

# **The First Church of Christ in Wethersfield**

## **Bylaws**

250 Main Street  
Wethersfield, CT 06109

[www.firstchurch.org](http://www.firstchurch.org)

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First Church of Christ In Wethersfield Bylaws

# Bylaws

## 1

### NAME

The name of this Church shall be The First Church of Christ in Wethersfield.

## 2

### ORGANIZATION

The First Church of Christ in Wethersfield is incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut. Said corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes of the corporation. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in, (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision contained herein, the corporation shall not carry on any activity not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170 (c) (2) of the internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## 3

### PURPOSE

This Church is a fellowship organized to encourage its members and friends to worship God, to strengthen and support them in the Christian faith, to explore, understand and deepen commitment to this faith, to know and experience the grace of God through the teachings, life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to share in the exhilaration and uplift of public worship and to love and serve others both within and outside The Church.

It is the further purpose of this church to live and function within society and a wider church in such a way as to communicate God's love and justice for his world and all its people, and support a growing Christian unity.

While mindful of the past, the emphasis of this Church is upon its mission to serve the present and the future.

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## 4 FAITH

The Statement of Faith of the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield (2008) is commended to members and friends as a significant testimony of the Christian faith.

## 5 COVENANT

The Statement of Covenant of the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield is commended to members and friends as a description of our covenant with God and one another.

## 6 MEMBERSHIP

Any person wishing to unite with this Church shall do so by confession of faith, letter of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith. Applications for membership shall be made to a minister or deacon, and shall be subject to approval by the deacons. Those uniting with the Church shall give public assent to its covenant. Baptism shall be a prerequisite of church membership. Persons who are members of another church but who would like to actively associate themselves in the affairs of this Church may apply for membership. Those persons who have not chosen to unite with this Church, but who are nevertheless active in its affairs, shall be deemed friends of the Church.

The deacons from time to time shall remove from the membership list those members who have requested that their names be removed and those who may be removed for other cause.

## 7 BUSINESS MEETINGS

### **7.1 — Government**

The Church shall govern itself in accordance with the assignment of duties and responsibilities made in these bylaws, retaining ultimate authority over all its life and functions.

### **7.2 — Voting**

Each member of the Church present at business meetings shall have the right to vote. Voting for members of the Staff, as defined in paragraph 17.2, shall be by written ballot and require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present.

### **7.3 — Dates and Notice**

The annual meeting of the Church shall be held in the month of April, followed in the month of June by a meeting to consider and adopt a budget, on such days as determined by the Board. Special meetings may be called by the president of the board, the senior minister, the moderator, or any forty members of the Church.

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Notice of any business meeting shall be mailed to each member of the Church no later than the tenth day before the day of the meeting. The purpose of any special meeting shall be stated in the notice.

### **7.4 — Quorum**

Forty members of the Church shall constitute a quorum at any business meeting. A smaller number may adjourn the meeting to another date.

## 8

### **CHURCH BOARD**

#### **8.1 — Membership**

The Church board shall consist of the president, the senior minister, the chairman of the Department of Worship, the chairman of the Department of Education, the Chairman of the Department of Research and Long Range Planning, the chairman of the Department of Inreach, the chairman of the Department of Outreach, the chairman of the Department of Finance and Property, the chairman of the Department of Communication, the chairman of the Personnel Committee, and four members at large, two of whom shall be under twenty years of age and two of whom shall be over nineteen years of age on the date of election to the board.

#### **8.2 — Election and Terms of Office**

Members of the board other than the senior minister and chairman of the Department of Worship shall be elected by the Church at its annual meeting.

Members of the board shall serve for terms of two years or until their successors are elected, except as follows: the senior minister shall serve an indefinite term, the chairman of the Department of Worship and members at large under age twenty shall serve a one-year term. After serving two consecutive two-year terms, a board member shall not be eligible to serve again as a board member until after the lapse of one year, however, this shall not preclude a board member from being eligible to be elected as president of the board for up to two additional two-year terms.

