

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Empowering Members for Ministry

Report of the Governance Task Force

**First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio**

December 2022

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Introduction

As an institution, First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, is composed of a beautiful building and attractive grounds, a democratic governance structure, talented employees and dedicated church members. Our church, however, does not exist for operational efficiency and perfect accountability. The singular role and function of our building, commissions and committees, and employees are to empower our church members to serve God and to live out our faith in communion with and in service to each other and the wider community.

The Governance Task Force approached its work with the goal of improving church governance and operations so our church members and staff find greater purpose and satisfaction in their church service and fellowship in our common endeavors. While our church employees do vital work, the impact of our church would be far smaller if our members were not engaged beyond Sunday morning worship. Our congregation simply cannot function without people giving of not only their treasure, but of their time and talents. While most of our task force's recommendations deal with issues of governance and operations, we do not want to lose sight of the fundamental reason for the improvements we suggest.

Charge to the task force

At the congregational meeting on January 30, 2022, church members voted to adopt a long-range plan for the church titled "Vision 2027." Among its many recommendations, the plan suggested the immediate establishment of the Governance Task Force as one of several strategies to enhance church governance in ways that permit the congregation "to move into the future with confidence and grace." The plan stated the task force's objective would be to "improve the transparency of church governance and decision-making by establishing church-wide goals and identifying indicators of success in reaching the goals." The plan also identified a number of specific items to be considered by the task force.

Church Council on February 15, 2022, created the task force and charged it with the following:

1. Review the church constitution and recommend potential amendments to Council and the congregation.
2. Re-evaluate all commissions, committees, and leadership teams and their respective mission statements and reporting structures and recommend ways to streamline, clarify and modernize church governance and church staff support as set forth in Section 8 of the Plan.
3. Recommend clear lines of reporting and church staff support for all commissions, committees, and subcommittees.
4. Consider and make a recommendation on a proposal for staggered two-year terms for key lay leadership positions such as moderator, treasurer and house & grounds chair.

5. Report back to Council regarding its activities periodically throughout 2022 with the goal of completing its work by the end of 2022.

Subsequently, Council on March 15, 2022, approved the appointment of the task force members. “Vision 2027” offered a number of specific recommendations for the task force members to consider. Among these were:

- Re-evaluate all commissions, committees and leadership teams and their mission statements
- Create a Stewardship Commission
- Re-imagine the Administration Commission as a Personnel Committee
- Realign the House & Grounds Commission
- Establish a Security Committee, Technology Committee, Communications and Social Media Committee, and a Congregational Care Commission or Committee
- Change the name of the Christian Education Commission to Faith Formation Commission
- Re-envision the Church Growth and Church Vitality commissions
- Create of a staffing model for the next five to 10 years
- Recommend clear reporting lines and staff support for all commissions and committees
- Evaluate a recommendation for staggered two-year terms for key lay leadership positions

Work of the task force

Our task force met monthly since March, including half-day meetings in July, August, September, October and November. In addition to our deliberations, task force members:

- During the spring and early summer, developed a set of common questions and then met one-on-one with church staff members, Council members and other lay leaders to discuss the procedures and operations of the congregation and its commissions and committees.
- Interviewed the senior ministers of three United Church of Christ congregations of similar size and mission to our church. The Heartland Conference minister suggested the congregations. The purpose of the interviews was to gain these ministers’ perspectives regarding the impact of the pandemic in church life and on ways to improve church operations. The interviews also provided insight into different approaches to church governance and structure.
- Conducted a detailed review of the church constitution to improve clarity and to assure that current practices conform to the constitution.
- Researched the changing demographics of religious life in the United States, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on churches, and trends in volunteerism, particularly among churches. (See appendices 1 and 2.)

Context and observations

Before turning to our recommendations, task force members wish to offer context for our deliberations and commentary that may provide helpful insights to lay leaders and church staff as they implement some of the recommendations.

As our task force looked in-depth at our congregation's structure with its many boards, commissions, committees, projects and activities, we are grateful for the amazing amount of time and talent given by our church staff and by many, many members to further the missions of our church. Our church's paid employees are critical for their job-related expertise, for the continuity and the daily operations of our congregation and for the support of lay leaders and volunteers. At the same time, our church members – who volunteer on committees, in the office, with children and youth, in the choir, in preparation for worship, with justice and mercy projects, and in so many other ways – extend these missions throughout the congregation, the community and the wider world. The vitality of our congregation reflects the synergy of staff and members. Our task force's deliberations have been energized by the desire to improve our congregation's governance and operations so as to make the best use of the incredible time and talent offered by our staff and members. They inspire us.

“Vision 2027” proposed changes in the structure and mission of boards, commissions and committees. We did not view these proposals as signs of problems with these bodies. Instead, the task force looked at staff members, lay leaders and committee members who are overburdened in the current structure. The intent of our task force's recommendations is to improve structure and operations in ways that allow staff and members to work more efficiently and effectively.

With the enormous variety of programming and activities that take place within its walls and that are extended into the community, our church is a complex organization. Its staffing requirements – with both paid employees and volunteers – and its financial record-keeping reflect that complexity. The proper stewardship of annual giving, the church's endowment funds, and income-generating activities requires ongoing attention. The evolution of job expectations and the growing legal complexity of personnel policies and practices over the last generation present challenges. Our task force hopes our recommendations for improvements in the administrative structure and operations of the church will help mitigate these challenges.

The scope of the charge to the task force is quite large. We have found it impossible to complete every aspect of the charge within 2022. “Vision 2027,” however, is a five-year plan, so no one should expect everything must be completed in the first year. Our task force identifies some issues that will require further study. On a number of other issues, we offer general recommendations, but we suggest that a particular board, commission or committee should develop the policy details because that body will be responsible for working within that policy.

Council established our task force prior to the resignations of the minister of music, the associate minister and the director of Christian education. Our task force has not participated in the personnel discussions and actions that preceded and followed those resignations, leaving these matters, as appropriate, with the senior lay leadership, Personnel Committee and Council. The matters, however, have informed the deliberations of our task force members as we tried to balance the competing claims of transparency, accountability and employee privacy within our church governance structure and operations.

Finally, as our task force considered its recommendations, we generally followed five major principles:

1. Improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

2. Enhance transparency and accountability through better communication, written policies and clearer lines of responsibility.
3. Avoid adding to the size of Council so it might remain an effective policy-making body.
4. Encourage church members to serve on committees and to volunteer beyond attendance at Sunday morning worship and remove barriers to such participation.
5. Avoid overloading staff members with too many responsibilities.

Recommendations

The ministry of church members

As noted in this report's introduction, our task force has sought to improve church governance and operations so our members find greater purpose and satisfaction in their church service and fellowship in our common endeavors. As a downtown congregation with a regional membership, one barrier to engagement and volunteerism can be the travel time to and from the church to a meeting or a project. We know that family life is busy, particularly with both parents working and the variety of activities available for children and youth. Our church is blessed with a number of retired members (and those who are not yet retired) who give generously of their time and talents. We must find ways, however, to foster service by all of our members. This is important not simply for our church as a whole, but for the spiritual growth and fellowship of each member.

One trend in volunteerism appears to be greater interest in one-time or limited-time projects. This might include planting flowers around the church building or serving meals at Bethlehem on Broad Street. Meanwhile, it appears to be harder to recruit folks to serve on boards, commissions or committees with a one- to three-year term and meetings monthly (or even more often). Clearly, both types of volunteerism need people willing to serve. The House and Grounds Commission has developed membership tiers that reflect the level of involvement. Some members commit to attend meetings, other support special projects, while others just wish to be informed, receive meeting agendas, minutes and progress reports and offer occasional advice. In discussing the challenge of recruiting people to committees, one senior minister we interviewed spoke of recruiting people to "groups with purpose, rather than to meetings."

On this issue of fostering the ministry of church members, our task force offers the following recommendations:

1. Creation of a Stewardship and Growth Commission with responsibility for the annual financial pledge campaign, encouraging year-round giving, and fostering and recognizing members' contributions of time and talents. We invest in what we feel a part of. Consultants in non-profit management emphasize that engagement through volunteerism leads to financial support of the organization. For more information on a Stewardship and Growth Commission, see the recommendations for restructuring Administration Commission.
2. The interests expressed by potential new members during new member classes should be shared with appropriate church officers, commissioners and committee chairs as a source of

new volunteers. Similar information on interests and gifts should be gathered from current members. The resulting data should be searchable digitally to identify potential volunteers.

3. Ask our members about their experience as a church volunteer, whether they feel their work had an impact, and whether it had a positive benefit to them. (Examples of surveys of volunteers are available online.) Act on the results of the survey.
4. Each commission and committee must do a better job of explaining the volunteer activities or committee functions and the time commitment expected. This involves engaging with volunteers (best done face-to-face), clearly communicating what is expected, and listening to the interests of those potential volunteers. The commissions could jointly host an annual volunteer fair for church members. Our church is a complex organization. As a congregation, we must do a better job of communicating the opportunities for service.
5. Each commission and committee must prepare to train members so, as volunteers, they know what they are being asked to do, the church procedures involved, and how to do their job.
6. As a congregation, we must recognize volunteers for their service.

Staffing

One of the charges to our task force is to “create a staffing model for the next five to 10 years.” While this is an important matter, we believe it is beyond the ability of our task force to develop such a staffing model at this time. With the departure of the minister of music, the associate minister and the Christian education director and the impending retirement of the building and grounds superintendent in mid-2023, the congregation has the opportunity to look creatively at our staffing needs. The Personnel Committee has already begun to do this.

Our task force recommends that, in this interim period, Council appoint a select number of church members to work with a subcommittee of the Personnel Committee to assess the congregation’s staffing requirements and bring back a recommendation on staffing positions and responsibilities.

Realigning the Administration Commission

“Vision 2027” proposed “re-imagining the Administration Commission as a Personnel Commission.” This proposal reflects the important work of the existing Personnel Committee. The Administration Commission also has responsibility for the important Budget and Finance Committee. Our task force realizes changes to the Administration Commission need to be made carefully because personnel and the budget are critical components of our church operations.

