

CONSTITUTION OF FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Church shall be First United Church of Oak Park, hereinafter referred to as the "Church."

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Church is to be the people of God, acting individually and together to do God's work in the world. To accomplish that purpose, the Church will communicate by word and deed the Good News of Jesus Christ, celebrate the sacraments, work for Christian community within the congregation and the Church Universal, render service to all people, and strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

ARTICLE III. FAITH

In our faith we are part of the people of God extending back to Abraham. Our understanding of basic values and life commitments is found in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We find help and guidance in the faith statements of the United Church of Christ and the Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Those statements include both historic and fresh expressions of the spirit in which the Church interprets the Word of God and remind us of the need to relate the timeless truths of the Gospel to the ever-changing world.

ARTICLE IV. COVENANT

The Church of Jesus Christ is a covenant people. The faith of those in the Old and New Testaments, as well as those throughout the history of the Christian Church, is deeply rooted in a covenantal relationship with God and one another. The Christian covenant is a symbol of binding commitment between a people of faith and God, the creator and renewer of the Church.

Members of this Church covenant together to:

- follow the way of Jesus, the Christ
- search for an honest expression of faith
- care for and support each other
- share in the life and worship of the Church

- contribute to its support and benevolences
- be advocates for the poor and oppressed
- seek peace and understanding in the world
- nurture and educate our members in the Christian faith
- include people of all races, nationalities, sexual orientations and disabilities in all aspects of our congregational life.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Members may be received into the Church by confession of faith, reaffirmation of faith or transfer of membership from churches with which the Church is in fellowship.

There shall be three categories of membership: active, associate and inactive. Associate membership status may be given to those who reside temporarily in the community, who have a primary affiliation at another church or who are members of a Presbytery.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

A member may on request and by vote of the Church Council be granted a letter of transfer to any Christian church.

A member may be given a certificate of church membership and his or her name be removed from the Church roll if he or she wishes to join a body not in fellowship with the Church.

A member who requests to be released from his or her membership obligations shall have his or her membership terminated by the Church Council.

The membership of a member who has not communicated with the Church or contributed to its support for a period of two years may be placed on a roll of inactive members or removed from the Church rolls by the Church Council.

ARTICLE VI. CHURCH GOVERNANCE

(1) The Church Council

The governance of the Church shall be vested in its members through the Church Council.

The terms of office of Church Council members shall be three (3) years, with a one-time option to serve an additional year. Youth members (under age 20) shall serve a term of any length (1-3 years). After serving a full elected term on the Church Council (excluding any time served by appointment to fill a partial term), a member shall, for one year thereafter, be ineligible for re-election to Church Council. In no event may a member be eligible to serve more than five (5) consecutive years. Elections shall be held annually and be so arranged that the terms of office of one-third of the Church Council members shall expire each year, balancing equal classes as much as possible.

The Church Council shall meet regularly as deemed necessary by the moderator or a majority of Council members.

Membership

The Church Council shall consist of at least thirteen (13) and no more than seventeen (17) persons, who shall be elected by the members of the Church in accordance with the laws of Illinois and Article VII of this Constitution. Elders elected into service on Council will take office upon their ordination in a worship service at a date to be set by Council. A quorum of Council shall consist of seven (7) members. In addition, the Pastor(s) shall be member(s) *ex-officio* without vote.

Members and former members of the Church Council shall be eligible to membership and office in the higher judicatories of the denominations with which the Church is affiliated.

Functions

The functions of the Church Council shall be as follows:

- a. It shall be the governing Board of the Church to which its Committees, as specified in the annual Ministry Outline, are responsible. It shall be subject to the direction of and responsible to the members of the Church.
- b. In consultation with the Nominating Committee, it shall organize itself and the church each year with a structure that is responsive to the ongoing needs of the congregation (including education, finance, property, mission, fellowship, worship, personnel, communications, etc.) Further, the Council will present a "Ministry Outline" to the congregation each year at the annual meeting, which will specifically detail how the church shall be structured in the new church year.