#### **8.3 — Vice President**

The board shall elect from its members a vice president who shall preside at meetings of the board in the absence of the president.

#### **8.4 — Duties**

The board shall serve as the board of directors of the Church. It shall have power to act except as otherwise provided in these bylaws by the Church.

The board shall have power to appoint committees and define committee responsibilities.

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The board shall have power to review and direct the work of the departments.

The board shall have power to select a bank or trust company to manage endowment and trust funds.

The board shall be responsible for recommending to the Church persons to be called as members of the staff as provided in paragraph 17.2.

### **8.5 — Budget**

The board shall be responsible for the preparation of the Church budget, subject to approval by the Church.

The board is authorized to make such adjustments in the approved budget, as it deems advisable during the course of the fiscal year and to expend undesignated income.

Upon the recommendations of the Department of Finance and Property, the board is authorized to borrow, not to exceed five percent of the current year pledge income budget.

The fiscal year of the Church shall be July 1 through June 30.

### **8.6 — Meetings**

Regular meetings of the board shall be held at such times and places as the board may determine. Special meetings may be called by the president, the senior minister or any three members of the board.

All meetings shall be open to members of the Church, with the exception of executive sessions when held by vote of the board. The attendance of officers and staff may be required by the board.

In the absence of a department chairman, the vice chairman of the department or other member of the department designated by the chairman shall attend meetings of the board but without vote and without constituting a part of the quorum. In the absence of the senior minister, he shall designate one of the other ministers to attend meetings of the board but without vote and without constituting a part of the quorum.

### **8.7 — Quorum**

Seven members of the board shall constitute a quorum.

### **8.8 — Vacancies**

Vacancies in the board shall be filled by appointment by the remaining members of the board until the next annual meeting of the Church, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws.

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## **8.9 — Voting by the President**

The president shall vote at meetings of the board only in the case of a tie vote, and this limitation shall also apply to the vice president when presiding in lieu of the president.

## **9**

### **DEACONS — DEPARTMENT OF WORSHIP**

#### **9.1 — Membership**

There shall be 21 deacons elected by the church at its annual meeting. Not more than 13 of the deacons shall be men and not more than 13 of the deacons shall be women.

#### **9.2 — Election**

Seven deacons shall be elected by the Church at its annual meeting for terms of three years or until their successors are elected. After serving a full three-year term, a deacon shall not be eligible for re-election until after the lapse of one year.

#### **9.3 — Duties**

The deacons shall have primary responsibility for the spiritual life of the Church, which shall include, without limitation, public worship, observance of the sacraments, the private and personal ministry of the Church to its members and friends, the relations within the staff, and the relations between the staff and the Church.

The deacons shall be responsible for the disbursement of the *Good Samaritan Funds* or their equivalents set aside for charitable use as specific needs may arise.

#### **9.4 — Committees**

In the performance of their duties, the deacons shall appoint such committees as they determine to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities. Deacons may serve as members of such committees.

#### **9.5 — Vacancies**

Vacancies among the deacons shall be filled by appointment by the remaining deacons, until the next annual meeting of the Church.

#### **9.6 — Department of Worship**

The deacons and the chairmen of committees appointed by the deacons shall constitute the Department of Worship. The chairman of the Department of Worship shall be a deacon. The department shall meet at the call of the deacons and shall assist the deacons in the performance of their duties.

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### **9.7 — Chairman**

The deacons shall elect from their members a chairman, who shall also be chairman of the Department of Worship.

### **9.8 — Vice Chairman**

The deacons shall elect from their members a vice chairman, who shall also be Vice chairman of the Department of Worship, and who shall preside at meetings in the absence of the chairman.

## **10**

### **DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

#### **10.1 — Membership**

The Department of Christian Education shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the department.

#### **10.2 — Duties**

The department shall have primary responsibility for the total educational program of the Church. Such responsibilities shall include, without limitation, church school, programs leading to confirmation, youth fellowship and adult education. It shall also be responsible for the church-sponsored nursery school and any similar church-sponsored educational program.