After input from the administration commissioner and the church treasurer and our own deliberation, the task force recommends:

1. Realignment of the Administration Commission as the Personnel Commission. The Personnel Commission could have a series of committees, such as Employee Relations (policy matters, job descriptions, employee evaluations), Hiring, and Equitable Compensation. This realignment would give Personnel a seat on Council.
2. Establishment of the Budget and Finance Committee as an independent committee with the church treasurer as the chair. The church treasurer already sits on Council and on Council’s Executive Committee.

3. The treasurer and Budget and Finance Committee should develop a common format for the description of a non-budget account and the procedure for creation of a non-budget account. The treasurer should have the authority to approve creation of a non-budget account.
4. Place the Stewardship Committee in the new Stewardship and Growth Commission, which would have a seat on Council. The commission could create additional committees, such as one to promote and support the engagement of church members.
5. Realign the Church Growth Commission as a committee within the Stewardship and Growth Commission. The Church Growth Commission has done good work over the years, but it has not always had consistent leadership and direction. Under the Stewardship and Growth Commission, it could work with new member classes and support the congregation's reach into the community.

Congregational care

“Vision 2027” suggested the creation of a congregational care commission or committee. The idea of a congregational care commission was suggested several years ago, but the idea was not acted on at that time. (See appendix 5 for the draft description of a congregational care commission prepared previously.) Our task force is sympathetic to a focus on congregational care that will define more clearly what such care encompasses and will determine effective ways to provide that care.

Under the church constitution, the deacons “assist the ministers in the spiritual direction of the church,” but over time they also have assumed some responsibilities for congregational care. In the past, laity also have been directly involved in congregational care, whether through informal volunteer efforts or a structured Stephen Ministry program. Currently, the church’s administrative manager leads an informal committee that sends cards and calls church members. Over the past year, the deacons have begun a one-to-one ministry with members, have established a congregational care hotline for people to call, and have surveyed members about congregational care.

Our task force recommends Council establish an *ad hoc* committee, including representation from the Board of Deacons and ministerial staff, to delineate the responsibilities and activities encompassed by a Congregational Care Commission, to identify the staffing, volunteers and budget needed to provide congregational care, and the division of responsibilities among the commission, ministers and the deacons. We suggest the *ad hoc* committee consider programs, such as Stephen Ministry, that could be established within the commission.

House and Grounds Commission

“Vision 2027” proposed realigning the House and Grounds Commission. This proposal reflects the enormous amount of work that members of this commission commit to maintaining our historic building and landscaping. Would their work be lessened if the commission had a building committee and a landscaping committee? The current house and grounds commissioner thinks separate committees would only result in more meetings. (We express our sincere thanks to church members who serve on the House and Grounds Commission, offering advice, helping to make critical decisions about our building, and volunteering in and around our building.)

Our task force applauds House and Grounds for establishing periodic workdays where church members can do simple building repairs and maintenance, prune bushes and plant flowers. These are opportunities for volunteers to contribute without committing to a monthly meeting. We also encourage church members with particular expertise in building systems (i.e., HVAC, electrical, plumbing, roofs) to make that known to the house and grounds commissioner and be willing to assist in projects where their knowledge would be helpful.

Communications and technology

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted church life as it did so much of civil society. Fortunately, our church had both the volunteers and the financial resources to livestream our worship services and the access to Zoom and other technologies to continue many of our meetings and activities virtually. The disruption, however, damaged the ability of our boards, commissions, committees and staff to share information effectively and orient new committee members. The disruption also highlighted our congregation's inconsistent record-keeping.

Carey Neiuwhof, an authority on leadership in churches, writes that the hybrid-church with both in-person and online activities is here to stay. The challenges are to provide the resources for both in-person and online activities and to determine how best to deliver those activities. For example, Neiuwhof suggests information can be easily shared online, while “transformation” will be through in-person experiences. Communications and technology will not deliver the transformational experiences of worshiping in our sanctuary with beautiful music and an intellectually stimulating sermon or sharing the fellowship of a small-group Bible study. But communications and technology are critical to maintaining the operations and many, if not most, of the activities and missions of the church.

Our task force commends the congregation for committing to hiring a full-time communications manager. Unfortunately, the search to fill that position was suspended last spring. With the departure this year of senior staff members, the congregation must undertake a review of its broader staffing needs. In light of these circumstances, we recommend the hiring of a full-time communications manager be given careful consideration, but within the context of the total staffing needs and budget. We suggest among the communications manager's responsibilities could be:

1. Provide information about the congregation's missions and activities across multiple platforms (i.e., weekly e-newsletter, website, social media).
2. Promote opportunities for volunteer service on committees and projects.
3. Consult with staff and lay leaders on how best to communicate their information and opportunities and to assess the effectiveness of such communications. This includes an effort to improve the clarity of information shared with members so that the transparency of church operations is enhanced. For example, some financial information might be better shared in graphic form, rather than columns of figures.
4. Provide periodic training for church staff, lay leaders and church members in the use of new technology, such as Realm, to improve information sharing, planning and decision-making. This is quite important as technology evolves and older members may be less familiar with how to use the particular technology.

5. Work with church staff, lay leaders and church members to develop guidelines to promote the most effective use of Zoom and other technology to make meetings productive for attendees. The church's new hybrid meeting room can work very well for many meetings, but may be less helpful for some types of gatherings.
6. Determine how best to communicate with church members, particularly those who may have limited or no access to technology.
7. Work with the ministry team to understand the opportunities for engagement with viewers of our church's livestreaming of worship services and for the use of technology to extend our church's ministries and missions.
8. Oversee the congregation's use of technology. As a practical matter, most of the church's use of technology is in communications. While we would not expect a communications manager to be knowledgeable about all fields of technology, this staff member could assemble the expert advice needed in particular situations.

Our task force recommends the establishment of a Communications and Technology Commission, which could be composed of a Communications Committee and a Technology Committee. The communications manager would work closely with the commissioner. Persons serving on the commission (or its committees) would provide advice on communications and technology and would volunteer to supplement the work of the communications manager.

Security Committee

Our task force commends the Security Committee for its work to secure the church building from break-ins and theft and to promote the safety of staff and church members. We recommend the Security Committee should report to the Board of Deacons, which is the front line for security on Sunday mornings.

The Security Committee should have at least one member each from the House and Grounds Commission and Board of Deacons, as well as other members recruited from the congregation. We suspect the Security Committee may not need to meet on a regular basis to oversee security. To respond as needed, however, the committee must have a clearly defined chair and membership. To the extent possible, church members with expertise in some aspect of security and public safety should be recruited as committee members.

Accountability and record-keeping

In a large congregation, Council cannot micro-manage staff members, boards, commissions, committees or ministry teams. That will stifle creativity and discourage volunteers and staff members. Yet the congregation needs policies and practices in place that assure accountability, transparency and financial integrity. The first step is to review the existing policies and practices, update them as needed, and create new ones as necessary. The next step is to educate lay leaders, church staff, and church members on the relevant policies and practices. The goal is to encourage engagement and creativity with proper accountability by clarifying the decision-making and budgeting processes and by avoiding confusion, delays and redundancy. To that end, our task force offers the following recommendations:

1. Lay leaders and members should familiarize themselves with the church constitution as the foundational document for church governance and operations. In 1990 and 1991, the bylaws were combined into the constitution for the simplicity of having one governing document for the congregation. As a result, more significant articles in the constitution require a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting for amendment, while other articles require only a majority vote.
2. The church constitution affirms: "Council is the policy-making body of the church." As a practical matter, Council also is the place where church officers, ministers, commissioners and other lay leaders come together to share information about the many and diverse programs and activities of the church. Our task force commends Council members for their commitment to their own specific responsibilities, but also for their deliberations on matters affecting the whole congregation. The information-sharing is important, but we wonder if it has overshadowed Council's responsibility for giving leadership and direction to the congregation. We recommend Council adopt a "consent agenda" model for decision-making. In such a model, no regular verbal reports from staff, boards, committees, and commissions are given during the meeting. All regular reports are written and submitted in advance of the meeting. A "consent agenda" includes appointments, funding decisions, contract approvals, and a host of other routine matters that from month to month require Council's approval. Background information and recommended actions are provided as attachments to the consent agenda, but there is no discussion on these action items. Non-routine items and important policy decisions that will require discussion are listed on the "discussion agenda." Before action is taken on the consent agenda as a singular motion without discussion, any member of Council may request that a consent agenda item be moved to the discussion agenda. The goal is to assure Council has time for discussion of important matters that drive the vitality and direction of the congregation.
3. Council should consider a policy to set a minimum time limit, such as 24 or 36 hours, for Council members to respond to a request to vote on a motion via email. The purpose is to permit Council members, who may not check their email more than once a day, to have the opportunity to vote before a final result is recorded. Council also may wish to consider a policy regarding which motions may be voted on via email and which must be voted on in a regular meeting.
4. If the congregation eventually chooses to adopt our task force's recommendations regarding commissions, one result will be an increase in voting members of Council from 17 to 18. If the number of Council members is increased to 18, then we recommend the quorum for a Council meeting to be increased from 9 to 10 voting members.
5. In listening to the concerns of staff members, our task force reminds lay leaders and church members to keep ministers and staff members informed early of planning efforts, potential programs and activities, and other matters that could affect the life of the congregation. Providing our staff with advance notice and the opportunity for providing advice will permit the appropriate use of our facilities, avoid duplication of effort and conflicting activities, and allow staff members to more effectively do their jobs on our behalf.
6. Our task force is very concerned the limit of two one-year terms for elected officers and commissioners has led to the rapid turnover of lay leadership and the loss of institutional

memory. For most elected positions, the learning curve in an organization as complex as our church often takes almost a year for a person to be comfortable in the position. As a result, continuity in planning and budgeting is compromised. We also recognize most positions require a great deal of time and attention from volunteer lay leaders, who may be unwilling to commit to more than one year. Our task force finds no perfect answer to this problem, but we suggest starting with granting Council the authority to permit additional one-year terms upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee. Not all officers and commissioners will seek an additional term, but those who do will provide some continuity on Council. We recognize that an additional term for an officer or commissioner may require an agreement with the officer- or commissioner-elect. We heard a suggestion that commissioners be chosen by the members of their commission, rather than nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the congregation. The Board of Deacons chooses the senior deacon, and the Board of Trustees chooses the chair. Each then serves on Council. Unlike the deacons and trustees, however, the commissions vary greatly in size and they don't have a defined group of elected members. Again, our proposal may not be the panacea, but we hope it sparks a useful discussion among church members.