- c. It shall, upon resolution, delegate specific duties and discretionary authority to each Committee and may from time to time change the specific duties and discretionary authority of any Committee. It shall have the power to reconfigure existing or constitute additional Committees, *ad hoc* committees and task forces to assist in carrying forward an integrated program for the whole Church.
- d. It shall elect from its lay membership its Chairperson and a Church Clerk. The Chairperson and the Clerk shall be elected for a one-year term and shall be eligible for re-election to one additional one year term. The Chairperson of the Church Council shall also serve as the Moderator of the Church, and shall be entitled to cast a vote on any matter at any meeting only in the event that the voting on that matter would otherwise result in a vote evenly divided between the affirmative and the negative.
- e. For purposes of the Illinois Religious Corporation Act and the Illinois General Not for Profit Corporation Act of 1986, it shall constitute the Board of Trustees of the Church; the Church Council shall be the trustees, the Chairperson of the Church Council shall be the President and the Church Clerk shall be the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.
- f. It shall have charge of all financial affairs of the church, including the responsibility for the preparation of the annual unified budget of the Church.
- g. It shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real property of the Church but only when specifically authorized to do so by the members of the Church.
- h. It shall have the care, custody and control of the real and personal property of the Church.
- i. It shall encourage and promote Christian Stewardship.
- j. Whenever the Church Council is given a direction by vote of the members of the Church, it shall act consistently with such direction.
- k. It shall recommend to the members of the Church, for their action, the size and assignments of the clergy staff, and any changes therein.
- l. At each regular meeting it shall take action on all matters presented to it by the Committees.
- m. It shall consider and vote on recommendations for the expenditure of Special Mission Endowment Fund (SMEF) grants in the amount of \$5,000 or more.

- n. It shall keep accurate records of its proceedings and report its activities to the members of the Church.

(2) Nominating Committee

The Congregation shall have a Nominating Committee that shall consist of one (1) member of Church Council and not less than four (4) other members elected at the annual election meeting. The Nominating Committee shall work with the Council in creating the Ministry Outline and implementing it. Nominating Committee shall be elected for two-year terms.

ARTICLE VII. ELECTION PROCEDURES

The Nominating Committee shall annually prepare for presentation at the annual election meeting an official slate nominating one person for the position of each Church Council member and Nominating Committee member whose term is expiring that year. The slate shall be posted and available at the Church not later than two Sundays prior to the meeting. Any member of the Church may at the meeting make a nomination from the floor with the consent of the person(s) being nominated. Terms of office shall commence upon election at the annual meeting or in the case of new elders upon their ordination as outlined in Article VI.

The Nominating Committee shall also prepare annually a slate nominating for appointment by Church Council one person for the position of each Committee member whose term is expiring that year. The slate shall be appointed at the first meeting of the Church Council following the annual election meeting. Any member of the Church Council may make a nomination of a member for appointment to a Committee from the floor with the consent of the person being nominated.

In the event a vacancy arises on the Church Council or on any Committee between annual elections meetings, it shall be filled by appointment by the Church Council after special nomination by the Nominating Committee.

ARTICLE VIII. THE CHURCH STAFF

Clergy Staff

Pastors shall be called for an indefinite time by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members of the Church present and voting at a special meeting duly called for that purpose. Similarly, the resignation of a member of the clergy staff may be requested by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members of the Church present and voting at a special meeting duly called for that purpose.

Minister candidates for the staff of the Church shall be chosen from the ministerial rolls of the denominations with which this Church is affiliated.

When a vacancy occurs on the clergy staff, the Church Council shall recommend to the

members of the Church, for their action, a Pastoral Search Committee representative of the whole membership. It shall be the duty of the Pastoral Search Committee to nominate a minister to the members of the Church for election to the clergy staff. The Lead Pastor shall serve *ex-officio* without vote on the Pastoral Search Committee unless he or she holds the staff position for which the Pastoral Search Committee has been constituted to make a nomination.

