

# PROPOSED BYLAWS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HENNIKER

Adopted [*insert date*], 2009

## ARTICLE I — NAME

The name of this church is the Congregational Church of Henniker. The church is a member of the Merrimack Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ and follows the guidelines for ministry set out in the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ.

## ARTICLE II — PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to maintain public services for the worship of God, for the teaching and preaching of the gospel, and in general to promote the interest of the kingdom of God according to the teachings of Christ.

## ARTICLE III — FAITH AND COVENANT

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness, and love; and in Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord and Savior, who for us and for our salvation lived and died and rose again and lives evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us for renewal, comfort, and inspiration.

The Congregational Church of Henniker seeks to lead parishioners toward a closer walk with God, a life of striving to follow the teaching, ministry, and mission of Jesus Christ. The congregation seeks to attain that closer walk, living in ways that express God's justice and demonstrate God's love, locally and throughout the world. To that end, the church shall offer to all people:

- (1) a safe, welcoming, and sacred place to gather;
- (2) worship that glorifies God with joy, wonder, music, message, and community;
- (3) care and a sense of belonging to those who seek to follow Christ;
- (4) Christian education and experiences and programs that seek to enhance people's faith in Christ;
- (5) opportunities to identify, address, and serve the needs of others locally and throughout the world;
- (6) services and other events that celebrate life and mark the spiritual aspects of life's passages for people in our community, recognizing and honoring our long history in Henniker.

And in turn the congregation shall strive to:

- (1) participate fully and joyfully in the worship services and activities of the church;
- (2) accept God's love and forgiveness, allowing us to love and forgive ourselves and others;
- (3) discover and nurture, through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, our individual passions and gifts, devoting them to God's service;

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- (4) embrace the costs and joys of discipleship by pledging our time, money, and energy to the church's ministries and our own individual spiritual growth and faith development;
- (5) serve others locally and in the world through personal involvement, prayer, and practical action;
- (6) welcome with a warm spirit friends, neighbors, and newcomers alike.

#### ARTICLE IV — MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Congregational Church of Henniker occurs in the following ways:

- (1) Having been baptized, by confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and by promising to live in accordance with the faith and covenant of the church;
- (2) By presenting a letter of transfer from another church;
- (3) By confirmation.

The deacons and the pastor shall recommend individuals for membership and shall inform the council of their recommendations. Individuals will be received into membership during worship. The vows taken during admission into church membership require the new member's presence and support for the church and for its other members, and are evidence of active membership.

On very rare occasions it is possible that a seemingly intractable conflict could arise in the church. If the church council cannot resolve such a conflict in a satisfactory manner, the church shall avail itself of the services of the Merrimack Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ for process and procedures to settle the problem.

In the event of the death of a member, receipt of a member's letter of transfer to another church, or at the request of a member, the person's name shall be removed from the rolls of the church. The deacons will conduct an annual review of the membership lists to determine if a member has been inactive for a year. If so, a letter will be sent to determine whether that person desires to remain an active member. If that person does not request to remain an active member, or if the address of that member is unknown, the person will be placed on the inactive list. A person on the inactive membership list will not be reported or counted in church statistics. In the event of a member's being on the inactive membership list for five years, the deacons at their discretion may remove that person from the inactive list and from all rolls. The deacons shall inform the council of decisions to place members on the inactive list or remove members from church rolls.

#### ARTICLE V — OFFICERS

All officers of the church, i.e., pastor, moderator, clerk, treasurer, and assistant treasurer, shall be members of the church. Officers, with the exception of the pastor, are elected at the annual meeting and shall serve for one year. The positions are renewable.

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Pastor: The pastor of the church, also referred to as the minister, shall be charged with nurturing the spiritual welfare of the church. The pastor will have standing in and be installed as pastor/teacher in the church by the Merrimack Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. The pastor shall preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, be responsible for services of public worship, give pastoral guidance and care, and provide leadership to the congregation. This leadership role extends to the church council and to the various committees of the church in the sense that the pastor works closely with the moderator, the council, and the committees, encouraging and directing the church in the pursuit of its mission.

Moderator: The moderator is the lay leader of the church. The moderator shall preside at the annual meeting and special meetings and will chair and provide leadership to the church council.