7. Council should establish an *ad hoc* committee to develop a records-retention policy and procedures. Among the issues to be addressed in this policy:
 - a. A determination should be made regarding the minutes and records of church bodies that should be printed, filed and accessible to church staff, lay leaders and church members. These church bodies might include the Council, Board of Trustees and Board of Deacons. Monthly reports from commissions and committees normally are submitted to Council and are included in the Council's minutes.
 - b. A determination should be made regarding the minutes, records and reports that should be accessible through the church office and those that should be accessible through our church's website. Examples of software to aid accessibility are Microsoft Sharepoint, Google Workspace and Confluence. Some churches place Council minutes on a bulletin board for members to read. Perhaps, some financial records should not be posted on the website due to concerns about data theft or privacy.
 - c. The *ad hoc* committee should work with the Personnel Committee to develop a policy for the retention of employee records, including the necessary safeguards for privacy and limiting access to these records.
 - d. After development of a records-retention policy, Council should determine a process to collect and appropriately store past records of the congregation.
8. Council should recreate a notebook or three-ring binder with printed copies of the church constitution, church policies and procedures, Council minutes and historical information for each Council member. Each notebook should be supplemented with information pertaining to the responsibilities of that Council member. Through the year, the Council member can add pages to the notebook, which should be passed on to her or his successor. These notebooks existed in the recent past, but the pandemic disrupted their continuation. Similar notebooks should be developed for the Board of Trustees and Board of Deacons. These documents and other information also should be available digitally.
9. Council should sponsor a thorough orientation session for Council members shortly after the annual congregational meeting.

10. The church constitution provides for Council coordinating with the Board of Trustees on long-range planning. We recommend Council and the Board of Trustees meet at least annually to discuss long-ranging planning and direction for the church.
11. Article VII.B.3 of the constitution gives Council control of the use of church property for meetings other than those of the church. We recommend Council develop a policy for the use of the building and delegate clear responsibility for who will approve such uses. In addition, the policy should direct who will approve the use of office space and other facilities for use by staff and members.
12. The third paragraph of the constitution's Article XVIII on amendments notes the first three articles of the constitution constitute the "articles" required by non-profit corporations under state law. Amendments to these first three articles and the designation of a statutory agent must be filed with the Secretary of the State of Ohio. We recommend Council designate an officer or entity of the congregation to make the appropriate filings on a regular basis.
13. The church constitution does not address the question of virtual meetings. Due to the pandemic, Council has relied on virtual meetings over Zoom for more than two years. A virtual congregational meeting, however, presents more difficult logistical challenges of determining a quorum and eligibility to vote and a process for voting. Our task force did not have the technical expertise suggest how such a virtual meeting might be held or how it might be described in the constitution, but it is a matter that could be addressed in the future.
14. The Personnel Committee, which has done an extraordinary amount of work in 2022, should undertake these additional reviews and policy development:
 - a. Review and, as necessary, revise and update its Personnel Policies and Practices manual to conform with current practices and legal mandates. The task force appreciates the work of the committee to write and refine this detailed manual over the years. We have obtained the personnel manuals from two other large UCC churches, which we will share with the committee for insights and ideas.
 - b. Develop a consistent policy for the search process, hiring and on-boarding of new employees.
 - c. Refine the annual evaluation process for church employees, the retention of evaluation records and the appropriate sharing of information from the evaluation process. While the evaluation process includes a review of the employee's performance, another equally important aspect is the opportunity for the employee to set work goals. At one UCC church, each staff member participates in an annual evaluation conducted by a team involving the staff member's supervisor, the lay leader with whom the staff member works, and a member of the personnel committee.
 - d. Develop for adoption by Council a "statement of shared values" and a "code of professional conduct" for church employees and lay leaders, including accountability and enforcement measures, and explore creation of an employee assistance program.

Constitutional amendments

The charge to our Governance Task Force included a request that we review the church constitution and offer proposed amendments. As a result, we have scrutinized the constitution line by line, and we now propose a significant number of amendments. Many proposed amendments are housekeeping matters that clarify the wording or bring the constitution into line with current practice. Other proposed amendments are much more significant and reflect the recommendations in this report that deal with administrative structure and policies.

Some proposed amendments that merely clarify the wording or make a name change, such as renaming the Education Commission as the Faith Formation Commission, could be considered at the congregation's annual meeting in January 2023. Other proposed amendments deserve careful deliberation by Council, other church bodies and church members before going to a vote by the congregation. Such proposed amendments could be considered at a special congregational meeting later in 2023 or at the annual meeting in January 2024.

The next section of this report provides the rationale for the proposed amendments to the church constitution. The section that follows presents the church constitution with proposed deletions and additions highlighted in yellow. The two sections should be read together.

Summary of proposed constitutional changes

PREAMBLE

The proposed changes to the Preamble reflect the revised open and affirming statement approved by the congregation on January 27, 2019. The proposed changes complete the formal process required for amending the constitution.

ARTICLE III. POLITY, Section B

A minor edit is recommended to change the word “government” to ‘governance’ to better reflect the context of the provision.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP, Section A. Active Members

It is proposed that the Senior Deacon be designated as the church official to initially determine the status of membership when a question arises (e.g., at a congregational meeting when only members can vote or be elected to church office). The Senior Deacon’s decision could be subject to review by the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE V. GOVERNANCE, Section D. Special Meetings

Proposed revisions would require that petitioners for a special congregational meeting to state the purpose of the meeting and would clarify the requirements for Council’s role in scheduling a meeting.

ARTICLE VI. ELECTED OFFICERS, Section A. Moderator

The proposed change reflects the current practice that the Moderator signs legal documents on behalf of the church.

ARTICLE VI. ELECTED OFFICERS, Section E. Treasurer

Proposed revisions reflect current practice that Council can designate other elected officials to assist the Treasurer in managing financial accounts and authorizing payments. It is also recommended that the Treasurer coordinate financial committees and oversee the management of church credit cards.

ARTICLE VI. ELECTED OFFICERS, Section G. Terms of Office

A major issue for review of the Governance Task Force was the need for reducing the amount of turnover in the leadership positions of the church. Under current provisions of the constitution, officers serving one-year terms are limited to two consecutive terms. In most cases, individuals have been serving one year in an “elect” position and one year as a commissioner or an officer. It is recommended that the practice change to encourage individuals who have served in an “elect” position to serve for two one-year terms as a commissioner or an officer when possible.

In addition, it is proposed that Council be given the authority to permit additional terms beyond the two-term limit if circumstances merit for an extended term for a specific position.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, A. Membership

There are several proposed changes for Council membership. The title of Vice-Moderator is to be substituted by the title of Moderator-Elect. Under current language, the Deacons have two representatives on Council including the Senior Deacon. The proposed change would identify the second deacon representative as the Senior Deacon Elect, which is the current practice. The listing of commissioner titles is changed to reflect the proposed restructuring and renaming of some commissions (see Article VIII. Commissions). With the proposed changes, there will be an additional commission for a total of eight commissions. It is proposed to recognize that church staff may hold elective office, but, similar to the service of called ministers, staff members holding elected office would serve in a non-voting status on Council. In addition, added language would encourage those serving in an “assistant” or “elect” position to attend Council meetings and be available to vote in the absence of their corresponding council member.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, B. Responsibilities

The proposed change would include security as another identified responsibility of Council to reflect current practice.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, B. Responsibilities, 1. Committees

Based upon the restructuring of the Administration Commission, the Treasurer similar to a commissioner would propose the members of the committee responsible for church finance. An additional proposed change would recognize Council’s current practice of appointing special committees and task forces when needed.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, B. Responsibilities, 2. Delegates to the Wider Church

The proposed change clarifies that a delegate can vote on actions to be taken by the wider church, but the delegate cannot vote to accept actions to be taken by the local church without prior authorization.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, B. Responsibilities, 3. Use of Church Property

The proposed addition recognizes the current practice that Council routinely delegates its authority to others to manage requests for use of church facilities and grounds. It clarifies that Council retains the ultimate authority to decide use of church property regardless of any delegation of its responsibility.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, B. Responsibilities, 4. Duties and Termination

Given the changes in technology and meeting formats, it is recommended that there no longer be an expected need to resign if an elected official is absent from the city. Instead, the need to resign is related to an absence from performing duties.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, C. Executive Committee, 1. Membership

The same proposed change for Council related to church staff serving in an elected position would apply if the staff member had a role on the Executive Committee. The staff member could be elected to a position that served on the Executive Committee, but would serve in a non-voting status. In addition, the Senior Deacon Elect could serve and vote as a member of the Executive Committee in the absence of the Senior Deacon.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, C. Executive Committee, 2. Responsibilities

The recommended addition of the word “proposed” for agendas is to clarify that the Executive Committee does not control Council’s agenda, but presents a proposed agenda for consideration of Council. Language also is added to recognize that Council may delegate its authority to the Executive Committee whenever it deems the delegation as appropriate.

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL, D. Meetings of Council

The quorum standard would be changed from 9 voting members of Council to 10. The recommended change is tied to the proposal to increase the total number of voting members of Council from 17 to 18. Another proposal recognizes the longstanding practice that the Moderator can initiate an email vote of Council that is subject to the existing quorum requirements for any meeting of Council. This option is available when there is a time-sensitive matter for which a decision is needed by Council.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS, A. Organization: Personnel, Stewardship & Growth

It is recommended that the Administration Commission be restructured. The commission would be renamed as the Personnel Commission to reflect its primary focus. A more detailed listing of responsibilities is intended to reflect the specific areas of coordination related to staff relations. Oversight of church finances would be transferred from the Administration Commission to the church Treasurer. Stewardship responsibilities would be combined with Church Growth to encourage a year-round approach to welcoming, joining, giving, and volunteering at the church.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS, A. Organization: Faith Formation

The Education Commission would be renamed as the Faith Formation Commission to reflect its current title. The responsibilities for the commission is expanded to reflect its diversity of programming.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS, A. Organization: Justice and Mercy

The expanded description of the commission recognizes its current practice of overseeing relations with the United Church of Christ denomination and in promoting opportunities of service by members to help those in need.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS, A. Organization: Communications and Technology

It is recommended to establish a new commission for communication and technology. Given the use of technology to provide access to worship services, special programs, and meetings, it is appropriate to establish a new commission to oversee these responsibilities and to have representation on Council. The new commission also would coordinate church communications in recognition of the development of the church's website and other social media platforms.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS, B. Commissioners

The proposed change in this section is to complement the proposed revisions in Article VI. G. Terms of Office. The new language allows Council to permit the nomination of an individual to serve for more than two consecutive one-year terms as a specific commissioner.