#### **10.3 — Committees**

The department shall appoint such committees as it determines to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities.

## **11**

### **DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH and LONG RANGE PLANNING**

#### **11.1 — Membership**

The Department of Research and Long Range Planning shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the department.

#### **11.2 — Duties**

The Department of Research and Long Range Planning shall have primary responsibility for study and recommendation involving change and improvement in all aspects of the life and affairs of the Church, its organization, and ministry. Such recommendations shall be made to the board. Duties shall be performed on a continuing basis, upon the initiative of the

## First Church of Christ In Wethersfield Bylaws

department or upon direction of the board, and shall include consideration of recommendations by any member of the Church.

### **11.3 — Committees**

The department shall appoint such committees as it determines to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities.

### **11.4 — Historic Resources Committee**

This shall include the church historian to preserve and promote the history of First Church by collecting, maintaining and making available historical records, artifacts and information. Its chairman, appointed by the department, shall serve two years and is renewable.

## 12

### **DEPARTMENT OF INREACH**

#### **12.1 — Membership**

The Department of Inreach shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting; such additional members as may be appointed by the department, including the presidents of organizations carrying out functions of the department.

#### **12.2 — Duties**

The Department of Inreach shall have primary responsibility for the ministry of the Church to its members and friends, not otherwise provided for in these bylaws. Such responsibilities shall include, without limitation, those interests, functions and activities which strengthen the inner life of the Church, deepen friendship, understanding and sympathy among its members and friends, and promote their individual and corporate development as a church family.

#### **12.3 — Committees**

The department shall appoint such committees as it determines to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities. The department shall foster those committees and organizations carrying out its functions, which may include church groups of all ages and interests.

## 13

### **DEPARTMENT OF OUTREACH**

#### **13.1 — Membership**

The Department of Outreach shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the department.

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## **13.2 — Duties**

The Department of Outreach shall have primary responsibility for the ministry of the Church to persons and organizations in the community and the world outside this Church. Such responsibilities shall include, without limitation, those interests, functions and activities which enable the Church, its members and friends, to apply their faith, and make it evident, in all realms of thought and activity, and to bring their strength, insights and compassion to bear upon the improvement of life for individuals and society.

## **13.3 — Committees**

The department shall appoint such committees as it determines to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities.

## **14**

### **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY**

#### **14.1 — Membership**

The Department of Finance and Property shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting, the treasurer, such additional members as may be appointed by the board which shall include the chairman of the Stewardship Division, the chairman of the Trusteeship Division, and the chairman of the Property Division, the chairmen of committees appointed by the department or by any division, and the auditors.

#### **14.2 — Duties**

The Department of Finance and Property shall have primary responsibility for the financial support of the Church, its endowment and property. Such responsibilities shall be allocated within the department as follows:

1. *The Finance Committee*, comprising the chairman of the department and the chairmen of the Stewardship, Trusteeship and Property Divisions, shall be responsible for overall financial policy and decisions, the development of adequate accounting controls, and the annual audit of all financial records and accounts, subject to direction and review by the board. The chairman of the department shall be chairman of the Finance Committee.
2. *The Stewardship Division*, comprised of the chairman of the division, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the division, shall be responsible for the pledging and collection of funds to meet the general budget or special needs of the Church.
3. *The Trusteeship Division*, comprising the chairman of the division, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the division, shall be responsible for:
  - a. the safekeeping, investment and management of all endowment and trust funds. No asset of any endowment or trust fund shall be sold, exchanged or otherwise disposed of, or invested, without approval of the Trusteeship Division or the Church.

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- b. the expenditure of principal and income of trust funds in accordance with the wishes of the donors.
  - c. the encouragement of additional bequests for the support of the Church.
4. *The Property Division*, comprising the chairman of the division, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the chairmen of committees appointed by the Division, shall be responsible for:
    - a. the maintenance of all Church property.
    - b. the proper and adequate insuring of Church assets, the bonding of appropriate officers and employees.
    - c. the purchase of supplies and equipment.
  5. The department may require attendance at any meeting and performance of duties by the other officers and staff involved in the work of the department.

