

The Farmington Valley Association

of the
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ
(Organized 1871)

CONSTITUTION

Changes proposed October, 2017

ARTICLE I: NAME AND MEMBERSHIP

The name of this organization shall be THE FARMINGTON VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF THE CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (The Association).

Membership in the Association shall consist of:

- Churches now belonging to the Association:
 1. Avon Congregational Church,
 2. First Congregational Church of Bristol,
 3. Congregational Church of Burlington,
 4. First Congregational Church of Canton Center,
 5. First Church in Hartland, Congregational,
 6. Farmington First Church of Christ Congregational,
 7. Granby First Congregational Church,
 8. Granby South Congregational Church,
 9. Congregational Church of Plainville,
 10. Simsbury First Church of Christ,
 11. Terryville Congregational Church,
 12. Unionville First Church of Christ,
 13. West Avon Congregational Church,

and such other churches as shall hereafter be received into its fellowship by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present at any regular meeting of the Association; provided the Committee on Ministry shall have acted on the application for such membership;

- Authorized ministers holding their active ministerial standing in this Association.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

Section 1. - Purposes

The purpose of the Association shall be to promote fellowship and cooperation among our ministers and churches. The Association shall provide opportunities for discussion, mutual encouragement, counsel, and the advancement of our common interests, in accordance with the usual practices of Associations in the United Church of Christ. It shall cooperate with the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, and so far as possible with Churches of other denominations and faith communities within the vicinity and the Greater Hartford and Connecticut Councils of Churches. This Association shall encourage our churches to work together, and shall strive to advance the Christian faith both in its personal and social aspects.

In keeping with the traditions of the United Church of Christ we, the member churches and authorized ministers in the Farmington Valley Association, relate to each other in a covenantal manner, promising each other to seek God's will and to be faithful to one another in the work we do. Each church is called to honor and respect the work and ministry of all members of the Association and to listen, hear, and carefully consider the advice, counsel, and requests of others. In this covenant, the members of the Association seek to walk together in all God's ways.

Section 2. - Functions

This Association shall perform the following specific functions:

- A. Provide fellowship and education for and among ministers and churches through meetings of the Association. This may include but not be limited to meetings of the Association clergy, mission outreach efforts including participation of the entire Association, and meetings with youth advisors to discuss opportunities for cooperation and shared programming within the Association.

- B. Determine, confer and certify standing of both local churches and authorized ministers in the UCC within the boundaries of this Association.

- C. Perform any other function(s) deemed necessary such as approval of an annual budget, election of officers, and approval of policies.

ARTICLE III: GOVERNANCE

Section 1. - Annual and Semi-Annual Meetings

The Association shall hold its annual meeting on the second Tuesday of May and the semi- annual meeting on the second Tuesday of November, unless otherwise ordered by the Committee on Ministry and shall be limited to the business in the call.

Section 2. - Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Committee on Ministry upon at least one week's notice to the churches and ministers. The purpose of any special meeting shall be specified in its call and shall be limited to the business in the call. The Committee on Ministry shall designate the day, hour, and the place of holding such meetings.

Section 3. Churches and Ministers with Standing

At regular and special meetings of the Association the power to vote shall reside in the churches through properly designated delegates to meetings of the Association and in the ministerial members of the Association. Each member church shall be entitled to six (6) delegates, and all ministers whose standing is in the Association. Each delegate and minister shall have one vote.

Section 4. - Quorum

A quorum shall consist of duly accredited delegates from seven (7) churches, together with any seven (7) ministers who are members of the Association.

Section 5. Officers and Terms

The Committee on Ministry shall have 9 members with 3-year terms which are renewable once. The Committee on Ministry shall determine its officers.

- Moderator: calls for and facilitates meetings, sets meeting agendas, serves as the chief point of contact for Association business, and provides an annual report to delegates and clergy of this Association. The Vice Moderator shall perform these duties in the Moderator's absence.
- Vice Moderator: shall act as the Moderator in the absence of the Moderator, or whenever requested by the Moderator to serve.
- Registrar: takes meeting minutes, records the results of consensus decisions and votes, and reports to the Connecticut Conference concerning installations, ordinations, commissions, licenses, or Members in Discernment, as well as persons or churches removed from membership. The registrar also transfers standing for authorized ministers in good standing.