ARTICLE IX. BOARD OF DEACONS

The proposed change in this section is to complement the proposed revision in Article VII. A. Council Membership indicating that the second deacon representative on Council is the Senior Deacon Elect. In addition, the responsibilities of Deacons are clarified to recognize current practice.

ARTICLE X. BOARD OF TRUSTEES, A. Organization

The proposed revision would permit the Trustees to appoint a secretary who is not a trustee.

ARTICLE X. BOARD OF TRUSTEES, B. Responsibilities

It is recommended that language be added to recognize the obligation of both the Trustees and the Congregation to comply with applicable Ohio law for endowment funds. It also is proposed that the Trustees provide a financial report to Council when requested rather than on a quarterly basis.

ARTICLE X. BOARD OF TRUSTEES, C. Meetings

The proposed revision permits the Chairperson of Trustees to adjust meeting dates and times, and to conduct email votes for time-sensitive matters. These changes reflect current practice.

ARTICLE XI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, A. Nominating Committee

It is recommended to reduce the size of the Nominating Committee from ten members to at least five members. In addition, committee membership will be proposed by the Chairperson and approved by Council.

ARTICLE XI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, B. Nominations

The added language represents current practice that the Nominating Committee is to recommend candidates at an annual meeting for the remainder of the term for vacant positions.

ARTICLE XI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, C.. Elections

Consistent with the change to Article IX. B. Nominations, it is proposed to include language recognizing the elections that are held for the remainder of the term for vacant positions.

ARTICLE XII. SENIOR MINISTER

The article that outlines the responsibilities of the Senior Minister also has addressed employment and compensation issues involving other staff. The recommended changes are:

1. A clear distinction is made between personnel matters involving called ministers and other staff. The term “calling” is deleted from a list of responsibilities shared by the Senior Minister, the Moderator, and the Personnel Commissioner for addressing employment issues. (The only employee that is “called” to service is a “called minister” as defined in the constitution. A called minister is hired based upon the recommendation of a pastoral search committee, the initial approval of council, and the final approval of the membership.) Consistent with current practice, it is proposed to designate that Council determines the pay and benefits for employees who are not called ministers and that Council determines improvements in pay and benefits for called ministers.
2. The Senior Minister, the Moderator, and the Personnel Commissioner are authorized to address or accept a staff resignation.
3. The Senior Minister, the Moderator, and the Personnel Commissioner may delegate their authority on employment matters to one of themselves or to others if the staff position relates to a part-time, interim, or temporary employee.
4. The role of supervision of employees is outlined in greater detail in the constitution. It is proposed that it be stated expressly that the Senior Minister, as well as other supervisors, are expected to manage the performance and schedule of church employees. (Please note that the actual staff organizational structure is fluid and changes over time, and has not been included in the constitution. For that reason, the staff organization structure is part of the Personnel Policies and Practice Manual that is recommended by the Personnel Commission and approved by Council.) In keeping with current practice, the Moderator would approve requests for paid and unpaid leave of the Senior Minister. In addition, Council would continue through approval of the provisions of the Personnel Policies and Practices Manual to establish the supervising body of the Senior Minister to address employment matters including performance reviews, grievances, and discipline.

ARTICLE XIII. CALLED MINISTERS, A. Definition

It is recommended that there be a definition for a “called minister.” The definition is consistent with the description used by the denomination for an ordained minister with the addition that a called minister by this provision would involve a vote of the membership to approve or end a call. It is proposed that a called minister, as is true for any ordained minister of the denomination, would be subject to the Ordained Minister’s Code of the UCC. (See Appendix 6.) There could be instances when an ordained minister would be hired to serve in a staff position at the church that was decided not to be subject to a formal call and vote of the membership. Consistent with current practice, a called minister would be subject to supervision and would need to comply with personnel policies approved by Council.

ARTICLE XIII. CALLED MINISTERS, C. Pastoral Search

Proposed edits clarify that the formal pastor search process applies to a called minister.

ARTICLE XIII. CALLED MINISTERS, F. Other Minister

It is proposed that the provision related to Council's authority to appoint interim ministers be expanded to include other forms of special ministers.

ARTICLE XIII. CALLED MINISTERS, G. Minister Emeritus

It is recommended that a new provision be included that would establish the process and the guidelines to apply for approving a called minister for recognition as an emeritus position with the church.

ARTICLE XIV. PROPERTY, B. Transfer

It is recommended that the property provision be amended to recognize that Council can address property issues when real property is donated to the church that is not intended to be used by the church for its mission and ministries. Sometimes church members have donated real property to the church as fulfillment of a pledge or as a bequest. Church members also have donated unneeded burial plots to the church. Another proposal clarifies that Council can address the disposition of personal property acquired by the church.

ARTICLE XV. AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

It is recommended to clarify that Council may not need to manage the daily operations of an affiliated organization, yet Council will still have the ultimate supervision and control over any affiliated organization including the appointment of an affiliated organization's governing board that would serve at the discretion of Council. A clarification also is proposed to indicate that an affiliated organization cannot undertake a legal obligation without approval of Council.

Constitution
First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio

PREAMBLE

As a community of faith, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, are called to witness and serve, united by their acceptance of the following mutual covenant:

We covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ and with one another and bind ourselves in the presence of God to live together in all God's ways as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scripture.

We covenant with one another to worship, work, and serve God together so that we may express through our fellowship and our individual lives the love and faith taught by Jesus Christ.

The church recognizes the rich diversity of God's creation through living by example the following open and affirming statement:

In our commitment and desire to reach out and welcome all those in need of and searching for God's love, We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all.

We believe that we are all created in God's image, **female and male,** and **that we** **are** called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us.

We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, **and** called to unite all people in God's love. **We welcome and affirm all people.**

We **invite those who** are **a community** seeking God's presence **and love in our lives. in their lives to join us on our common journey.**

Our faith community We seeks to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, **sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures,** mental, **intellectual** and physical **conditions, abilities, socioeconomic levels, economic circumstances,** and political, **and** theological **and faith** backgrounds.

Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will **strive to** "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

The church acknowledges that all members have the right of individual interpretation of the principles of the Christian faith and respects them in their honest convictions.

In accordance with the teaching of our Lord, the church recognizes two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church is FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, COLUMBUS, OHIO.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the church is to provide for the worship of God and the spiritual enlightenment and improvement of the people of God; to further Christian fellowship among its members and among all people; and to promote, through its services and work, the practice of Christian love and discipleship.

ARTICLE III. POLITY

- A. The church is a member of the United Church of Christ and therefore sustains that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in the constitution of the United Church of Christ relating to local churches.
- B. The **government governance** of the church is wholly vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs subject to no other ecclesiastical body, but subject to the laws of the State of Ohio relating to non-profit corporations.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the church is open to any person who is in accord with the faith and covenant of the church, expressed in the Preamble of this Constitution. Members are expected to strive to live the Christian life, to foster diligently the spiritual welfare of their fellow members, to bring a Christian presence to the community and the world, and to their fullest abilities to participate in the worship services of the church and to support its benevolences, work and activities. Membership may be active, associate, or inactive.

A. ACTIVE MEMBERS

All candidates recommended by a called minister and accepted by action of the deacons will be received into active membership at any regular service. Persons become active members by baptism and either confirmation or profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; by reaffirmation of faith; or by letter of transfer or certification from another Christian church. **Any question related to the status of an active member is to be decided initially by the Senior Deacon subject to review by the Board of Deacons.**

B. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

All candidates recommended by a called minister and accepted by action of the Board of Deacons will be received into associate membership at any regular service. Members of other Christian churches wishing to participate in the life and work of the church may be received as associate members after attestation of membership in good standing of another Christian church. Associate members may not vote in congregational meetings or hold congregationally-elected positions. Associate membership is not meant to affect the associate member's relationship with another church.

C. INACTIVE MEMBERS

When a member of the church makes a request to a called minister or the Board of Deacons, or when a member has for two consecutive years neither been in attendance at church services nor shared in the life of the congregation by financial support and/or service, the Board of Deacons may move the member to inactive membership status. Inactive members may not vote in congregational meetings or hold congregationally-elected positions. An inactive member may reinstate active membership upon request.

D. TERMINATION

Active, associate or inactive members will be released from membership and may receive a letter of transfer from the Board of Deacons upon the member's request to a called minister or the Board of Deacons.

The Board of Deacons may terminate an inactive member who has been inactive for three or more years, an action to be taken only after contact with the member, if contact is possible.

After the church's faithful, diligent and sustained but unsuccessful efforts to nurture a member's commitment to member expectations, as described in the opening paragraph of this Article, the Board of Deacons may terminate a person's membership.

ARTICLE V. GOVERNANCE

A. CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The governing body of the church is the membership assembled in a properly noticed Congregational Meeting. Sixty active members constitute a quorum.

B. VOTING

Except as otherwise provided in this constitution, the affirmative vote of a majority of active members present and voting at a properly noticed Congregational Meeting at which a quorum present, is the action of the church.

C. ANNUAL MEETINGS

The annual meeting of the congregation is held on the last Sunday of January of each year. At this meeting, the written annual reports of the Council, each of the elected officers, the Board of Trustees, the Board of Deacons, each of the Commissioners, all church organizations and the ministers will be submitted to the congregation and to the church archives.

D. SPECIAL MEETINGS

Council will call a special meeting of the congregation when Council deems it necessary or when a petition is received at a Council meeting, the petition to be signed by no fewer than thirty active members of the congregation. **The petition must state the purpose for the special congregational meeting. Upon consideration of a valid petition at a council meeting,** Council will schedule **such a special congregational meeting** within four weeks **of its call or of receipt of the petition of that council meeting or within an alternate time period proposed by Council with the consent of the representative(s) of the petitioners.**

E. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Written or electronic notice of meetings, with a summary of any actions to be voted on, will be sent to the members by the Secretary not less than two weeks prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE VI. ELECTED OFFICERS

The elected officers of the church are the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer.

