

**BYLAWS
THE UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF AUSTIN**

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church is the United Christian Church of Austin.

ARTICLE II. AFFILIATION

The United Christian Church of Austin is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

**ARTICLE III. RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THE CONGREGATION**

The congregation, as defined in the Constitution, shall manage its affairs under the Guidance of Jesus Christ; own, control and encumber its property; organize and carry out the purpose and witness of the congregation; establish its budgets and financial policies; call and support its pastoral and other staff; and participate through voting representatives in the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ at all levels.

The congregation shall demonstrate its mutual concern for the nurture, purpose and witness of the whole church. Among other responsibilities, it shall: proclaim the gospel; celebrate baptism and holy communion; provide for the spiritual nurture of its members; grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship; transcend all barriers within the human family; be faithful in Christian stewardship, striving to share proportionately in providing resources for the total life, work and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ; and seek to realize the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other churches of the community and through ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

The congregation shall exercise and enjoy all other rights, privileges and responsibilities requisite or appropriate to carrying out its purpose.

ARTICLE IV. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A. Pastoral Search Process

The pastor(s) shall be called by the congregation as follows:

1. A representative committee of at least five members of the congregation, nominated by the Council Chair and elected by the Church Council, shall serve as the Pastoral Search Committee. The Council Chair may be included to serve as an ex officio member of the Pastoral Search Committee.
2. The Pastoral Search Committee shall utilize the services of the two denominations for information, counsel, and development of a search process.

3. The Pastoral Search Committee shall recommend a prospective candidate and compensation package to the Church Council.
4. The Church Council, at a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present and voting.
5. After affirmation of the candidate by the council, the candidate will be introduced to the congregation and lead the congregation in worship.
6. The congregation, in a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the Church Council by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members present and voting.
7. Upon approval of the congregation, the Pastoral Search Committee shall develop a "Letter of Call" outlining the terms of employment and covenant of agreed upon responsibilities. This letter shall be extended to the prospective pastor by the Church Council, on behalf of the congregation. The letter shall be signed by the Pastor, the Chair of the Pastoral Search Committee, and the Chair of the Church Council.

B. Requirements of a Pastor(s)

The pastoral candidate(s) recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee shall be ordained and in good standing in either the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ or be willing to seek joint standing in both denominations.

C. Support of the Pastor(s)

1. The congregation shall at all times lend full support, concern, understanding, and care to the pastor(s).
2. Just as the pastor(s) has a spiritual and moral obligation to each member of the congregation, likewise the congregation, both individually and collectively, has the same spiritual and moral obligation to the pastor(s).
3. Pastoral Advisory Groups shall be formed for each licensed or ordained pastor. The pastor(s) will select two members of the congregation to serve on their Advisory Group.
4. The Advisory Groups for the pastor(s) will work with the Personnel Committee and the Stewardship and Finance Committee to develop an annual pastoral compensation package.

D. Terms of Employment for the Pastor(s)

1. The terms of call setting forth the salary and other terms of employment shall be provided to the pastor(s), with a copy of the agreement filed in the church office and with the appropriate office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.
2. The term of ministry shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated by either party in accordance with the covenant agreement for the pastor(s).
 - The Church Council may recommend, by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present and voting, the termination of a pastoral call agreement.

- The congregation, in a stated or called meeting, may approve the Church Council's recommendation to terminate a pastoral call agreement by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members present and voting.

E. Installation

Installation should be scheduled as soon as possible after the arrival of the pastor(s), in consultation with both denominations and the new pastor(s).

F. Pastoral Leadership and Responsibilities

1. The pastor(s) shall assume the spiritual leadership of the church and, cooperating with the officers and committees, carry forward the general programs of the church consistent with the policies of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. The pastor(s) shall be ex-officio member(s) of the Council, standing committees and constituency groups of the congregation.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

A. Positions

The congregation shall elect from its members a Chair, Vice Chair, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Clerk and Historian. These officers shall be elected at an annual meeting of the congregation and shall serve as officers of the Church Council as set forth in these Bylaws.

B. Election

1. The Nominating Committee shall submit a slate of officers at the annual congregational meeting. The congregation shall, from that slate or from nominations made from the floor, elect its officers.
2. Vacancies in any office of the church shall be filled by nomination of the Council Chair in consultation with the Pastor(s). Selected individuals must be endorsed by the Church Council. Persons so selected shall serve until the next election of officers, when they will be eligible for nomination and election in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws.

C. Qualifications

1. Officers must be active members of the congregation at the time of their election and throughout their term of office.
2. Anyone elected as an officer may be terminated by vote of the Church Council if two consecutive meetings of the Church Council are missed without due notification to the Chair or Vice Chair, or by written resignation to the Church Council.

