

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

### **PREAMBLE**

We are young, we are old, we are rich, we are poor, we are seekers, we are certain, we are progressive, we are traditional, we are natives of Austin, we are citizens of the world, we are pilgrims, we are shepherds, we are connected, we are connecting, we are the United Christian Church of Austin, Texas, an ecumenical partnership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

### **ARTICLE I. MISSION**

As a community of faith:

- We worship God,
- We seek wisdom,
- We serve others,
- We offer care and compassion,
- We share Good News.

As individuals and as a church family, we will:

- Seek to deepen our faith in Christ and enrich our spiritual lives through prayer, meditation and worship.
- Seek always to learn about God's Word and work through study and discussion.
- Remain open and loving to all believers and seekers of God's will, and encourage diversity of opinion in the light of faith and scripture.
- Fellowship together as friends and family, sharing our joys, sorrows and burdens through all of life's passages.
- Be a witness to Christ's love to the community and to the world, offering our gifts and service as a testimony of God's gift to us, and declaring our faith without fear or reservation.
- Establish our church building as a place of worship, celebration, study, service, fellowship and sanctuary.

### **ARTICLE II. VISION**

As a community of hope:

- We will welcome, grow, and serve,
- We will demonstrate God's love in the world by serving and empowering people,
- We will cultivate a joyful spirituality,
- We will expand our church building,
- We will make our church building a place of ministry and service,
- We will give gladly of our time, talents, and resources to support this Vision.

### **ARTICLE III. VALUES**

As a community of love, we value:

- Open Minds - Seeking wisdom and engaging new ideas.
- Inclusivity - Inviting and including all: Creating a place for sanctuary and rest.
- Faith - Loving God, following Jesus, and listening to the Spirit.
- Justice - Making the world a better place.
- Generosity - Giving of our time, energy, money and prayers.
- Teamwork - Working together within our church, with other churches and with other faith traditions.

### **ARTICLE IV. OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT**

We, the congregation of The United Christian Church, declare ourselves to be an open and affirming congregation, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of every person created in God's image. We welcome into full membership and participation in the Body of Christ persons of every race, ethnic background, age, gender, gender expression/identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, social-economic background, marital status and faith background. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our congregation.

### **ARTICLE V. COVENANT**

We are a covenant people who accept the two great commandments of Jesus to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" and to "love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Matthew 22:37-40) These commandments, which may be considered a summary of God's original covenant with God's people as defined by the Ten Commandments, are the foundation of our covenant with God, with ourselves, with our families, with our community, with United Christian Church, and with our two communions, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. We are committed to learning how Jesus' commandments will guide us in living out our covenant.

We covenant with God to make our relationship with God, as we have come to know God in and through Jesus Christ, first in our lives. We, therefore, will honor the Sabbath with regular attendance at worship. We pledge our commitment to continuing growth in our knowledge of God's truth and in our understanding of God's will through regular Bible study and meditation and in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all we do through daily prayer.

To live out our covenant with God, we covenant with ourselves to seek the spiritual strength which promotes personal wholeness, so that we may truly know ourselves, name and develop our gifts and talents, and finally to use those gifts as we express our love for our neighbors.

To live out our covenant with God, we covenant with our families to consider as a sacred trust the spiritual welfare of our families, giving whatever time, nurture and instruction is needed to enable our family life to be an expression of the love which flows to us from God.

To live out our covenant with God, we covenant with our faith community to be regular in our participation in the scheduled activities of the congregation, to faithfully meet its financial needs, to actively support its ministry in reaching out to others in the local, state, national, or world community, and to support our two communions. We will seek the spiritual strength which promotes personal wholeness, so that we may truly know ourselves, name and develop our gifts and talents, and finally to use those gifts as we express our love for our neighbors.

## **ARTICLE VI. SACRAMENTS**

We celebrate the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. In keeping with the traditions of our ecumenical partnership, we celebrate infant baptism (by sprinkling), infant dedication, confirmation, and believer's baptism (by sprinkling or immersion).

Our Lord's Supper is an open table extended to all who come to it to remember, share and celebrate the Risen Christ.

## **ARTICLE VII. MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of this congregation consists of: those who are currently members; those who shall unite with us by confirming their baptism as infants and confessing their faith; those who shall unite with us by believer's baptism (sprinkling or immersion); and those who transfer their membership from another church. Voting privileges shall be accorded to all members present. The official membership of this church shall be the church roll maintained by the Clerk.

## **ARTICLE VIII. GOVERNANCE**

Pastoral and lay leadership duties and responsibilities are defined in the Church Bylaws. The final authority of this congregation is in the officially called congregational meetings, informed by prayerful discernment.

A congregational meeting shall be called annually for the purpose of electing church officers, the Church Council, and other positions for the following year and for the presentation and adoption of the proposed budget for the following year. Special meetings of the congregation shall be called by the Church Council Chair, Church Council, or upon the request of the pastor(s).

Notice of all regular and special meetings shall be announced in advance of the meeting. Notice shall be given at a regular Sunday morning worship service of the congregation at least one week prior to the meeting and by mail, email, or the church newsletter sent at least ten (10) days before the meeting. The purpose, date, time and place of the meeting shall be indicated in each notice. A quorum shall consist of one-fourth (1/4) of the members of the congregation.

## **ARTICLE IX. FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year of United Christian Church shall begin on January 1 of each year.

## **ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS**

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

## **ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION**

This church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote (2/3) of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting called for that purpose. At such time:

- All liabilities and obligations of the corporation shall be paid, satisfied, and discharged.
- Assets held by the corporation upon conditions requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, must be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements.
- All remaining assets shall be distributed to the Christian Church in the Southwest and South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ, or such successor

church as may then exist.

- In no event shall any asset be distributed to an entity that is not exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or such successor provision.