A. MODERATOR

The Moderator is the lead lay officer of the church and Council and presides at Congregational Meetings and meetings of Council. **The Moderator has the authority to sign legal documents and contracts on behalf of the church for matters that are authorized by Council whether by policy or action.** The Moderator undertakes special projects, such as long-range planning, as directed by the Council.

B. VICE-MODERATOR-MODERATOR-ELECT

The **Vice-Moderator-Moderator-Elect** assists the Moderator in Council matters as requested by the Moderator, **and** serves as Moderator in the absence of the Moderator, **and is the Moderator-elect.**

C. SECRETARY

The Secretary is responsible for the care and custody of records of church membership, baptisms, marriages, deaths, and other ceremonies and details. The Secretary prepares the official records of meetings of the congregation, Council, and the Executive Committee, and transmits the records to the church archives, for which the Council is responsible. The Secretary is responsible for notices of Congregational Meetings, Council and its Executive Committee.

D. ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The Assistant Secretary is the Secretary-elect and assists the Secretary in the record keeping and notices of the church. The Assistant Secretary serves as the Secretary in the absence of the Secretary.

E. TREASURER

The Treasurer is the custodian of all funds of the church, except those legally or specifically vested in the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer is responsible for recording and collecting all pledges and moneys to the church, **makes for making** all payments from funds as authorized by Council, and **keeps for keeping** separate accounts of funds received for separate purposes. The Treasurer makes monthly reports to Council. **The Treasurer and other elected officers as designated by Council have signing authority to manage church financial accounts and authorize payments. The Treasurer is responsible for the coordination of all committees and groups involving church finance. The Treasurer determines who may use a church credit card and the maximum lines of credit subject to the credit card policy approved by Council.**

F. ASSISTANT TREASURER

The Assistant Treasurer is the Treasurer-elect and assists the Treasurer in coordinating the finances of the church except those legally or specifically vested in the Board of Trustees. The Assistant Treasurer serves as the Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer.

G. TERMS OF OFFICE

The officers are elected for terms of one year and for no more than two consecutive terms **unless Council authorizes additional one-year terms upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee.**

ARTICLE VII. COUNCIL

A. MEMBERSHIP

The Council is composed of the following voting members:

Moderator

~~Vice-Moderator~~ Moderator-Elect

Senior Deacon

One Senior Deacon **Elect** (chosen by the Deacons)

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees (chosen by the Trustees)

Secretary

Treasurer

One Member-at-Large

One Youth Member-at-Large

Chairperson of the Nominating Committee

Seven Eight Commissioners and **seven eight** Commissioners-Elect as follows:

(1) **Administration Personnel**

- (2) **Church Stewardship and Growth**
- (3) **Education Faith Formation**
- (4) Justice and Mercy
- (5) Music, Arts and Heritage
- (6) Church Vitality
- (7) House and Grounds
- (8) **Communications and Technology**

In addition to the voting members, the called ministers of the church are non-voting ex-officio members of Council. **Church employees who are active members of the church and who are elected to positions on Council must serve as non-voting members of Council. The Assistant Secretary, the Assistant Treasurer, the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and the Commissioners-Elect are encouraged to attend and participate in Council meetings, but they may vote only when the corresponding Council member is absent or in non-voting status.** At the Moderator's discretion, others may be asked to participate in Council meetings **without voting privileges.**

~~The Assistant Secretary, the Assistant Treasurer, Commissioners-Elect, and Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees will vote only when the corresponding Council member (the Secretary, the Treasurer, the related commissioner, or the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees) provides the Moderator notice of an intended absence.~~

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

Council is the policy-making body of the church and transacts the business of the church. It determines the current operating budget, including the budget for missions and benevolences, and for raising the necessary funds to support the budget. It is responsible for the care, ~~and~~ maintenance **and security** of the church's buildings and property; for the time and character of worship and other services; for the music and education programs; for church growth, outreach and missions; and for the fellowship life of the church. It coordinates with the Trustees in the development of long-range planning for the church, its needs, and its missions. Its actions are subject to the instructions of Congregational Meetings. It is responsible for the church archives.

1. COMMITTEES

Council organizes itself each year and forms such committees as will serve to further the purpose of the church. Each commissioner proposes the chairpersons of the committees within the commission and the members of those committees, with the approval of Council. **The Treasurer serves as the chairperson of the committee responsible for church finance, and appoints the members of the committee, with the approval of Council. Also, Council may form special committees or task forces for designated purposes. They will report directly to Council, and their funding sources and their membership will be decided by Council.**

2. DELEGATES TO THE WIDER CHURCH AND ORGANIZATIONS
Delegates will be drawn each year by Council, first from the officer-elect positions, to represent the church in meetings or conferences with the wider church and other organizations. Delegates have no power to bind the church to financial obligations or to any definite action **by the church** unless such power is expressly granted to them in the action of their appointment.
3. USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY
Council controls the use of church property for meetings other than those of the church, and the use of the church or its services for the promotion of any interests or organizations other than the church. **Council may delegate its authority regarding use of church property to others with recognition that Council may exercise its ultimate authority if objections or questions arise involving the proposed use of church property.**
4. DUTIES AND TERMINATION
All persons serving in elected positions are to be regular and faithful in the discharge of their duties. Any individual contemplating an extended absence from **the city their duties** or becoming unable to perform the proper functions of the position is expected to resign. Council may request the resignation of any individual inactive in respect to the duties of the position. If necessary, Council may declare the position vacant, and proceed to fill the vacancy in the manner provided in this constitution.

C. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. MEMBERSHIP
The Executive Committee consists of the Moderator, the **Vice-Moderator Moderator-Elect**, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Senior Deacon, and the Chairperson of the Trustees. The Senior Minister and the immediate Past Moderator serve as non-voting ex-officio members of the Executive Committee. **Church employees who are active members of the church and who are elected to positions on the Executive Committee must serve as non-voting members of the Executive Committee.** The Assistant Secretary, the Assistant Treasurer, **Senior Deacon Elect**, and the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees may **attend and** vote only when the corresponding Executive Committee member **is absent or in non-voting status, provides the Moderator notice of an intended absence.** At the Moderator's discretion, others may be asked to participate in Executive Committee meetings **without voting privileges.**
2. RESPONSIBILITIES
The Executive Committee provides coordination and leadership to Council, including establishing **proposed** agendas for Council meetings and responding to requests by other church groups and staff related to important issues of the church

that do not require Council action, if such responsibilities are not otherwise provided for in this constitution. **The Executive Committee acts on Council's behalf when authorized by Council.**

3. MEETINGS

The Executive Committee meets monthly at the discretion of the Moderator.

D. MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

Council meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month. By action of Council, the date of a regular meeting may be changed, in which event at least one week's written or electronic notice is given to each member of Council. **Nine Ten** voting members of Council constitute a quorum.

Council may dispense with regular meetings during the months of July and August of each year, and may authorize the Executive Committee to act on its behalf during these months. Council may authorize the Executive Committee to act on its behalf on specific matters at other times.

Special meetings of Council are called by the Secretary either at the request of the Moderator, or upon the written request of five members of Council. Written or electronic notice of any special meeting will be given by the Secretary before such meeting, stating the purpose of the meeting. If time does not permit written or electronic notice, a reasonable effort will be made to notify personally all members of Council of the meeting. **For time-sensitive matters, the Moderator may authorize and conduct a vote of Council by electronic communication subject to Council quorum requirements. These votes are to be recorded as any other meeting of Council.**

ARTICLE VIII. COMMISSIONS

A. ORGANIZATION

Church activities not assigned to Council, elected officers, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee, or staff are coordinated by the Commissions, whose responsibilities are as follows:

Administration Personnel - plan, coordinate, and evaluate the human **and financial** resources of the church; **oversee salary and benefit surveys and recommend employee compensation and benefits for approval of Council; administer the operating budget of employee compensation and benefits; approve job responsibilities and supervisory structure; guide internal staff relations, and staff relations with church leaders as needed; oversee maintenance of personnel records; direct the conduct of employee performance reviews; oversee the employee grievance and disciplinary procedures; and recommend personnel policies for approval of Council;**

Church Stewardship and Growth - promote the growth and development of the church **as a faith community and invite members to commit to share**

resources of time, talent, and treasure to support the ministries of the local church and denomination;

Faith Formation Education - further the understanding of the Christian faith and of God's creation, **develop and train teachers and leaders to advance faith formation for children, youth and adults, organize youth programs and youth mission projects, support confirmation classes, and strengthen families by providing parenting and family enrichment programs;**

Justice and Mercy - **advance social justice, seek opportunities of service and support to** reach out to and help people in need, **foster what is right,** seek peace, **and** effect change for a better world, **and oversee relations with the church's denomination – the United Church of Christ and its missions;**

Music, Arts and Heritage - encourage the arts in the context of our liturgy and our building, and preserve our heritage;

Church Vitality - develop relationships with and enhance fellowship and service among members of the congregation;

Communications and Technology - advance the growth and effectiveness of communications with members, staff, and the wider community, and provide advice, implementation and oversight regarding the ongoing development and use of technology for the church and its programs;

House and Grounds - maintain, repair, and improve the church buildings **and their mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems,** furnishings, aesthetics, and landscape.

B. COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners are elected from the active membership of the church for one-year terms and for no more than two consecutive terms **unless council authorizes additional one-year terms upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee.**

The Commissioners are responsible for the coordination of all committees and groups within their respective Commission. Each Commissioner is to coordinate and work with the other Commissioners and Council to bring about the best use of the church resources and to provide good communication with the church membership. Each Commission has a Commissioner-elect to assist the Commissioner and to serve in the absence of the Commissioner.

ARTICLE IX. BOARD OF DEACONS

Fifteen deacons are elected from the active membership of the church, five of whom are elected at each annual meeting to serve a term of three years. The Deacons select a chairperson who is the Senior Deacon, as well as the **Senior Deacon Elect who will serve as** representatives to Council. The Deacons assist the ministers in the spiritual direction of the church, including pastoral care **and spiritual development of members,** worship, celebration of the sacraments, other special services, and oversight of ushers. The Deacons have additional duties specified under Article IV Membership.