D. Responsibilities

1. The Chair shall fulfill the usual duties of such an office, call and preside over all regular or special business meetings of the congregation, and serve as Chair of the congregation and of the Church Council. In the absence of the Treasurer, the Chair is authorized to disburse funds of the church according to the authority designated the Chair by the Church Council. The Chair shall serve as an ex officio member, without vote, of all committees.

2. The Vice Chair shall fulfill the usual duties of such an office, call and preside at all regular business meetings of the church in the absence of the Chair and serve as Vice Chair of the congregation and the Church Council. The Vice Chair shall Chair the Personnel Committee and be responsible for administration of church personnel policies.
3. The Recording Secretary shall keep and distribute minutes of all regular council, congregational, and special meetings, and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
4. The Treasurer shall receive all reports of income of the congregation from the Financial Secretary, be responsible for payment of all accounts of the congregation as authorized by the budget or special action of the Church Council when such items are not in the church budget, provide accurate records of all expenditures, make monthly written reports to the Church Council, and provide for an annual audit of income and expenditures for action by the Church Council and the congregation. Two signatures are required for all disbursements of church funds. The Chair, Vice Chair, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer are authorized to sign checks.
5. The Financial Secretary shall be responsible for receiving and depositing income from the congregation, keeping accurate records of the source and amounts of such income, sending out statements as directed by the Church Council, providing the Treasurer of the congregation with copies of all deposit receipts, and making monthly written reports to the Church Council.
6. The Clerk shall keep records of membership, baptisms, confirmations, births and deaths. The Clerk shall submit the appropriate reports as required by the denominational partners.
7. The Historian shall collect and arrange the non-current records and memorabilia of the church, its officers, committees and boards, and ancillary organizations.
8. The duties of the Recording Secretary, the Clerk, and the Historian may be carried out by one to three persons.

E. Executive Committee

The Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Recording Secretary and Pastor(s) shall comprise an Executive Committee. This Executive Committee may meet occasionally at the call of any member of it. All decisions made by the Executive Committee will be reported to the full Council at the Council's next meeting.

ARTICLE VI. CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Membership

Membership of the Church Council shall be composed of the following voting members: the six officers of the Congregation, the Chair of the Elders, the Chair of the Deacons, and the Chairs of the standing committees. The Pastor(s) serve as ex officio non-voting members.

B. Authority

1. The Church Council shall be concerned with policy rather than administrative matters, taking into full account the responsibility of the congregation to the total nurture, witness, and mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.
2. All business meetings of the Church Council shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order (Revised).
3. A quorum shall consist of two thirds (2/3) of the members of the Church Council.

C. Responsibilities

1. The Church Council shall conduct its affairs in accordance with these Bylaws.
2. The Church Council shall be responsible for conducting the business affairs of the congregation and providing for the planning, coordinating, providing resources, evaluating, and implementing the work and activities of the congregation.
3. The Church Council shall establish ad hoc committees as are determined necessary for the conduct of its work.
4. The Church Council shall receive regular reports from its officers, committees and other organizations within the congregation, and it shall act upon such reports appropriately.
5. The Church Council shall receive the proposed annual budget of the congregation from the Stewardship and Finance committee and recommend its approval or amendment to the congregation at its annual congregational meeting.
6. Any extraordinary expense, exclusive of emergency situations, which exceeds two percent of the budget, must first receive approval of the congregation at a regular meeting or a meeting called by the Council Chair. Any emergency shall be dealt with by the Church Council.
7. Any church member may attend any Council meeting, in a non-voting capacity, and may participate in any and all discussion.

D. Meetings

Regular meetings of the Church Council shall be monthly. Special meetings shall be called by the Chair, upon request of the pastoral leadership or other Council members, as necessary. Notice of special meetings shall be made by announcement at a Sunday morning worship service, by mail, or by e-mail. The purpose, date, time, and place of the meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

ARTICLE VII. ELDERS AND DEACONS

A. Election

1. The Elders and Deacons shall be selected and presented by the Nominating Committee in the same manner as the officers of the congregation.

2. The congregation, at the annual congregational meeting, shall elect Elders and Deacons. The number of Elders and Deacons elected shall be sufficient to meet the needs of the congregation. Both offices shall be open to all members of the church.

B. Qualifications

The qualifications for Elders and Deacons shall be the same as set forth for the officers of the congregation.

C. Responsibilities

1. Elders shall be responsible for assisting the pastor(s) in the care and spiritual nurture of the congregation and in serving Communion.
2. Deacons shall be responsible for collecting the offering, recording attendance and preparing and serving Communion. The distribution of the elements need not be limited to the elected Deacons.

ARTICLE VIII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Committees

The church shall establish standing committees as follows: Personnel, Education, Social Justice and Service, Fellowship, Welcome and Communications, Property, Stewardship and Finance, and Worship.

