

CONSTITUTION

Of First United Church of Christ

ARTICLE I. NAME

1. The name of this church shall be First United Church of Christ of the United Church of Christ located in Clay County, State of Indiana.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

2. The intent of this union shall be to strengthen the witness to Jesus Christ by a renewal of the Spirit among the people to worship God, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the Sacraments, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal; to be united in Christ through service to all.

ARTICLE III. POLICY

1. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ adopted July 4, 1961, with amendments relating to local churches.
2. The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to Law of the State of Indiana relating to corporations not for profit or ecclesiastical corporations.

ARTICLE IV. FAITH & COVENANT

This church acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of man. It acknowledges as brothers and sisters in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to seek its creative and redemptive work in the world. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among all Christians, it recognizes two Sacraments: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

“STATEMENT OF FAITH” One expression of this faith is:

“We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify.

He calls the worlds into being,
 Creates man in his own image
 and sets before him the ways of life and death.
 He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will
 declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,
 He has come to us
 and shared our common lot,
 conquering sin and death
 and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy spirit,
 creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ,
 binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

He calls us into his Church
 to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
 to be his servants in the service of men,
 to proclaim the gospel to all the world
 and resist the powers of evil,
 to share in Christ’s baptism and eat at his table,
 to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him
 forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
 courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
 his presence in trial and rejoicing,
 and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him. Amen”

COVENANT-We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God. We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshipping God, and striving for truth, justice, and peace. As did our fathers, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.
3. Any member may, on his own request, be granted a letter of transfer.

ARTICLE VI. GOVERNING BODY

1. The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled in church meeting. The vote of a majority of members present at the meeting shall be the action of the church.

ARTICLE VII. EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

1. The Executive Council shall be the executive body of this church. It shall be composed of the Pastor or Pastors, three Elders, three Deacons, and three Trustees. One-half of its members shall constitute a quorum.
2. The Executive Council shall organize itself each year, with the Elders serving as President and Secretary, and the Treasurer be appointed; and shall form such boards or ministry teams as will serve to further the purpose of the church.
3. If the church is a part of a pastoral charge composed of two or more churches, the members of the Executive Council shall be members of a Joint Council to which shall be committed the common interests of these churches.
4. One Elder, one Deacon, and one Trustee shall be elected by majority vote at the annual meeting of the congregation. They shall be elected for three years.
5. Nominations shall be made for the offices of Elder, Deacon and Trustee by a committee of five; the outgoing Elder, Deacon, and Trustee along with two members of the congregation elected by the congregation at a previous congregational meeting. Public notice of such nominations shall be given from the pulpit or by bulletin or letter at least two weeks before the election. Other nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting at which the election is held.
6. When elected, the Elders and Deacons shall be publicly ordained to their respective offices. Trustees shall be installed.
7. Vacancies on the Executive Council shall be filled by the Executive Council for the unexpired term.
8. The Executive Council shall be the policy-making body and shall transact the business of the church, make provision for the determining and raising of the current expense budget as well as for Our Christian World Mission and benevolences, provide for the auditing of financial accounts and for the adequate support of the staff.
9. The Executive Council shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all church records, and report to the church at its regular and special meetings. All acts and deliberations of the Executive Council are subject to the will of and revision by the governing body.

10. The Executive Council may authorize an extraordinary expense if the funds are available; but if borrowing exceeds \$200.00, it must receive the approval of the church.
11. In addition to the boards, committees, or ministry teams; the Executive Council shall appoint such other committees or teams as it may deem necessary.
12. The Executive Council shall meet monthly for the transaction of business as listed on an approved agenda. (Meetings normally should include prayer and study and should emphasize policy deliberations.) Special meetings are subject to the call of the President or the Pastor.