Each member of the clergy staff shall meet at least annually as directed by Council to review his or her relationship with the Church and the terms of his or her call.

Non-Clergy Staff

Other staff members, professional and non-professional, shall be appointed by the Church Council in consultation with the Lead Pastor.

The Lead Pastor shall serve as head of the entire Church staff.

Terms of employment of the non-clergy staff shall be reviewed annually.

ARTICLE IX. BUSINESS MEETINGS

Annual Meeting

A meeting of the members of the Church for the purposes of receiving the yearly reports of officers, organizations and departments, transacting business and adopting the budget and program plans for the new year shall be held annually on the first Sunday of February or at such time as the Church Council may determine. Written notice thereof shall be posted and included in a Church publication at least two weeks in advance.

Election Meeting

A meeting of the members of the Church for the purpose of electing persons to fill the positions of those Church Council and Nominating Committee members whose terms are expiring that year (the "election meeting") shall be held annually in May. Written notice thereof shall be posted and included in a Church publication not less than two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Special Meetings

A special meeting may be called by the Church Council, by the Lead Pastor or by the Church Council upon written request of twenty-five members of the Church. The notice thereof shall be made to the Church membership in writing not less than five days in advance of the special meeting and there shall be an announcement during a regular Sunday service of worship not less than one week in advance of the meeting. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call.

Rules and Regulations

- (1) Notice. Notice for the annual and other corporate meetings shall comply with the requirements of the law of Illinois.
- (2) Quorum. A quorum shall consist of fifty voting members.
- (3) Voting. Unless otherwise required, a majority vote shall be decisive and, unless restricted by law, all members and associate members of the Church personally present shall be entitled to vote.
- (4) Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of the Church shall begin January 1.

Reports

The Church Council and its Committees shall report at the annual meeting and at such other times as may be requested by the Church.

ARTICLE X. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE DENOMINATIONS

- (1) The Church (a) shall be subject to Section G 16.0100 through G-16.0300 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and shall be a union church within the meaning of those sections, and (b) shall be subject to ARTICLE IV of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ and shall be a local church within the meaning of that article. The foregoing sentence shall prevail over any other provisions in this Constitution inconsistent therewith.
- (2) The Church shall report annually its total membership to each denomination, shall apportion one-half of the total to each denomination and shall pay such per capita tax as may be payable under denominational requirements.
- (3) The Church shall in each year apportion its benevolence moneys so that the work of each denomination and its agencies shall receive an equitable share of those moneys.
- (4) The power to sell, mortgage or otherwise encumber any real property formerly owned by the First Presbyterian Church of Oak Park shall be in accordance with the practices of the Presbyterian church (U.S.A.).
- (5) In the event that the Church shall dissolve, the Church's then existing assets shall be divided equally between, and be and become the property of, the respective judicatories of the two denominations with which the Church is affiliated.

ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS

ARTICLES I, II, III, IV, X, and XI may be amended by vote of not less than two-thirds of the members and associate members of the Church present at an annual meeting at which not less than one hundred members and associate members are present, after the proposed amendment or its substance has been included in a Church publication or mailed to each member not less than thirty days prior to the annual meeting, and after the proposed amendment or its substance has been read before the Church congregation at a worship service on three consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the annual meeting; provided, however, that no amendment of ARTICLE X shall be effective without the written approval of the Presbytery of Chicago.

All other articles may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Church present at any meeting of the Church after a notice specifying the time and place of the meeting and the proposed amendment or its substance shall have been read before the Church congregation at worship services on the two Sundays immediately preceding said meeting.

Amended January 18, 1976
Amended May 6, 1976
Amended February 4, 1979
Amended August 26, 1979
Amended February 3, 1980
Amended February 3, 1985

Amended February 2, 1986
Amended May 7, 1989
Amended May 5, 1991
Amended February 7, 1999
Amended February 2, 2003

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