B. Committee Leadership

The Chairs of the standing committees shall be elected by the congregation at the annual meeting.

C. Committee Membership

1. Standing committees shall be composed of persons sharing an interest in the ministry or mission of the particular committee.
2. Each standing committee shall make regular reports to the Church Council and operate within the established policies of the church. Meetings should be held as necessary to conduct the business of the committee.
3. Each standing committee shall prepare a budget request to be presented to the Stewardship and Finance Committee for inclusion in the proposed budget which will be submitted to the congregation at the annual congregational meeting.
4. Any church member may attend a standing committee meeting, in a non-voting capacity, and may participate in any and all discussion. Standing committees may only hold open meetings, and notice should be announced not less than one week prior to the meeting. Because of the sensitive and confidential nature of its business, the Personnel Committee is exempted from these conditions.

5. Standing committees may assume any other responsibilities designated by the Church Council.

D. Committee Responsibilities

1. Personnel

The Personnel Committee will be responsible for :

- Fostering positive working conditions and a harmonious relationship between the church and its employees, including helping to facilitate the resolution of employment-related issues and concerns;
- Periodically reviewing and overseeing the update of employee policies, practices, procedures, and processes to ensure alignment and compliance with applicable laws, regulations, guidelines, and established best practices;
- Evaluating and making recommendations about employee compensation and benefits; and
- Assisting the appropriate committee(s) and/or Pastor(s) with various employment actions, including onboarding, addressing performance and conduct issues, and offboarding.

2. Education

The Education Committee will be responsible for :

- Developing and overseeing educational programs for children and youth;
- Coordinating and providing educational and spiritual growth opportunities for adults;
- Recruiting and training leaders for programs as needed; and
- Ensuring needed materials are available to support educational programs.

3. Social Justice and Service

The Social Justice and Service Committee will be responsible for extending the work of the church to the local community, the nation, and the world by:

- Providing education on social justice issues;
- Developing, communicating and coordinating opportunities for advocacy and service; and
- Encouraging connections with and involvement in the larger community through ecumenical justice and service initiatives.

4. Fellowship

The Fellowship Committee will be responsible for developing, coordinating and encouraging fellowship opportunities to build a sense of community within the congregation.

5. Welcome and Communications

The Welcome and Communications Committee will lead and equip the congregation to invite visitors and the community to share in the life of the church. The Committee will be responsible for:

- Welcoming visitors into our church;
- Raising the visibility of our church in the community;
- Providing information to prospective and new members regarding the life of the church and becoming active members of the congregation; and

- Communicating information regarding the life, programs and activities of United Christian Church.
6. Property
The Property Committee shall be responsible for caring for and maintaining any and all church property and facilities.
 7. Stewardship and Finance
 - a. The Stewardship and Finance Committee shall be responsible for:
 - An ongoing stewardship program within the church;
 - Developing and recommending to the Council each year a proposed budget, to be presented to and approved by the congregation at its annual meeting; and
 - Coordinating and administering special funds, fund campaigns and offerings as necessary.
 - b. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be members of the Stewardship and Finance Committee.
 8. Worship
 - a. The Worship Committee will be responsible for assisting the pastor(s) in planning worship services and for other duties related to these services.
 - b. The Chair of the Elders, the Accompanist(s) and the Choir Director will be ex officio members of the Worship Committee. Elders and Deacons will be enlisted to participate on this committee.
 9. Ad Hoc Committees
In addition to these standing committees, the Council Chair, in consultation with the Council, may appoint such *ad hoc* Committees as deemed necessary to carry out the ministry of the church. Such Committees will be appointed to carry out specified purposes. They will cease to exist at the end of each calendar year, unless reappointed by the Council Chair. These Committees will report regularly to the Council.

ARTICLE IX. NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

A. Nominating Committee Composition

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of two members of the Church Council and three members of the congregation who are not members of the Church Council. The committee shall be appointed by the Church Council Chair and announced to the congregation at least eight (8) weeks prior to the annual congregational meeting.

B. Nominating Committee Responsibilities

1. The committee shall nominate church Officers, Elders, Deacons, Endowment Fund Trustees, standing committee Chairs and church representatives to denominational and other partner bodies to be elected by the congregation at its annual meeting. Nominations to any office may be made from the floor.

2. The committee shall secure consent from the list of nominees and shall prepare a slate of one (1) nominee for each vacancy.

C. Elections

Nominees who receive a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected.