- Treasurer: The Treasurer shall submit an annual budget to the Committee on Ministry for approval by the Association, shall collect all monies due the Association, shall pay all bills, and shall keep a record of all such transactions. The Treasurer has no term limit.

Section 6. Standing Committees

A. The Committee on Ministry shall consist of:

- a) The Officers and an ad hoc representative of the Conference. The Conference Representative shall have voice but not vote.
 - b) Including the Officers, there shall be 9 members.
1. It shall supervise, plan for and guide the work of the Association. Such supervision shall include the coordination of committees, the recommendation of an annual budget to the Association, and the planning of agendas and programs for Association meetings.
 2. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Consider the standing of local churches, review and recommend churches to the Association for membership or dismissal
 - Review and transfer standing of ordained ministers, accept candidates for Member in Discernment standing, and approve candidates for licensed or commissioned ministry or Ordained Ministerial Partner status.
 - Review and recommend candidates for Ordained Ministerial Standing and Installation to an Ecclesiastical Council.
 - Review and recommend candidates for Installation or Privilege of Call to an Ecclesiastical Council or serve as that Council
 - Grant authorized ministers' leaves of absence when requested and accept the written resignation

of such ministers.

- Adjudicate any allegations of pastoral misconduct by an authorized minister and, if person is found unfit, remove standing.
- Review and remove standing without prejudice of an authorized minister who is not retired and is no longer serving the church in the capacity for which he or she has standing.
- Grant reinstatement of standing, if appropriate, to authorized ministers who have had their standing removed and have reapplied for standing. Ensure that all decisions about standing are guided by the Manual on Ministry.
- Act as mediator or counselor in local churches when invited to do so by the minister or church leadership.
- Provide opportunities for continuing education and collegiality.

3. It shall act for the Association between regular meetings.

4. It shall present a slate of officers, committee members, and delegates, including General Synod delegates, not less than six weeks before the Annual Meeting for a vote.

5. It shall inform the churches, through their moderators and minister members, of the offices and committee memberships which will be vacant, and shall invite suggestions of persons to fill these vacancies. Nominations if possible should be made from the names thus received. All nominees shall be informed that their names will be presented; their consent shall be obtained in advance of the Annual Meeting.

6. It shall annually adopt procedures to review the books of the Association. This review shall be reported at the Association's Annual Meeting prior to the acceptance of the Treasurer's report.
7. It shall have the power to appoint task forces as necessary.

B. Special Committees

Special Committees to be responsible to the Committee on Ministry may be established for a specific length of tenure by appointment or election at any meeting of the Association.

ARTICLE IV: AMENDMENTS

The Constitution may be amended at any Annual or Semi-Annual meeting of the Association by two-thirds vote of the delegates present; provided notice of the proposed changes has been given at a previous meeting.

ARTICLE V: UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS REFERENCE

Any matter not specifically covered by this Constitution shall be considered as being covered by the pertinent provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ and will be accepted as binding on this Association.

Revised 08/07/2000, 02/16/2003, 10/28/2007, 05/10/2016,
05/08/2018

NOTE: ARTICLE VIII: THE MINISTRY, Sections 1-12, ARTICLE X: Finances and ARTICLE XIII: PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY are NO LONGER part of the Constitution per se. They follow below as policy guidelines.

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY AND ASSOCIATION

GENERAL POLICY AND GUIDELINE

In the formation of all Committees, including Special Committees, a priority will be to ensure balance and diversity between lay and clergy, and between male and female representation.

THE MINISTRY

Section 1. - Transfer of Ministerial Standing and Application for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

Persons seeking transfer of ministerial standing to, or ordained ministerial partner standing in, the Association shall make application to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry determines that the applicant's ordained ministerial standing should be recognized and accepted, it shall grant the applicant ordained ministerial standing in the Association. The Committee on Ministry shall present the applicant to the Association at the Association's next regularly scheduled meeting.

