed to furthering this policy.

As we use the budget to support church programs, projects, and activities, again, a least one-half of these should be committed to social outreach. Although such outreach involves the entire range of the congregation, as does the internal life of the church, the primary responsibility for coordinating social outreach programs and activities shall be that of the Community Action Committee. That committee shall serve as a catalyst for the congregation in formulating and receiving proposals for congregational commitments and translating those commitments into specific budget items to be adopted in each new budget. Since we are committed to meeting the needs of others as they arise, it is also expected that a contingency fund shall be established each year for use by the congregation, again coordinated by the Community Action Committee.

As the budget of the congregation continues to grow, this issue will continue to be addressed at an annual budget meeting as priorities are set.

## **Article VIII – Nominations, Elections, Vacancies**

### **Section 1. Nominations**

The Nominating Committee shall develop a method of identifying and recruiting persons for leadership positions in the church and shall accept volunteers and recommendations from the congregation and nominate candidates for the elective office for the coming year. All volunteers or suggested persons, or additional persons named by the committee, shall be contacted by the committee as to their willingness to serve in specific offices. The names of those so signifying shall be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting as nominees for office. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the time of the elections. The Nominating Committee shall also seek persons to serve as members of the committees and encourage such participation.

### **Section 2. Elections**

- a. The election of any office shall be by majority vote on a written ballot only when more than one (1) nomination has been made for the office.

- b. The term of office for those elected shall commence immediately upon election.

### **Section 3. Vacancies**

- a. Any vacancy which occurs among the offices shall be filled by nomination by the Nominating Committee and a majority vote of the congregation at the next meeting of the congregation. The Board of Stewards shall have the authority to appoint persons to temporarily fill such vacancies.
- b. Vacancies which occur among committee chairpersons and members-at-large shall be filled by appointment by the Board of Stewards, and such appointment shall be for the remainder of the term of the vacancy.

## **Article IX – Amendments**

### **Section 1. Procedures**

These By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of the active members present at a congregational meeting, provided that:

- a. A petition bearing the proposed amendment(s) may be submitted to the Moderator with the signatures of ten (10) active members or ten percent (10%) of the active membership of the congregation, whichever is greater; or
- b. The Board of Stewards proposes amendments as they deem necessary for the effective operation of the church.
- c. Notice of the intention to amend the By-Laws shall have been given as provided in these By-Laws to the congregation .

### **Section 2. Timing**

In no event shall more than twenty (20) days pass between the time the Moderator receives the proposed amendment(s) by petition and the calling of the congregational meeting, unless a majority of the petitioners agree to such a delay.

### **Section 3. Adoption**

Following adoption of amendments to the Constitution or By-Laws, each member of the congregation shall be provided with a dated copy of such amendments, or a dated copy of the revised Constitution and/or By-Laws.