ELDERS, DEACONS, TRUSTEES, AND MEMBER-AT-LARGE

13. Elders are members of the church elected by the church and ordained to the office. They shall assist and support the Pastor in spiritual affairs of the church. They shall provide the elements for the Lord's Supper. They shall have jurisdiction in matters of discipline except in the case of the Pastor. Elders shall prayerfully respond to the calling of the office: faithfully nurturing spiritual interests of the church, maintaining order in the house of God, visiting the sick, ministering to the edification and comfort of all. In the case of pastoral discipline, the Elders shall refer to the Church & Ministry Committee of the Association. They recommend the annual compensation package for the Pastor inclusive in the annual budget.
14. Deacons are members of the church elected by the church and ordained to their office. They shall aid in securing the funds for the support of the church in its various activities to foster the principles of stewardship, and to dispense the charity of the church. They propose an annual budget for the Executive Council approval.
 Gifts and Memorials: It shall be the responsibility of the Deacons to maintain records and the memorial book. They shall determine when the useful life of these articles has ended. It shall foster the practice of monetary donations to special causes as memorials to deceased members.
15. Trustees are members of the church elected by the church and installed to their office. They shall have the care of the physical property of the church as a sacred trust. In accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation and this Constitution and By-Laws and under direction of the Council.
16. No elected member may serve on the Executive Council for more than three consecutive years.

ARTICLE VIII. PASTOR

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Pulpit Committee, appointed by the Executive Council, to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of Pastor.
2. As soon as a pastoral vacancy occurs, it shall be reported to the Conference Office.
3. In filling a vacancy or in securing supply ministers for the period of vacancy, the Pulpit Committee may seek the counsel of the Conference staff.
4. The Pulpit Committee may request the Indiana Kentucky Conference to secure relevant information about any minister whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy.
5. Any minister may confer with the Indiana Kentucky Conference concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the minister's request, their name shall be submitted by the Indiana Kentucky Conference for consideration by the local church committee.
6. The Pulpit Committee shall present to the church the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. A ballot vote of a simple majority of those members present constitutes a call.

7. The final interview prior to the trial sermon will include: responsibilities, duties, and financial compensations as specified as a contract between the Church and the prospective minister.
8. In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the agreement of the church to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Ministers' Health Insurance Program, and other terms agreed between the candidate and the committee. The minister, the church, the Association and the Indiana Kentucky Conference shall each receive a copy of the call.
9. When a minister accepts a call to this church, the church and he/she join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation or recognition. A report of this service shall be signed by the proper officer of the Association and by the Indiana Kentucky Conference and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ and the Council for Church and Ministry.
10. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, three months' notice shall be given by either party. The procedure shall be in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the First United Church of Christ and under the direction of the Church and Ministry Committee of the Wabash Valley Association.
11. When either party decides to terminate the relationship, the termination shall be by action of the Executive Council and notice of such termination shall be sent by the President of the Executive Council to the Indiana Kentucky Conference and to the Association for appropriate action.
12. Brotherly discipline of the pastor shall be in conformity with the Constitution and By-Laws of the First United Church of Christ. The discipline of a minister is the responsibility of the Association in which he/she holds their standing.
13. The church may, at its discretion, choose an Associate or Assistant Pastor(s).

ARTICLE IX. PROPERTY

1. For incorporated churches – The church may in its corporate name sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property, both real and personal for such work as the church may undertake, and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purposes of the church; it may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objects and purposes of the church.
2. Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it shall then be possessed, including any devise, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to Indiana Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ. (This is not required by the General Synod, and we want to make it plain that the United Church stands firmly on Article 21 of the Constitution but under the Internal Revenue Service regulations, if there is not a specific disavowal that the assets on dissolution will be distributed to the membership, the church will not qualify as an exempt organization. See Internal Revenue Code Sec. 501 (c) (3) and the regulations there under.)

ARTICLE X. CHURCH MEETINGS

1. The Annual Meeting of the church shall be held on the second Sunday of January. At this meeting, the Council, the officers of the church, the Pastor, and all church organizations shall submit their annual reports in writing.
2. Special church meetings may be called by the Executive Council or by a petition to the Executive Council signed by not less than ten percent of the members. The Executive Council shall call such meetings within three weeks from receipt of the petition, and adequate notice of such meeting shall be sent to the membership by the Secretary.

ARTICLE XI. RULES OF ORDER

1. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and/or By-Laws.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

1. Amendments to this Constitution and/or By-Laws may be made at any duly called church meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote, by ballot, of the members present, public announcement of the text of the proposed amendment(s) having been made two weeks prior to the meeting.

Approved March 3, 1968 by members of First Presbyterian and St. Peter UCC meeting as one congregation at St. Peter UCC.