Section 2. - Member in Discernment

Persons seeking status as a Member in Discernment of the Association shall make application, through their pastor and the local church of which they are a member, to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application according to the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry finds the applicant qualified, it shall receive the applicant as a Member in Discernment with the Association. The Committee on Ministry shall present the applicant to the Association at the Association's next regularly scheduled meeting.

Section 3. - Licensed Ministry

Persons seeking recognition and authorization as a Licensed Minister shall make application, through the applicant's local church, to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry finds the applicant qualified, it shall approve the candidate for licensing, subject to placement in a designated local church within the Association. The Committee on Ministry shall present the applicant to the Association at the Association's next regularly scheduled meeting.

Section 4. - Commissioned Ministry

Persons seeking recognition and authorization as a Commissioned Minister shall make application, through their local church, to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry finds that the applicant meets the requirements for commissioning, it shall arrange for an Association Ecclesiastical Council.

Section 5. - Ordained Ministry

A Member in Discernment of the Association who seeks to be ordained shall make application, through the governing board of the local church where he or she is a member, to the Committee on Ministry that he or she be examined for ordination in the United Church of Christ. Upon approval of the request by the local church board, the Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry is satisfied that the candidate meets the requirements for ordination, it shall arrange for an Association Ecclesiastical Council.

Section 6. - Ordained Ministerial Partner

An ordained ministerial partner from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who seeks a call in the United Church of Christ shall submit a

formal letter requesting permission to seek a call in the United Church of Christ to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry* in order to determine whether the applicant demonstrates appropriate knowledge of, and appreciation for, the history, polity and practices of the United Church of Christ. If the Committee on Ministry determines that the ordained ministerial partner is qualified to seek a call in the United Church of Christ, it shall notify both the Office for Church Life and Leadership and Region that the partner is entitled to seek a call in the United Church of Christ.

Section 7. - Dual Standing and Privilege of Call

Persons seeking dual standing or privilege of call in the United Church of Christ shall make application to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall review the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*. If the Committee on Ministry finds that the applicant meets the requirements for dual standing or privilege of call, it shall arrange for an Association Ecclesiastical Council.

Section 8. - Installation

Installation is the celebration and recognition of the ministry through the covenantal relationship of the minister, the ministry setting and the Association. Upon request from a local or other calling body and an ordained or commissioned minister, the Committee on Ministry shall take leadership in planning a service of installation in cooperation with the other partners in the covenantal relationship.

Section 9. - Withdrawal from the Association

A member seeking to withdraw from the Association shall make such request to the Committee on Ministry. If the Committee on Ministry approves the request to withdraw from membership in the Association, it shall request the Registrar to take appropriate action.

Section 10. - Annual Review of the Membership Roll

The Committee on Ministry shall make an annual review of the membership roll of the Association, and, as a result of this review make appropriate recommendations to the Association.

Section 11. - Gathering, Admission or Dismissal of Churches

All requests from churches concerning gathering, admission to, or dismissal from the Association shall be made to the Committee on Ministry. If the Committee on Ministry finds that a church should be admitted to the Association, it shall recommend the church to the Association at its next regular meeting. The Committee on Ministry shall serve as an advisory committee to any church requesting guidance in matters of faith and order.

Section 12. - The Ordained Minister's Code, The Commissioned Minister's Code and The Licensed Minister's Code; Investigation and Adjudication of Allegations of Ethical Violations; Censure, Suspension and Termination of Ministerial Authorization for Cause(s)

This Association holds The Ordained Minister's Code, The Commissioned Minister's Code and The Licensed Minister's Code, as set forth in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*, to be binding on all persons serving in each of the respective authorized ministries. Ordained ministerial standing, standing as a licensed minister and standing as a commissioned minister shall reside in the Committee on Ministry.

