

**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEW FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT, INC**

United Church of Christ

Document of Understanding for Interim Governance

Amended to By-laws

\*DRAFT\* September 2005

**ARTICLE I: PURPOSE**

This document of understanding has been created to provide a method for the interim governance of the Congregational Church of New Fairfield for a period of two years beginning with its acceptance by the congregation and concluding with a vote at next scheduled business or special meeting following this two year period. Upon acceptance, it will temporarily replace ARTICLE VII (Boards) and ARTICLE VIII (Committees) of the current by-laws last updated on February 27, 2005.

This document is a working document. It is expected that changes will be made during the two year timeframe it will be in force. Special modification procedures to ensure both organizational agility and congregational control have been created to manage this expected change (see "ARTICLE VII: Modification" on page 9).

**ARTICLE II: ENACTMENT**

Enactment of the provisions contained within this document requires a modification to the Church's existing by-laws through a resolution approved by three-quarters of the members present at a business or special meeting of the congregation. At that time, the following resolution will be made:

*Whereas*, The Congregational Church of New Fairfield desires to make changes to their governance; and

*Whereas*, It is desirable that changes not be made to our by-laws on a permanent basis without a trial period; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That ARTICLE VII (Boards) and ARTICLE VIII (Committees) of the by-laws are hereby suspended; and

*Resolved*, That for a period two years from date of enactment of this resolution concluding with a vote at the next business meeting of the congregation following this two year period, the Document of Understanding for Interim Governance for the Congregational Church of New Fairfield will replace by-law ARTICLE VII and ARTICLE VIII; and

*Resolved*, That during this time all referring by-law articles will contextually refer to the Document of Understanding for Interim Governance for the Congregational Church of New Fairfield; and

*Resolved*, That a final by-law update proposal will be presented to the congregation for their approval at the first business meeting following the

expiration of the two year trial period at which time a decision will be made to either make the proposed changes permanent or return to governance by our existing by-laws.

### **ARTICLE III: MINISTRY TEAMS**

The day to day operations of the church shall be vested in its ministry teams which shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council (see “ARTICLE IV: Executive Council” on page 7) and the congregation. Ministry teams will be reviewed and adjusted on a periodic basis with the approval of the congregation.

For all ministry teams, a quorum of members representing a majority of the active members on the team must be present for any matters requiring a decision (vote) of the members of that team. Meetings for discussion purposes only may be held with less than a quorum present. When a member accepts the responsibility of serving as a member of a team, he or she is expected to be familiar with the duties and work of the team and to fully participate on a regular basis in the team’s deliberations. Should a team member be inactive for a period of six months without a reasonable excuse, the Executive Council reserves the right to remove the member from his or her position and to appoint a new member to complete the unexpired term. Only church members on the list of active members may serve on the following teams.

#### **A. TEAMS ELECTED BY THE CONGREGATION**

The following teams are elected by the congregation and supervised by the Executive Council.

##### **1. WORSHIP AND MINISTRY TEAM**

The Worship and Ministry team shall consist of three active members of the Church, one third of whom shall be elected at each May meeting to serve for a term of three years, and all Deacon Emeriti. After serving two full terms, an individual shall for one year be ineligible for re-election to this ministry team. Members of this team may not simultaneously serve on the Trustee team, Christian education team, or the Mission team. An individual who has served eighteen years may be recommended by the Executive Council and voted upon at a meeting of the full congregation for election as Deacon Emeritus, and upon such election shall be for life an honorary (ex-officio) member of this team. As such the Deacon Emeritus is encouraged to participate in the work of the team. The Deacon Emeritus may serve as an elected member of any other team.

The Worship and Ministry team shall organize by selection of its own officers as may be necessary. It shall be the duty of the team to cooperate with and assist the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual interests of the Church and the community and in this role the team shall be responsible with the Pastor and the Executive Council for periodic reviews of the forms of public worship, including administration of the Sacraments. It shall assist in the preparation and administration of the ordinances, in the caring of the sick, the sorrowing, the indifferent, and the stranger.

The Worship and Ministry team shall have sole jurisdiction in the administration of the Deacon's Fund received at Communion Services, but reports of receipts, expenditures, and balance on hand shall be made to the Executive Council annually.

Any matters of Church or pastoral discipline shall be the responsibility of the Worship and Ministry team. It shall make an annual survey of the Church Roll and at the May meeting submit a revised roll. It shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in case of vacancy and in the absence of the Pastor. It shall make necessary arrangements for the Installation Ceremony when this becomes necessary.