ARTICLE X. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A. ORGANIZATION

There are nine Trustees. Eight are elected from active members of the church (two each year) for terms of four years, and the Moderator is an additional voting Trustee. The Senior Minister is a non-voting ex-officio member of the Trustees. Five voting members constitute a quorum for Board of Trustees meetings.

The Trustees may appoint from the active members of the church a treasurer, **a secretary**, and a legal counsel to serve as advisors to the Board of Trustees. Specialized legal counsel may be retained with the approval of Council.

At their first meeting following the annual Congregational Meeting, members of the Board of Trustees select from their members a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson who serves in the absence of the Chairperson; and they also select a secretary.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees, **as fiduciaries**, invest and disburse funds held by them in accordance with the instructions of donors **and in compliance with Ohio law for endowment funds**. The Trustees consult with Council prior to authorizing the disbursement of such funds. The Trustees' authority in these matters is final except as legally directed by action taken at a Congregational Meeting **in accordance with the instruction of donors and in compliance with Ohio law for endowment funds**. The Trustees hold, invest, and disburse other funds as requested by Council.

The Trustees coordinate with Council in the development of long-range planning for the church, its needs, and its missions, and actively encourage church members to contribute to the endowment funds and to make special gifts for the benefit of the church, its needs or its missions.

The Trustees ensure that adequate insurance for the church and its activities and property is maintained at all times. The Trustees make a financial report to Council **as requested at least quarterly** and submit an annual financial report to the annual meeting.

C. MEETINGS

The Board of Trustees meets monthly. **By action of the Board, At the direction of the Chairperson**, the date of a regular meeting may be changed, in which event at least one week's written or electronic notice is given to each member of the Board. **For time-sensitive matters, the Chairperson may authorize and conduct a vote of the Trustees by electronic communication subject to quorum requirements. These votes are to be recorded as any other meeting of the Trustees.**

ARTICLE XI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

A. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee **is to be composed of at least five members. has ten members.** The Chairperson of the Nominating Committee is the immediate Past Moderator unless the individual is unable to serve, and in that case the **Vice-Moderator Moderator-Elect** serves as Chairperson. The committee is made up of active members of the church proposed by the **Chairperson Moderator** and approved by Council and should reflect the diversity of the congregation. **Committee members serve one-year terms and for no more than two consecutive terms unless Council authorizes additional one-year terms upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee. Six members of the committee serve three-year terms, two of whom are selected each year within two months after the annual meeting. Three at-large members serve one-year terms and are selected within two months after the annual meeting.**

B. NOMINATIONS

Only active members of the church are eligible to be nominated for elected positions. The Nominating Committee makes nominations for Moderator, **Vice-Moderator Moderator-Elect**, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, five Deacons, two Trustees, Members-at-Large, Commissioners, Commissioners-Elect, and **vacant positions for the remainder of the term Chairperson of the Nominating Committee.** Public Notice of these nominations will be published at least two weeks prior to the annual meeting. Other nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting, provided the consent of the nominee was obtained.

C. ELECTIONS

At each properly noticed annual Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present, Moderator, **Vice-Moderator Moderator-Elect**, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, five Deacons, two Trustees, Member-at-Large, Youth Member-at-Large, Commissioners, Commissioners-Elect, and **vacant positions for the remainder of the term Chairperson of the Nominating Committee** are elected by a majority of active members present and voting.

D. VACANCIES

For any position elected at an annual meeting, vacancies may be filled by Council for the period of time until the next annual meeting. Nominations for vacancies may be made by the Nominating Committee and/or from the floor of Council, provided the consent of the nominee was obtained.

ARTICLE XII. SENIOR MINISTER

The Senior Minister is the called pastoral leader of the church and is responsible for the general welfare of the church **and its members.** The Senior Minister is the spiritual leader and administrator of the church except on those matters which are otherwise specified in the constitution as being the responsibility of Council, Executive Committee, elected officers, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Commissions, or committees. The Senior Minister consults and

works with Council and with the appropriate individuals or groups in carrying out these responsibilities. The Senior Minister makes an annual report to the church at its annual meeting.

The Senior Minister, in agreement with the Moderator and **Administration Personnel** Commissioner and in consultation with others as needed, has responsibility on behalf of the church for selecting, hiring, **or calling, promoting,** and dismissing **employees that are not called ministers staff. Council in consultation with the Personnel Commission and the employee's supervisor decides the compensation and benefits of newly hired or promoted employees and decides improvements in the compensation and benefits established in the original call agreement of called ministers. The Senior Minister, in agreement with the Moderator and Personnel Commissioner and in consultation with others as needed, is authorized to address or accept the resignation of an employee or called minister. The Senior Minister, in agreement with the Moderator and Personnel Commissioner, may delegate their authority of employment matters to one of themselves or to others involving part-time, interim or temporary employees. The responsibility for selecting, calling, promoting, and dismissing called ministers is specified under Article XIII of the constitution.**

The Senior Minister and other supervisory staff are responsible for setting priorities, providing and approving training , approving employee and called minister schedules, approving paid and unpaid leave in accordance with established personnel policies, conducting performance reviews, addressing grievances, and deciding employee and called minister discipline. For purposes of the Senior Minister, the Moderator is responsible for approving paid and unpaid leave in accordance with established personnel policies. For all other matters involving the Senior Minister including performance reviews, grievances, and discipline, Council establishes the appropriate supervising body to make decisions as directed by in compliance with personnel policies approved by Council.

ARTICLE XIII. CALLED MINISTERS

A. DEFINITION

A called minister is a minister (e.g. Senior Minister and Associate Minister) who has standing or who will seek standing as an ordained minister with the Central Southeast Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ subject to a call and vote of the membership of the church once recommended by Council. A called minister is to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership. A called minister is to adhere to the Ordained Minister's Code of the United Church of Christ that provides guidance to a clergyperson's behavior in ministry. A called minister as any other employee is subject to supervision as approved by the Personnel Commission, and is subject to personnel policies as approved by Council.

B. VACANCY

When any position of a called minister becomes vacant, the Moderator reports it to the Central Southeast Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ or its successors.

C. PASTORAL SEARCH

Council appoints a pastoral search committee to select and recommend to Council a candidate for **the position of a called** minister **position**. The pastoral search committee consults with Council and others as directed by Council concerning terms of employment, financial requirements of the committee, and other matters necessary or incidental to its task of selecting and recommending a **called** minister. During the search and selection process the committee consults with the appropriate officials of the Central Southeast Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ or its successors to receive counsel and guidance.

D. CALL

When the pastoral search committee has selected and recommended a candidate who has been approved by Council, the Moderator calls a properly noticed special Congregational Meeting to consider the recommendation. In the proposed call, the terms of the relationship are stated including compensation, housing and other allowances, pension, health insurance, and other fringe benefits. With a quorum present, the affirmative vote of two-thirds or more of active members present and voting will constitute a call.

E. DISSOLUTION OF CALL

A called minister serves until relations with the church are terminated in accordance with the terms of the minister's call or by action taken at a properly noticed special Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present. By the affirmative vote of two thirds or more of active members present and voting at the meeting, the congregation may dissolve the call. Notice of termination will be sent by the Moderator to the Central Southeast Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ offices or its successors for appropriate action.

F. **INTERIM OTHER** MINISTER

Council may appoint an interim minister when necessary, and during this process consults with the Central Southeast Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ or its successors. **Council may appoint a supplemental minister who is to assist when regular ministers are unavailable because of vacation, sabbatical or disability, or may appoint a designated minister for special duties (e.g. Minister of Marriage).**

G. **MINISTER EMERITUS**

A called minister who has completed service with the church may be considered for designation as a Minister Emeritus upon the recommendation of Council and with the approval of a majority of the active members present and voting at a congregational meeting. The role of the Minister Emeritus is to be determined on an ongoing basis by Council and the Senior Minister (or acting Senior Minister) of the church.

ARTICLE XIV. PROPERTY

A. ACQUISITION

The church may in its corporate name sue or be sued; acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise, and own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property, real and personal; and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for or transfer, rent, lease, mortgage, or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer, or convey such property for the general purposes of the church. It may receive and hold real and personal property in trust and invest or reinvest the same and enter into contracts to further the objectives and purposes of the church.

B. TRANSFER

Any real property or any interest therein owned legally or beneficially, to be used or available for use by the church for its Purpose (Article II), may be transferred, **sold**, or mortgaged to secure loans to it only by action taken by the affirmative vote of two-thirds or more of active members present and voting at a properly noticed Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present. **Any real property or any interest therein owned legally or beneficially, that is not intended to be used or to be available for use by the church for its Purpose (Article II), or any acquired personal property of the church may be transferred, sold, or mortgaged to secure loans to it by action of Council.**

C. DISPOSITION

In the case of the dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it then possesses, including any bequest, gift, devise, or grant contained in any will or other instrument in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, will not be distributed among the members, but will be distributed to any other affiliated church organization(s) whose objectives and purposes are similar to those of the church as expressed in Purpose (Article II) herein only by action taken by the affirmative vote of two-thirds or more of active members present and voting at a properly noticed Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present.

ARTICLE XV. AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Except as otherwise provided in this constitution, any organization which is either a part of the church or primarily dependent upon the church for its continuance **is subject to ultimate supervision and control will be operated, supervised, or controlled** by Council. **The governing body of the affiliated organization will be appointed by Council and serves at the discretion of Council.** Its form of organization and any change thereto are subject to approval by Council. No such organization may incur any **legal** obligation without approval by Council, and its financial records will be audited periodically as directed by Council.

ARTICLE XVI. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the church is the calendar year.

ARTICLE XVII. RULES OF ORDER

Robert's Rules of Order (the current edition) is the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this constitution.

ARTICLE XVIII. AMENDMENTS

The Preamble (includes Faith and Covenant), Articles I (Name), II (Purpose), III (Polity), IV (Membership), V (Governance), and Articles XIV (Property), and XVIII (Amendments) may be amended at a properly noticed Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present by the affirmative vote of two-thirds or more of active members present and voting. All other articles may be amended at a properly noticed Congregational Meeting at which a quorum is present by the affirmative vote of a majority or more of active members present and voting.

Public Notice of such a meeting and the text of the proposed amendments(s) will be given by written or electronic means, bulletin or letter at least three weeks prior to the meeting.