BY – LAWS

ARTICLE I.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS. Announcement of all congregational meetings shall be made on two successive Sundays, the first announcement being made two weeks prior to the meeting or with the wish of Executive Council, notices of a congregational meeting can be electronic mailed, or postal mailed by the secretary to every member of the congregation. This action cancels the two-week waiting period.

ARTICLE II.

OBLIGATION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

- (A) The pastor and a delegate, from this congregation shall be appointed each year by the Executive Council to attend the annual meeting as a voting delegate of conference. All expenses not paid by conference shall be paid by the congregation.
- (B) The congregation shall regularly contribute toward the support of all branches of the United Church of Christ and the conference according to the rules and actions of the General Synod and the Conference.
- (C) This congregation shall make such reports Syndical and Conference authorities as may be requested.
- (D) The official year of the congregation shall be from January 1 to December 31.

ARTICLE III.

PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS

All communicant members of this congregation are entitled to voice, vote and office.

ARTICLE IV.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations of the offices of Elder, Deacon, Trustee, Member- at – Large, Church School Superintendent, Nominating Committee, and Cemetery Board shall be made by the nominating committee, which shall present to the congregation a slate of candidates of members of the congregation for church office (except for Nominating Committee, which shall have four nominees). One additional nomination may be made by the congregation for each office.

ARTICLE V.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

- (A) The Executive Council shall submit any or all records to the Conference when occasion requires or the Conference requests. Minutes of the Executive Council meetings shall be published for all members to read.
- (B) The Executive Council shall direct the pastor to keep a complete record of baptisms, confirmations, communicants, reception of new members, transfers, erasures of names, suspensions, marriages and deaths. All records shall be the property of the congregation. But upon dissolution of the congregation its records shall become property of the Conference.
- (C) The Executive Council shall approve all bills before payment, and those submitted in the regular business of the Executive Council.

ARTICLE VI.

MINISTRY TEAMS

The following is a brief description of the suggested ministry teams.

- (A) **WORSHIP:** This ministry team shall assist the pastor in planning worship services, securing special music and musicians for worship, Christmas Eve Programs and involving lay persons in various leadership roles in worship services. This also includes the planning and use of technology in the worship service.
- (B) **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** This ministry team is responsible for the administration of the church school, including the selection of the curriculum, children's church, teachers for the church school, and the appointment of Bible school. This team is also responsible for the Youth Advisory Team for the youth group.
- (C) **STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE:** This ministry team is made up of the Deacons. It is the team's responsibility to secure the funds for the support of the church in its various activities, to foster the principles of stewardship, and to dispense the charity of the church.
- (D) **FELLOWSHIP:** The Elders shall be the Fellowship Team; the Pastor shall be the chairperson. If the congregation is without a pastor, one of the elders shall be chosen to preside. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.
 1. Stated meetings shall be held to consider and to act upon requests for letters of transfer and to discuss and to devise plans for the quickening of the spiritual life of the congregation.
 2. The Fellowship Team shall exercise discipline in the congregation.
- (E) **OUTREACH:** It shall be the responsibility of this team to aid and encourage the congregation in proclaiming the Gospel in such a way that those outside the fellowship of the church will respond to the Good News by committing themselves to Christ. This team will plan outreach goals on local, conference, and national levels.
- (F) **VISITATION:** This ministry team shall assist the pastor in visiting; home visits, hospital, and shut-ins. They will help follow up with visitors and possible new members.
- (G) **SPECIALTY MINISTRY TEAMS:** Women's Fellowship, Christian Discovery, and others that might arise out of specific needs.

ARTICLE VII.

THE PASTOR is an ex officio a member of all organizations within the church. As long as he/she is pastor, no other minister shall perform any religious ceremony in his/her church without his/her consent. To invite a speaker either during a temporary absence of the pastor or for special occasions, the consent of both the pastor and Executive Council is necessary.

ARTICLE VIII.

ELIGIBILITY OF OFFICERS

- (A) To be eligible for office in any organization of the congregation, a candidate must be a member of the church.
- (B) To be eligible for the office of Elder, the candidate shall have been a member of the congregation for at least four years.
- (C) To be eligible for the office of Deacon or Trustee, the candidate shall have been a member of the congregation for at least two years.

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