The Worship and Ministry team shall make arrangements to visit the sick and needy, call upon new members, introduce new families into the life of the Church and cooperate with the Pastor in promoting the spiritual interests of the Church. It shall be responsible for the preparation of the elements for the Communion Services. Communion may be received by all members and non-members.

No later than the end of September each year, the Worship and Ministry team shall review the performance of the Pastor, and make a recommendation to the Executive Council regarding any appropriate adjustments in salary for the following year.

The Worship and Ministry team shall coordinate and oversee all aspects of worship services conducted by the Church. This shall include but not be limited to the provision for ushering all regular and special services of the Church, the lighting of the altar candles, the posting of the hymn numbers and the distribution of folded programs at services. It shall also see to the appropriate decoration of the Church Sanctuary for all regular and special services or occasions in the life of the Church through the use of flowers, etc. It shall organize a Memorial Flower Calendar for the year so that all members and friends of the Church will have an opportunity to donate memorial flowers.

The Worship and Ministry team shall be responsible for the music program of the Church in coordination with the Minister of Music. They along with the Minister of Music and shall coordinate the active pursuit of members for participation in the various music groups of the Church. It shall also annually (no later than the end of September) review the performance of the Minister of Music and any other musical staff and make recommendations to the Executive Council regarding any appropriate adjustments for salaries for the following calendar year.

## **2. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM**

The Christian Education team shall consist of three active members of the Church, one third of whom shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of three years. After serving for two full terms, a member of this team shall for one year be ineligible for re-election. Members of this team may not simultaneously serve on the Worship and Ministry team, Trustee team, or the Mission team.

This team, in conjunction with the Pastor, Director of Christian Education, and Youth Minister, shall have supervision and direction over the educational programs of the Church including the Church School and youth groups. It shall have full power to appoint and remove volunteer advisors to the youth groups, teachers, and all other officers not otherwise provided for. This

team shall recommend candidates to the Executive Council for the positions of Christian Education Director and Youth Minister.

This team, in conjunction with the Pastor shall have supervision over the Director of Christian Education. It shall assist the Director in the development and implementation of the Church School programs. Also, in conjunction with the Pastor, the team shall meet annually (not later than September) to review the performance of the Christian Education Director and make recommendations to the Executive Council regarding any appropriate adjustments in salary and working conditions for the following year.

This team, in conjunction with the Pastor shall have supervision over the Youth Minister. It shall assist in the development and implementation of programs for the youth. Also, in conjunction with the Pastor, the team shall meet annually (not later than September) to review the performance of the Youth Minister and make recommendations to the Executive Council regarding any appropriate adjustments in salary and working conditions for the following year.

This team shall be responsible for the care and upkeep of the Church Library by providing books, periodicals, tapes, and videos for the education and edification of the Church.

### **3. TRUSTEES TEAM**

The Trustees Team shall consist of four active members of the church, one third of whom shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of three years. For this team, two people shall be consistently considered one third for one of the election years. After serving for two full terms, a member of this team shall for one year be ineligible for re-election. Members of this team may not simultaneously serve on the Worship and Ministry team, Christian education team, or the missions' team.

Under the direction of the Church and except as otherwise provided, the Trustees Team shall have the care and custody of the property of the Church and have charge of its financial affairs, always subject to the regulations prescribed by the laws of the State. This team shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real property without the specific authority by vote of the Church membership.

The Trustees Team shall be responsible for the investment of the Congregational Church of New Fairfield "permanent funds." They shall invest these funds with the goal of achieving the following:

1. Prudent investment of the funds in relatively conservative vehicles.
2. Reasonable returns on the invested amounts.
3. Investments of an "ethical" nature.

The Trustees Team shall have the responsibility of appointing an auditor or auditing body from its members to examine the accounts of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer and report their findings to the Executive Council no less than every two years.

No later than the end of September each year, the Trustee Team shall review the performance of the Church Secretary and the Sexton(s) and make a recommendation to the Executive Council regarding any appropriate adjustments in salary for the following year.

#### **4. MISSION TEAM**

The Mission team shall consist of three active members of the Church, one third of whom shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of three years. After serving two full terms, a member of this team shall be for one year ineligible for re-election. Members of this team may not simultaneously serve on the Worship and Ministry team, Trustee team, or Christian Education team.