ARTICLE X. TERMS OF SERVICE

- A. Council members shall serve a term of one year, and may serve three consecutive terms on Council. The Congregation may vote to waive the three-term limit. However, no person shall serve as a voting member of Council for more than five consecutive terms, and no person shall serve as a member of the Executive Committee for more than three consecutive terms, after which the person shall be ineligible for election to Council for one year.
- B. Deacons shall serve a term of one year without limitation to the number of consecutive terms they may serve as Deacons. The Chair of the Deacons, as a member of Council, is limited to three consecutive years as Chair of the Deacons.
- C. Elders shall serve a term of two years without limitation to the number of consecutive terms they may serve as Elders. The Chair of the Elders, as a member of Council, is limited to three consecutive years as Chair of the Elders.
- D. Trustees of the Endowment Fund shall be elected to a term of three years, with the initial terms staggered one, two and three years to provide a rotating membership. Trustees may be re-elected to a second consecutive term, but may not serve more than two consecutive terms, after which they shall be ineligible to serve as Trustee for one year.
- E. Terms shall begin January 1 and end December 31 each year.

ARTICLE XI . PERSONNEL

A. Employment

1. Employment of church personnel, except the pastor(s), shall be based upon recommendation from the appropriate standing committee, the Council Vice Chair and the Pastor.
2. A written agreement of employment shall be filed in the church office and a copy shall be given to the employee.

B. Coordination

The Council Vice Chair and the Pastor shall coordinate and administer church personnel policies.

ARTICLE XII. SPECIAL FUNDS

A. Descriptions

In addition to the general operating fund, the church shall maintain other special funds, including, but not limited to a Memorial Fund and an Endowment Fund, and other designated funds and offerings which the Stewardship and Finance Committee with approval of the Church Council shall deem necessary for the furtherance of the ministries of the church.

B. Memorial Fund and other Designated Funds

1. The Stewardship and Finance Committee shall keep an account of and acknowledge all Memorial gifts.
2. The committee shall coordinate with the families of the honored persons, and make recommendations to Church Council as to the manner in which gifts shall be designated for use. Final disposition of funds must be approved by the Council.
3. Memorial gift and other Designated Funds need not be placed in a separate account but shall be accounted for separately and specifically.
4. The Stewardship and Finance Committee shall present an accounting of gifts in the annual report to the congregation.
5. The Church Council, in consultation with the Stewardship and Finance Committee, reserves the right to redirect Memorial and other designated funds to the area of ministry most needed.

C. Endowment Fund

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of the Endowment Fund is to enhance the financial capabilities of the church in expanding the witness and mission of Jesus Christ in the world, through serving human needs in our community and around the world. The endowment Fund is to be a growing, living account that provides for present and future work of the church.

2. Gifts to the Endowment Fund

- a. All gifts and bequests intended for the endowment fund must be clearly designated as such. Endowment Fund monies shall not be commingled with general operating funds or other designated funds.
- b. Gifts and bequests to the Fund may not be given as designated for specific expenditures.
- c. Gifts and bequests to the Endowment Fund may come in a variety of forms, including stocks, bonds, real estate, tangible property and cash.
- d. All gifts and bequests received in any form other than cash will be converted to cash or investments at fair market value as soon as practical.

- e. All gifts and bequests received by the Endowment Fund shall be considered as permanent.
 - f. If deemed necessary, the church may refuse a gift or bequest to the Endowment fund. This will be done by the Church Council, upon recommendation of the Endowment Fund trustees.
 - g. Gifts and bequests to the Endowment Fund are distinct from gifts to the Memorial Fund, from other designated funds, from regular giving, and from other funds received in the weekly and special offerings.
3. Endowment Fund Trustees
- a. The Endowment Fund shall be managed by three Trustees elected by the congregation in accordance with the Nominating procedures.
 - b. The pastor(s) and Council chair will be ex-officio members without vote.
 - c. The responsibilities of the Trustees will be to:
 - Invest the corpus of the Endowment Fund, in accordance with such policies as may be defined by the Church Council to reflect the commitment of the church to corporate social responsibility;
 - Allocate Endowment Fund monies to the Stewardship and Finance Committee of the congregation annually for expenditure. Trustees shall not have the responsibility for and will not make recommendations concerning the spending policy of the Endowment Fund.
4. Annual Spending for Ministry
- a. Each year, a portion of the Endowment fund may be spent for ministry, or all earnings may be reinvested.
 - b. The Church Council, in consultation with the Trustees and approval of the congregation, shall determine the portion of the Endowment Fund which may be drawn off each year (if any).
 - c. Monies from the Endowment Fund may be expended for any ministry purposes of the church as determined by the Finance and Stewardship Committee and as presented in the annual budget and approved by the Council and congregation.

ARTICLE XIII. POLICIES

To further the ministry of the church, the Council may establish by majority vote other written policies. The Council shall publicize to the congregation such policies at the time of their adoption. Such policies will at all times be available to the congregation.

ARTICLE XIV. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting in a stated or special meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been circulated to the congregation by mail, by e-mail, or read before the congregation at a regular Sunday morning worship service for the two weeks prior to the meeting of the congregation at which any amendment is to be considered.