### **14.3 — Committees**

The department and any division shall appoint such committees as it determines to be advisable and shall define committee responsibilities. In the Stewardship Division such committees may include the Stewardship Committee. In the Trusteeship Division such committees may include the Investment Committee, the New Bequest Development Committee and the Bequest Management Committee.

In the Property Division such committees may include the Property Committee and the Insurance Committee.

### **14.4 — Procedure Concerning Check Signing and Sale of Securities**

All checks shall be signed by two persons at least one of whom shall be bonded, and who shall be the chairman of the department, treasurer, president or such other persons as may be determined by the board.

The chairman of the department, the treasurer, or any other officer designated by the board is authorized and empowered to sign proxies, and upon approval of the Trusteeship Division to sell, assign, transfer or exchange stocks, bonds or other securities belonging to the Church, and to execute and deliver any assignments, powers of attorney and other instruments necessary or convenient to effectuate any such sale, purchase, assignment, transfer or exchange.

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### 15

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

##### **15.1 — *Membership:***

The Department of Communication shall consist of the chairman elected by the Church at its annual meeting, such additional members as may be appointed by the board, and the Chairmen of committees appointed by the department.

##### **15.2 — *Duties:***

The Department of Communication shall have the primary responsibility for all media communications with Church members, the Church community and the world outside the Church not otherwise provided for in these bylaws.

##### **15.3 — *Committees:***

The department shall appoint such committees as it determines advisable and shall define committee responsibilities.

### 16

#### DEPARTMENTS, DIVISIONS AND COMMITTEES

##### **16.1 — *Membership***

All members of departments and divisions, including committee chairmen, shall be members of the Church. All members and friends of the Church shall be eligible for appointment to committees.

##### **16.2 — *Terms of Office***

Except as otherwise determined by the board, members of departments, divisions and committees, other than the deacons and the Nominating Committee, shall serve for terms of two years or until their successors are appointed.

##### **16.3 — *Organization***

Each department, division or committee shall elect from its membership a vice chairman, who shall preside at meetings in the absence of the chairman and a secretary, who shall keep a written record of the work. It may also appoint such other officials, as it deems advisable, subject to approval by the board. A copy of the written record shall be furnished regularly to the chairman of the department who has overall responsibility for the work.

##### **16.4 — *Meetings***

All meetings of departments, divisions and committees shall be open to members of the Church, with the exception of executive sessions when held by vote of the department, division or committee.

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## 17 OFFICERS AND STAFF

### **17.1 — Officers**

The officers of the Church shall consist of the president of the board, the senior minister, deacons, chairmen of departments, members at large of the board, moderator, clerk, and the treasurer. With the exception of the senior minister, they shall be elected by the Church for terms of two years or until their successors are elected and may serve more than one term, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws. They shall be members of the Church, not less than twenty-one years of age, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws for members at large of the board.

### **17.2 — Staff**

The staff of the Church shall be defined as the senior minister, associate and/or assistant minister or ministers, minister or director of education, and minister or director of music, but the words “shall be defined” will not be construed to limit the number of positions on the Church Staff. The board shall be responsible for recommending to the Church persons to be called as members of the staff above listed, and may appoint a search committee, as hereinafter set forth, to examine candidates and report to the board.

### **17.3 — President**

The president shall be the chief officer of the Church, with responsibility for overall supervision of its affairs and execution of policy and decisions of the Church and the board. He shall preside at meetings of the board.

### **17.4 — Senior Minister**

The senior minister shall be the spiritual leader of the Church. He shall also be the executive officer of the Church, subject to overall supervision by the president, and he shall be responsible for allocation of duties among the ministers, subject to approval by the board.

### **17.5 — Chairmen of Departments and Divisions**

The chairmen shall be responsible for the work of their respective departments and divisions and shall preside at meetings thereof.

### **17.6 — Moderator**

The Moderator shall preside at meetings of the Church. The Moderator shall not be a member of the board. In the absence of the Moderator, a moderator for the meeting shall be elected by members of the Church who are present.