The Mission team is concerned with the Church's wider mission in our community and beyond. It shall have in its charge the organization and supervision of the Mission outreach plans of the Church, and shall oversee and direct the distribution of benevolence funds as provided in the annual Church budget, donations made to the Mission fund, and contributions received from special offerings and fund raisers specifically sponsored by the Mission team. It shall promote missionary interest and systematic giving to missionary education programs and seek to teach the ideals of Christian Mission

#### **5. SCHOLARSHIP TEAM**

The Scholarship team shall consist of three active members of the Church, one half of which shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of two years. One half of this committee shall consist of two members for each year ending in an odd number and one member for each year ending in an even number. There shall be no limit to the number of consecutive terms an individual may serve as a member of this team. A member of this team may also be a member of other ministry teams.

This team shall be responsible for distributing interest earned from the scholarship fund in the form of education scholarships to persons meeting the eligibility criteria established by the team. The team shall keep a faithful accounting of all moneys requested and distributed. Meetings may be called at the discretion of the chairperson or at such times as a quorum of two members shall determine. The team shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council.

#### **6. HOSPITALITY TEAM**

The Hospitality Team shall consist of two active members of the Church, one half of which shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of two years. There shall be no limit to the number of consecutive terms an individual may serve as a member of this team. A member of this team may also be a member of other ministry teams.

This team shall be responsible for encouraging and promoting church family growth through a variety of timely fellowship activities held throughout the year. Activities planned should focus on reaching all age groups within the church. The team shall also be responsible for arranging the weekly coffee hour and welcoming prospective members and visitors. The team shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council.

## **7. STEWARDSHIP TEAM**

The Stewardship Team shall consist of three active members of the Church, one half of which shall be elected at each May meeting of the Church to serve for a term of two years. One half of this committee shall consist of two members for each year ending in an odd number and one member for each year ending in an even number. There shall be no limit to the number of consecutive terms an individual may serve as a member of this team. A member of this team may also be a member of other ministry teams.

This team shall be responsible for the annual enlistment of pledges from members and friends. It shall also seek to promote member stewardship throughout the year. The team shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council.

## **B. APPOINTED TEAMS AND POSITIONS**

The following teams and positions are appointed. Only members on the church's list of active members may serve in appointed positions. These teams and positions are supervised by the Executive Council.

### **1. PASTORAL RELATIONS TEAM**

The Pastoral Relations team shall consist of three members. This team shall be composed of two active members appointed by the Executive Council and one active member appointed by the Pastor no later than the May meeting of the Executive Council. There shall be no limit to the number of times an individual may be appointed to this team.

Questions, concerns, complaints, etc. on behalf of the Pastor or the congregation are to be addressed with the aim of arriving at an amicable and acceptable solution to all. The team shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council. A member of this team may also be a member of other ministry teams.

### **2. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST DELEGATES**

There shall be two active members of the church appointed by the Executive Council to fill the church's quota of delegates to represent the church at meetings and functions of the Fairfield East Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. These individuals shall be appointed no later than the May meeting of the Executive Council. There shall be no limit to the number of times an individual may be appointed to this position. These individuals shall be accountable to the Executive Council.

## **C. SELF-ORGANIZING TEAMS**

The following teams are self organizing. It is left to the team do determine their size, membership, and other methods of operation. Only members on the church's list of active members may serve as officers of self-organizing teams. These teams are supervised by the Executive Council.

### **1. OUTDOOR MINISTRIES TEAM**

The Outdoor Ministries team shall be responsible for the construction, administration and upkeep of the Church's outdoor chapel, Biblical garden and memorial wall. The team shall keep a

faithful accounting of all moneys received for current and future memorial niches. The team shall report to and be supervised by the Executive Council.

#### **ARTICLE IV: EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

The Executive Council shall be the policy formulating and program planning body of the Church, coordinating and supervising the various ministry teams performing such other functions as may be assigned to it by the congregation. If required, it shall act on behalf of the Church. It shall consist of the following persons, each of whom must be a member of the Church: The Pastor, ex-officio; the Minister of Music, ex-officio; all Officers as defined in by-laws ARTICLE VI; the members of all of the ministry teams defined in ARTICLE III of this document (each team in ARTICLE III Section A shall have only one vote each, teams in ARTICLE III Section B and C shall have no vote); and three lay members representing the congregation at large, with lay members elected at the May meeting of the Church for a period of one year. The Executive Council shall ordinarily meet monthly. Other meetings may be called by the Chairman or at such other times as a quorum of six members shall determine.