Articles I, II, and III of this constitution constitute the "Articles" as set forth in the laws of the State of Ohio relating to non-profit corporations. Any amendments to these "Articles" are not effective until filed with the Secretary of State of Ohio.

Amended _____

Appendix 1: Trends affecting church life

April 5, 2022

TO: Governance Task Force
FROM: Steve Sterrett, task force chair
RE: Trends affecting church life

Research online has yielded several articles on church trends that underscore the importance of our task force's work. First Church appears to be responding well to these trends. Our task force should affirm what is working and help to build on success.

Perhaps, the most significant religious trend is that the Gallup organization in 2020 found the membership of Americans in houses of worship (church, synagogue or mosque) dropped below a majority for the first time in the 80 years of polling on this question. Membership in 2020 was 47%, compared with 70% in 1999. Other data indicates that more than 90% of U.S. congregations are declining in membership. These trends are not likely to change.

Carey Neiuwhof is an author and public speaker on leadership who often focuses on churches. His website has two articles that are particularly timely. The first is a list of the 12 disruptive trends affecting churches in 2022. He emphasizes that most churches can't keep doing church in the ways they have in the past and churches need to have a new vision for their future. He notes that the hybrid-church (both in-person and online activities) is here to stay. He suggests that information can be easily shared online, while "transformation" will be in-person.

<https://careynieuwhof.com/12-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2022-and-the-post-pandemic-era/>

Neiuwhof's second article suggests five ways to make your church irrelevant. One of those five ways is to focus on management, rather than leadership. For a church to thrive, great management is essential in the long term, but in a time of rapid change the church needs leadership to develop the vision and commitment to meet the changes.

<https://careynieuwhof.com/is-your-church-becoming-irrelevant-stop-doing-these-5-things/>

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership at the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., published an article in early 2021 on eight trends impacting church leadership. Among the eight trends are the move to digital ministry, promoting home faith practices, and leadership on racial justice. First Church scores well on these trends. The "take-home" kits for the Advent and Lenten seasons are an example of a good way to support families when Sunday school is not in session.

<https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/8-trends-impacting-church-leadership-for-2021/>

The online research suggests additional ideas:

1. In response to the pandemic, First Church ramped up its online and other digital communications, including the worship services. As church members and people, however, we have been living both in-person and online lives for a decade or more. If First Church is to thrive, then we will have to find the most appropriate ways for our church experiences to be both live and digital. With this in mind, the hiring of a full-time communications staff person may be critical to how we do church in the future.
2. While the worship services are available online, the congregation should consider developing more video content. For example, might our youth be interested in creating a short video (with the help of the communications staff person) of their summer work camp? The video could be placed on the church's website, as well as distributed over social media.
3. The church staff and lay leaders must document what the congregation has learned during the pandemic. What changes were made in church operations and in church activities? This documentation would be very useful in the future when another crisis comes down the pike.
4. As a large congregation, we can't micro-manage staff members, commissions and ministry teams. That will stifle creativity, particularly at a time when the congregation must respond to changing demographics and expectations. Yet we need policies and practices in place that assure accountability, transparency and financial integrity. An important aspect of our task force's work will be to identify changes in administrative structure and the need for clear policies that foster creativity, while maintaining accountability.

Appendix 2: Trends in volunteerism

August 23, 2022

TO: Governance Task Force
FROM: Steve Sterrett, task force chair
RE: Trends in volunteerism

The work of our task force offers even greater insight into the tremendous amount of volunteer work done by our church members. This includes elected church officers, Council members, deacons, commissioners, trustees, committee members, church school teachers, and volunteers with the church office, Bethlehem on Broad Street, meals for Faith Mission, flower gardens and much, much more. Our congregation can't function without people giving of their time.

One trend in volunteerism appears to be greater interest in one-time or limited-time projects. This might include planting flowers and pulling weeds in the beds around the church building or serving meals at Faith Mission or Bethlehem on Broad Street. Meanwhile, it appears to be harder to recruit folks to serve on commissions or committees with a one- to three-year term and meetings monthly (or even more often). Clearly, both types of volunteerism need people willing to serve.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Wiley of First Congregational Church of Hudson and the Rev. Dr. Kelly Brill of Avon Lake UCC discussed the challenge of recruiting people to committees. Rev. Wiley spoke of recruiting people to "groups with purpose, rather than to meetings." He also suggested the need for a smaller Council that provided thoughtful direction for the congregation, rather than just overseeing operations. Rev. Brill emphasized the importance of gatherings with a focus on "transformational experiences."

Online research offered the following ideas:

1. Non-profit organizations are finding that they need volunteers with a variety of skills and greater ability to use technology.
2. We must do a better job of explaining the volunteer activities and the time commitment expected. This involves communicating clearly what the volunteer activities are, engaging potential volunteers, and listening to the interests of those potential volunteers.
3. We should ask our existing volunteers about their experience as a volunteer, whether they feel their work had an impact, and whether their volunteer work had a positive benefit to them. (Examples of surveys of volunteers are available online.)
4. Volunteers often are looking for fresh experiences and opportunities to enhance their own knowledge and skills.
5. Volunteers are seeking a real and authentic connection with other people.

6. We need to train volunteers so they know what they are being asked to do, the church procedures involved, and how to do their job.
7. We need to value the contributions of these volunteers, express our appreciation, and be willing to listen to their experiences.
8. One website offered the calculation that a face-to-face request for a volunteer is 34 times more likely to be successful than an email message. Again, people value a personal connection.
9. Several websites focused on non-profit management emphasized that engagement through volunteerism leads to financial support of the organization.

To further spark your creative thinking, please read online:

“2022 Volunteering Trends” on the Civic Champs website at
<http://www.civicchamps.com/post/2022-volunteering-trends/>

“6 More Volunteer Trends to Watch in 2022” on the Volunteer U website at
<http://www.volunteeru.org/6-more-volunteer-trends-to-watch-in-2022/>

Appendix 3: Recent History of Church Constitutional Changes

Prepared by Tom Worley
August 2022

Pre-1990

Prior to 1990, church council had between 37 and 41 members. As now, there were two boards (deacons [12] and trustees [5]), but all of the board members were also members of council. There were only 3 commissions: Business, Education, and Missions. There were 7 named committees and allowance for up to 4 more committees that all could be represented on council and report directly to council.

Prior to 1990, there were both a constitution and bylaws. The main distinction is constitutional articles were subject to a 2/3s vote to amend and bylaw articles were subject to a majority vote to amend. The constitution established the purpose, principles and covenant, the officers, the boards, and the minister of the church. It spoke briefly about membership, meetings, and property. The bylaws provided greater detail regarding these provisions and identified the structure of council, commissions, committees, nominations, and the process for a pastoral search.

Prior to 1990, the moderator would act as a one-person nominating committee and would nominate all commissioners, commission members, committee chairs, and committee members for eventual approval of council. A separate nominating committee would nominate all officers, trustees, deacons, and at-large members for approval of the church membership.

Post 1990-1991

The 1990 and 1991 changes combined all bylaw provisions into the constitution for the simplicity of having one governing document for the church. It was then necessary to identify which article numbers would require a 2/3s vote to amend and which article numbers would only require a majority vote to amend. The new constitution also reflected inclusive language related to gender.

One significant addition to the revised constitution was the requirement that any real property once owned by the church would need for a 2/3s vote of the church membership to transfer or mortgage the real property. Previously, the board of trustees could own property in its own name and had made independent decisions related to the purchase and disposition of real property.

There were other changes to the responsibilities of the board of trustees. The board now was responsible for joining council in long-range planning for the church. In addition, the board was to consult with council prior to authorizing disbursement of endowment funds and was required to provide a quarterly financial report to council. Prior to 1980, the trustees seldom provided a detailed report of its funds or disbursements to council or to the church membership. The revised constitution emphasized the need for council and trustees to work closely together as they each have important roles related to church finances.

The major change in the constitution in 1990 was to reduce the size of council from possibly 41 members to 18. This was achieved initially by reducing the number of deacon representatives from 12 to 4, reducing the number of trustee representatives from 5 to 2 (the moderator and trustee chair), and reducing the number of other representatives from possibly 25 to 12. Council previously was so large that many of its members did not attend council meetings thinking that enough others would attend. Council at times struggled to reach a quorum to conduct business. The new smaller council had the benefit of a more conducive size for actual discussion and decision-making. In addition, the revised constitution authorized council to declare a position vacant (and fill it) if an individual was unable to meet the responsibilities of the position.

Rather than identifying specific committees in the constitution (other than the nominating committee), the document authorized council each year to establish the intended committee structure for the church (name of committee, its purpose, its size, and commission assignment). Each committee was intended to fall under the umbrella of a specific commission. That helped to reduce the number of groups reporting directly to council, but still allowed all groups to have an assigned commissioner who would represent them on council. Each commissioner was elected directly by the church membership and was responsible for nominating individuals to serve as chair and as members of the committees assigned to that commission for eventual approval by council.

Overtime, some commissions had two or three committees to supervise while other commissions had none and in essence the commission acted as the committee for its area of responsibility. Originally, the Administration Commission had four committees under it: Budget and Finance, Stewardship, Personnel, and House and Grounds. After several years, the constitution was amended to make House and Grounds its own commission.

1999

Following a period of controversy related to staffing decisions by a former senior minister, the congregation voted to change the authority of the senior minister for hiring and firing staff. Previously, the senior minister could take action after consulting with church council. The revised provision indicated that in the future the senior minister would need to gain the approval of council or such other group that council would designate as appropriate for seeking approval. Also, the senior minister was designated as an ex-officio member of council without vote – similar to other professional staff. Previously, the senior minister was a voting member of council. In addition, the senior minister was designated as an ex-officio member of the executive committee rather than as a voting member of this body.

2002

This year House and Grounds became its own commission. The number of deacons on council was reduced by one (from 4 – including the senior deacon to 3 – including the senior deacon). A third at-large position also was created for council. In the end, council had 18 members similar to its total in 1990. The chair of trustees became a member of the Executive Committee.

2013

The name of the church changed from the First Congregational Church of Columbus, Ohio to the

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Columbus, Ohio.

The faith and covenant of the church was expanded to include the church's open and affirming statement and was re-titled as the Preamble to the constitution.

Deacons gained authority to terminate the membership of an inactive member.

Nominating committee was expanded in size and to reflect the diversity of the church membership.