When a concern is brought against an authorized minister with standing in the Association (except the Conference Minister and Regional Ministers), it is the Committee on Ministry that is responsible for determining whether the concern raises the question of ministerial fitness in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Upon voting in the affirmative to initiate a Fitness Review for said minister, the Committee on Ministry will refer such review to the Unified Fitness Review Committee (UFRC), a Conference team of clergy and lay people specially elected (or appointed) and trained for the implementation of a Fitness Review.

The UFRC will follow the process for conducting a Fitness Review as described in the current *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry* and will follow any additional processes agreed upon by the participating

Associations. The Committee on Ministry will accept the outcome of the UFRC as its own, and report the same to the appropriate settings of the United Church of Christ.

If an oversight decision of the UFRC is appealed, the Association Committee on Ministry shall be convened as a Board of Appeal. The grounds for appeal of oversight decisions shall be limited to questions of process. The appeal will determine whether the approved process of the Committee on Ministry and the UFRC were adhered to. The potential outcomes of an appeal are:

- Affirmation that the process used was consistent with the UFRC's process and with the Committee on Ministry process, in which case the decision of the UFRC stands.
- Recognition that the process used was not consistent, in which case the Committee on Ministry will refer the case back to the UFRC and the Committee on Ministry to be completed pursuant to the adopted process.

The Association Committee on Ministry shall appoint (or elect) one member to the UFRC. The appointee must have been a member of the Committee on Ministry within the last six years. The term of service for each member will be three years.

The Association may choose to renew the appointee for up to two more terms of service. Attention to the importance of balancing gender, clergy, lay, and the needed skills and experience on the UFRC shall be considered in making or renewing appointments.

Any member of an Association board or committee, or participant in an Association oversight action, who has a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict or appearance of a conflict with any matter pending, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting in an impartial manner, will offer to voluntarily excuse him/herself and refrain from discussion of, participation in, and/or voting in the activity where the conflict or appearance of a conflict exists. If there is a conflict either real or perceived and the individual does not voluntarily excuse him/herself, the Association board or committee may, by a super-majority vote of two-thirds of

the members then present and voting, require involuntary recusal.

ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS

Section 1. - Purposes of Ecclesiastical Council

The Association shall meet as an Ecclesiastical Council at the request of a member church, the candidate, and the Committee on Ministry to examine the candidate for fitness for ordained ministry, to vote whether or not to authorize ordination pending an approved call, and to assist in the ordination or the commissioning of a minister.

Section 2. - Procedures for Convening an Ecclesiastical Council

The candidate and an officer of the church shall consult with the Chair of the Committee on Ministry as far in advance as possible so that all records can be in proper form and procedures explained. The recommended procedures shall be those of the United Church of Christ as set forth in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*.

Section 3. - Representation and Voting

When the Association meets as an Ecclesiastical Council the power to vote shall reside in the churches through properly designated delegates and in the ministerial members of the Association. Each member church shall be entitled to one (1) delegate and its ministers with standing in the Association. A minister serving a church in the Association may be elected as the delegate to the Ecclesiastical Council although the minister does not hold ministerial standing in this Association. Each delegate and ministerial member shall have one vote. In the case of an examination for ordination or commissioning, it is recommended that each ministerial member and each delegate will be allowed each one question of the candidate. Following this first round of questions additional questions will be allowed, as time permits.

Section 4. - Invited Guests to an Ecclesiastical Council

The inviting minister and church may ask that guests be made non-voting members of the Ecclesiastical Council upon its convening by request in writing to the Moderator.

Section 5. - Quorum

A quorum shall consist of duly accredited delegates from seven (7) churches, together with any seven (7) ministers who are members of the Association.

FINANCES

Each church in the Association shall be assessed annually on the basis of its membership to defray the expenses of the Association. Changes in the rate of the assessment may be made at any meeting upon the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry and the vote of the delegates, providing such proposed changes are announced in the call to the meeting.

PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules for Order, Newly Revised* shall govern the Association in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the Association may adopt.

Revised 06/07/2000, 02/16/2003, 10/28/2007, 05/10/2016,
05/08/2018