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### **17.7 — Clerk**

The Clerk shall keep minutes of the meetings of the board and Church, which shall record all business transacted at these meetings.

### **17.8 — Treasurer**

The treasurer shall be responsible for the receipt and disbursement of Church funds and for the fiscal and accounting records of the Church, and shall have such other duties as prescribed by the Department of Finance, Property and Personnel.

### **17.9 Vacancies**

Vacancies in any office, except that of the staff, shall be filled by appointment by the board until the next annual meeting of the Church, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws. Vacancies in the staff shall be filled by the Church upon the recommendation of the board, except that vacancies in the staff may be filled on an interim basis by the board until a permanent appointment is made at a special meeting or the next annual meeting of the Church.

## **18**

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

#### **18.1 — Membership**

There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of nine members who shall be members of the Church, nominated by the board and elected by the Church at its annual meeting. The Nominating Committee shall be classified as a committee of the board.

#### **18.2 — Election**

Three members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected by the Church at its annual meeting for terms of three years.

#### **18.3 — Chairman and Vice chairman**

The chairman and vice chairman of the Nominating Committee shall be elected by the Committee from its members. The chairman shall preside at meetings of the committee. The vice chairman shall preside in the absence of the chairman.

#### **18.4 — Duties**

The Nominating Committee shall present at the annual meeting of the Church a list of nominations for all offices of the Church. Said list shall be mailed to each member of the Church with notice of the meeting.

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At the request from time to time of the Church, the board, or any department or division, the Nominating Committee shall present nominations for election or appointment to any office, department, division, committee or other position, or to fill any vacancy.

### **18.5 — Vacancies**

Vacancies in the Nominating Committee shall be filled by appointment by the board until the next annual meeting of the Church.

## **19 SEARCH COMMITTEE**

### **19.1 — Membership**

A search committee of at least seven members, who shall be members of the Church, shall be appointed by the board when in the opinion of the board such a committee is necessary to investigate candidates. Members of the board may be appointed to the committee. The chairman and vice chairman may be designated by the board.

### **19.2 — Duties**

The duties and powers of the search committee shall be set forth by the board and such powers and duties shall be terminated at the discretion of the board.

## **20 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

### **20.1 — Membership**

There shall be a Personnel Committee consisting of six members who shall be members of the Church, four of whom are to be elected by the Church at its annual meeting, one to be appointed by the deacons from among its members, and one to be the senior minister.

### **20.2 — Election**

Two members of the Personnel Committee shall be elected by the Church at its annual meeting for terms of two years.

### **20.3 — Chairman and Vice Chairman**

The chairman and vice chairman of the Personnel Committee shall be elected by the committee from its members. The chairman shall preside at meetings of the committee. The vice chairman shall preside in the absence of the chairman.

### **20.4 — Duties**

The Personnel Committee, with concurrence of the senior minister, shall be responsible for the employment of personnel, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, and the

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development, maintenance and periodic review of personnel policies for all employees, accountable to the board. This shall include, but not be limited to, responsibility for salary administration, retirement plans and life and health insurance programs.

### **20.5 — Vacancies**

Vacancies in the Personnel Committee shall be filled by appointment by the board until the next annual meeting of the Church.

## **21**

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The latest edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised” shall be used as the parliamentary authority for any procedural issues, which are not addressed elsewhere in these bylaws.

## **22**

### **DISSOLUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as such Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

## **23**

### **AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended at any business meeting of the Church by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members, who are present, provided notice of the proposed amendment is given in the notice of the meeting.

Adopted January 28, 1971  
Revised January 29, 1976  
Revised January 25, 1979  
Revised January 29, 1987  
Revised November 23, 1987  
Revised April 11, 1988  
Revised April 26, 1992  
Revised April 20, 1993  
Revised April 24, 1994  
Revised April 23, 1996  
Revised April 15, 1999  
Revised September 21, 2004  
Revised June 21, 2005

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Revised June 19, 2007