The senior minister's ability to hire and fire staff was changed from gaining approval of council to gaining approval of the administration commissioner and moderator.

A new distinction was made to recognize the hiring and firing of a called minister. Although the constitution does not define the term, it is believed that when any ordained minister is a candidate for call via a formal search process then this constitutes a called minister. A called minister must be approved by a 2/3s vote of the congregation. Similarly, the revised constitution requires that to dissolve a call of a called minister, the change must be approved by a 2/3s vote of the congregation. Previously, it was unclear whether an associate minister could have his or her call dissolved by action of the senior minister with the approval of the moderator and administration commissioner. In addition, the prior majority vote standard for dissolving a call was changed to a 2/3s standard.

The council membership changed from 18 to 17. Two of three at-large positions were eliminated and one youth position was created. Also, professional staff members were no longer listed as ex-officio members of council. Only called ministers would hold ex-officio positions.

Commissioner-elect and officer-elect positions were created to allow for succession planning for church leaders. In addition, the elect positions could temporarily vote in the place of the commissioner or officer if the commissioner or officer could not attend a meeting.

The senior deacon became an added member of the executive committee. The nominating chair became an ex-officio member of the executive committee.

The nominating chair was now designated as the immediate past moderator of the church. This would allow the past moderator to serve in an active role on council including the ability to vote as a council member.

Council is to consult with the Central Southeast Association of the UCC prior to hiring an interim minister.

2019

Deacons could adjust membership status based upon verbal communication with the member without need of a written or electronic communication for confirmation.

Appendix 4: Major Projects & Decisions of the Church (1958-2021)

Prepared by Tom Worley
August 2022

1958 – Schumacher Awards began
1964 – Education Wing Capital Campaign
1964? – First Interracial Nursery School in Columbus established by the church
1969 – Pretiola Gift Shop
1972 – Beckerath Organ
1972 – Co-hosted the Onawales
1975 – Established partnership with Deep Griha Society
1976 – Alma Keeler Funds established
1976 – Downtown Playschool
1976-83 – Clerestory Stained Glass Windows
1982 – Cambodian refugee resettlement
1982 – Good Samaritan Fund established via bequest
1984 – Jackie Owen Fund established
1985 – Began hosting Bethlehem on Broad Street
1986 – Mission Offering Series established
1986 – North Parking Lot renovation
1986 – Central America Task Force
1987 – Faith Mission meals began
1987 – Led effort to establish Columbus Habitat for Humanity
1988 – Parable Stained Glass Windows
1988 – Handicap Accessibility Capital Campaign (lift, elevator, bathroom)
1990 – Kitchen renovation
1990-91 – Major constitutional changes
1994 – Barnard Music Fund established
1995 – Mission Endowment Fund established
1996 – New Roof - Air Conditioning Capital Campaign
1996 – 9:00 a.m. Informal service began
1996 – Youth Mission Trips began
2000 – Joined B.R.E.A.D.
2002 – Open and Affirming Church
2004 – Kimball Organ renovation and Martin/MacNevin Organ Fund established
2004 – Catalyst Mission Program began
2007 – Dorinda White Endowment Fund established
2010 – West Lot/Jeffrey Window/Playground/Building Repairs Capital Campaign
2012 – Organ Preservation Fund established
2013 – Stained Glass Preservation Fund established
2013 – Major constitutional changes
2014 – Sam Gordon Playground Fund established
2014 – Stewardship Continuity Fund established

2015 – Johannes Landscape Maintenance Fund established
2015 - West Lot Fund established
2016 – Project 2020 tuck-pointing – window renovation project
2018 – Washington Gladden Social Justice Park dedicated
2019 – Social Justice Park Maintenance Fund established
2021 – Our Single Garment of Destiny Sculpture dedicated

Appendix 5: Draft of duties of congregational care commissioner

The Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens provided this list of the proposed duties prepared several years ago for creation of a new position of congregational care commissioner. The position was not created at that time. The Governance Task Force recommends the Board of Deacons complete its review of congregational care. This list is included in the task force report to offer information for further discussion on the topic with the congregation.

Congregational Care Commissioner

Time Required:

Annual Meeting - elected for a one-year term from among Congregational Care Commission; attend commission/committee meetings and other activities as able; attend monthly Church Council meetings. Approximately ___ hours per month.

Line of Communication:

Moderator of the Church Council

General Purpose:

Receiving and delegating care request, planning, coordinating, and evaluating the Congregational Care outreach efforts of First Church.

Specific Responsibilities:

- Voting member of the Church Council.
- Submit proposed committees, and membership of those committees, including a chairperson for each area of ministry, for Council's approval.
- Report activities of Congregational Care Commission to Church Council in writing, and other bodies as needed.
- Assist in the preparation and balancing of a budget(s).
- Prepare a year-end report for publication in the Annual Report.
- Coordination of all committees and groups within the commission: Pastoral Ministry, Practical Ministry, and Specialized Ministry
- Assist in the recruitment of church members to join the CC subcommittees, or assist with activities.
- Designate a chairperson for each area of ministry
- Facilitate communication and coordination between CC committees, other Commissions, and other areas of church life as appropriate.
- Advise and assist three ministry areas chairs to ensure that each meets its goals and objectives of the Long-Range Plan and accomplish tasks.
- Periodically write for The First Church News to keep the congregation informed of philosophy, committee decisions, and accomplishments.

Qualifications/Skills Needed:

- An appreciation of the various needs of individuals in the congregations and a determination to provide and coordinate their care

- An understanding of the church's mission and Long Range Plan.

Support Provided:

- Moderator of the Church Council
- Senior and Associate Ministers
- Senior Deacon
- Office Manager

Appendix 6: The Ordained Minister's Code

The Ordained Minister's Code

All persons with ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ are expected to abide by the UCC Ministerial Code.

I acknowledge as the Church's sole Head, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior, and as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession. I will look to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world.¹¹¹

Affirming that I have been called by God to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and granted ministerial standing by the United Church of Christ, I agree to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church with integrity, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership in covenant with others.

Relying on the grace of God, I...

COVENANT WITH GOD TO:

- Lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.
- Demonstrate a sincere yearning for connection with the triune God, expressed in prayer, worship, Bible study, retreat, and other spiritual practices.
- Affirm the importance of discernment in relationship to my call and, using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, will continue to discern the nature of my call in community.
- Grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.
- Cultivate a culture of call by nurturing the gifts of others in the Church and joining their gifts with mine in seasons of change and continuity for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.
- Honor the diversity of God's creation and work for the unity of the body of Christ (John 17:21).
- Recognize the communal nature of God, ensuring that ministry does not happen in isolation.

COVENANT WITH SELF AND FAMILY TO:

- Attend to my physical well-being by adopting a healthy life style including diet, exercise, and rest, setting aside time for Sabbath and vacation.
- Steward my time, talents, and personal financial resources responsibly.
- Accept responsibility for all debts that I incur.
- Refrain from abusive behavior including abusive behavior toward others, the abuse of alcohol, drugs, or any other substance; to seek appropriate care for physical and mental health concerns; and to avoid addictive behaviors.
- Engage in sexually healthy and responsible behavior.
- Honor my family commitments, including my family's need for privacy and time together.
- Develop and maintain meaningful personal relationships outside of my ministry setting.

COVENANT WITH THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO:

- Actively participate in the covenantal life and work of all settings of the United Church of Christ.
- Adhere to all requirements for maintaining ministerial standing as set forth by my Association, and abide by the terms of my call agreements and covenants with energy and vitality.
- Seek the counsel of others, including Conference staff and/or the Association Committee on the Ministry, should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.
- Serve as an ambassador for the United Church of Christ, and participate in activities that strengthen its mission, vision and purpose.
- Advocate for fair standards of compensation for all ordained and lay employees of the Church, and honor the search and call process of the United Church of Christ.
- Seek to know, understand and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the United Church of Christ, affirming that all settings of the UCC speak to the church and not for it.
- Encourage and participate in the evaluation of my ministry, understanding and demonstrating that ministry is of and for the Church as it seeks to advance God's mission in the world.

COVENANT WITH MY MINISTRY SETTING TO:

- Preach and teach the gospel without fear or favor, regarding all persons with equal respect and concern, and undertaking to minister impartially.
- Honor all confidences shared with me, telling only those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it.
- Steward church funds and property faithfully, while overseeing the administrative tasks of ministry with integrity.
- Speak the truth, not using my position, power, or authority to exploit any person nor using my position for unwarranted personal financial gain.
- Assess with care the implications of accepting gifts from congregation members.
- Not perform pastoral services within a congregation or for a member of a congregation, without the invitation of the current pastor of that congregation.
- Neither interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor, upon my departure from a ministry setting; and to deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

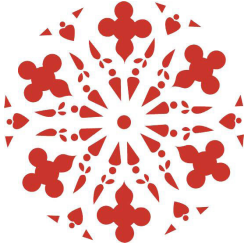
COVENANT WITH ALL ORDAINED MINISTERS TO:

- Work cooperatively and collegially, with intercultural awareness.
- Stand in mutual relationships with colleagues in ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support with intentionality.
- Use technology and social media responsibly.
- Act to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Attribute the sources of words and ideas that are not my own.
- Accurately represent my professional qualifications, education, experience and affiliations, acknowledging the limitations of my office, abilities, skills and competencies, and making referrals when necessary and/or appropriate.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and practice self-differentiation in both my personal and professional life, including within the Local Church where I hold membership.

[☐](#) Preamble to the United Church of Christ Constitution

Appendix 7: Organizational charts

The following two pages present organizational charts of Church Council as it is currently structured and then as it would be structured if all of the recommendations of our task force were adopted by the congregation.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Council Members

Moderator*
 Moderator-elect*
 Senior Deacon*
 Treasurer*
 Secretary*
 Trustee Chair*
 Administration Commissioner
 Church Growth Commissioner

Church Vitality Commissioner
 Education Commissioner
 House and Grounds Commissioner
 Justice and Mercy Commissioner
 Music, Arts and Heritage Commissioner
 Deacon (chosen by Deacons)
 Member-at-Large
 Youth Member-at-Large

Nominations Committee Chair
 (immediate Past Moderator*)
 Senior Minister*+
 Associate Minister+

*Member of Executive Committee
 +Non-voting ex-officio