The Moderator shall be the chairman of the council. The Church Clerk shall act as secretary of the council. In the event of the resignation of the Pastor, a prospective list of people to serve on a Pastoral Search Team composed of not more than nine members of the Church shall be presented at a special Church meeting by the Executive Council for consideration and approval by the Church membership.

The Executive Council shall act on the replacement of vacancies which occur on the ministry teams or officers upon recommendation of members of the ministry team itself, members of the council, or members of the congregation. Such replacements require confirmation by a majority of the members present at the next scheduled quarterly business meeting of the congregation.

The Executive Council shall act upon (1) the recommendations of the Worship and Ministry Team as to the call and release of the Minister of Music; (2) the recommendations of the Trustee Team and Pastor as to the calling and release of the Sexton(s) and Church secretary; and (3) the recommendation of the Christian Education Team and Pastor as to the calling and release of the Youth Minister. It shall develop policies concerning job descriptions, days off, sick leave, vacation time, continuing education or training, salaries and other benefits through working with existing staff members and ministry teams.

Not later than its May meeting, the Executive Council shall appoint a member from the Church's list of active members to serve as Chairman of a delegate team to fill the church's quota of delegates to represent the Church at meetings in the functions of the Fairfield East Association and the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ (see "2. United Church of Christ Delegates" on page 6). This team shall report directly to the Executive Council.

Not later than its May meeting, the Executive Council shall appoint two active members from the Church's list of active members to serve as members of the Pastoral Relations team (see "1. Pastoral Relations Team" on page 6). This team shall report directly to the Executive Council.

The Executive Council shall coordinate the construction of an annual budget to be presented to the congregation for adoption at the November meeting each year.

## **ARTICLE V: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

The purpose of this article is to provide guidelines for the Executive Council and various Ministry teams to ensure that business of interest to the congregation at large is brought forward for council and guidance. It serves as a limit or check on the power granted to these entities by the congregation to act on their behalf.

### **A. OPERATIONAL DECISIONS**

Operational decisions will generally be made without consulting the congregation at large. These types of decisions include:

- Expenditures related to items in the current approved budget.
- General and recurring maintenance of existing facilities and grounds.
- Repairs of existing facilities when less than \$5,000 or provided for by the current approved budget.
- New capital items when provided for by the current approved budget.
- Emergency repairs.
- Policies related to the general operation of the church.

### **B. NON-OPERATIONAL DECISIONS**

Non-operational decisions require consultation with the entire congregation prior to approval or implementation. These decisions include:

- Any decision in which the topic is considered “controversial.”
- Expenditures (capital or otherwise) that are not provided for by the approved budget.
- Usage of the church’s permanent funds.

## **ARTICLE VI: TRANSITION**

The organization presented within this document will require a period of transition. Existing boards and committees are typically larger than what is presented within this document. It has generally been left to the existing boards and committees to decide their own membership from their existing members. However, should the number of members wishing to remain a part of the new team structure, they will be allowed to complete their unexpired terms as they exist within our current by-laws: No one will be left out who desires to continue with their responsibilities.

In this new structure, many of the responsibilities for operation will be vested in the laity rather than official boards and committees. It will therefore be important to identify individuals to take on several responsibilities formerly conducted by official boards and committees without the requirement to be on a board or committee to fulfill such responsibilities.

## **ARTICLE VII: MODIFICATION**

This document is a working document. It is expected (and desired) that changes will be made during the two year timeframe it will be in force so that the final update to our by-laws at the end of this two year period is what works best. To ensure that changes made to this document provide for both organizational agility and congregational control, the following rules will govern modifications:

1. A proposed change will first be approved by the Executive Council.
2. Changes that are considered minor (general duties, appointed teams and positions, new appointed teams, etc.) may be implemented by the Executive Council. Such changes will be summarized at the next called business meeting of the congregation for their retroactive approval.
3. Major changes will be brought to the congregation during a regular business meeting or during a special meeting for approval. Implementation will follow approval.

## **ARTICLE VIII: TERMINATION**

The provisions contained within this Document of Understanding may be revoked by the congregation at any time during the period it is in effect through a majority vote at any business or special meeting of the congregation. Should the provisions of this document be terminated, the by-laws in effect at the time of its enactment plus any approved modifications will again be in effect.