Clerk: The clerk shall keep a complete record of the transactions of all annual and special meetings of the church and report same at the annual meeting. The clerk shall post official notice of annual and special meetings at or near the principal entrances of the church at least two weeks before the meeting, stating the time and place of the meeting and the business to be transacted. The clerk shall be a member of the church council and shall record transactions of its meetings. The clerk shall within a reasonable time distribute all reports and minutes as appropriate.

Treasurer: The church treasurer is entrusted with the receipt, care, disbursement, and record keeping of church-related funds as directed by the church council and/or its stewardship and finance subcommittee. The treasurer will attend all meetings of the council and update the council on financial activities and trends. The treasurer's records shall be kept as directed by the church council, and shall be made available for inspection at its request.

Assistant Treasurer: The assistant treasurer shall perform the duties of treasurer in the treasurer's absence.

## ARTICLE VI — GOVERNANCE

The congregation is the governing body of the church through its annual meeting or any special meeting of the congregation to conduct the business of the church. The church council is the primary leadership body of the church in conducting its regular business. "Leadership" is defined as managing the affairs of the church; that is, encouraging and nurturing passion in the church's various programs and providing direction to the church's committees and other activities, assuring that these efforts comport with the congregation's shared vision. In its leadership role, the council shall coordinate the church's various ministries and have final approval of and responsibility for the church's major decisions, financial and otherwise.

Church Council: The church council consists of the moderator, clerk, pastor, treasurer, and a designated representative (preferably the chair) of the following standing committees: Christian education, diaconate, music, pastor/parish relations, trustees of buildings and

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grounds, and world service. An at-large member shall be chosen by the council to serve as liaison between the council and the congregation. The council will appoint one of its members as assistant moderator, who will perform the duties of moderator in the moderator's absence. The council shall meet monthly. The council is responsible for counting the offering after worship services. The council shall recruit assistance by volunteers from the congregation and appoint task forces as needed for specific projects. An individual member or friend of the congregation wishing to create a new project (e.g., fundraising, building repairs, etc.) shall make a proposal to the council for input, direction, and approval. The council shall have power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer substantial property only with the specific authority voted by the church.

Stewardship and Finance Subcommittee of the Council: This subcommittee shall be appointed and directed by the council, and all of its activities shall be carried out in close coordination with the council. It shall consist of three members, each serving a staggered two-year term, which may be renewed for one successive term. This subcommittee has the following major functions:

- (1) Conducting an annual stewardship campaign;
- (2) Developing and tracking, in cooperation with the church council, the annual church budget for submission and final vote at the annual meeting;
- (3) Supervising the work of the treasurer, including reviewing monthly performance against the budget, thus keeping the council apprised of the status of the budget on an ongoing basis;
- (4) Tracking the use, performance, and status of the church's endowment and investments and keeping the council apprised thereof;
- (5) Maintaining, in cooperation with the diaconate, all memorial funds and donations to the church, with particular attention to any caveats and restrictions to same.

## ARTICLE VII — STANDING COMMITTEES

Each of the church's standing committees shall determine its own chairperson, who shall be a member of the church. Regular members of committees, except deacons, need not be members of the church, although church membership is encouraged. Each committee shall appoint a representative, preferably its chair, to the church council. The church's standing committees shall report regularly to the council, through their representatives, regarding their ministries and activities. The committee representatives shall relay information from the council back to their committees. The council shall ensure that vacancies on standing committees are filled. A secretary/scribe shall be chosen by each committee if needed; copies of any minutes of meetings shall be distributed to the church secretary for electronic preservation and availability to the church council. The committees generally meet about ten times a year, except for the pastor/parish relations committee, which meets about six times a year or as needed. Each committee shall write a report for the church's annual meeting. Each committee shall give continuous, careful consideration to its budget; specifically, its budget should be a part of each meeting's agenda. Each committee shall submit its proposed budget, including staff compensation, to the finance subcommittee of the council annually when required. Each committee shall remain mindful of the church's vision statement in all its activities and goals.

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Other committees may be appointed by the council or elected as a need arises, but the following shall be the standing committees of the church.

**Christian Education Committee:** The Christian education committee shall be composed of up to nine members, a majority of whom shall be active members of the church. Terms shall be three years, staggered to assure continuity. The committee, working closely with the pastor, shall be responsible for carrying out a program of Christian education for the entire church family and will conduct screenings and background checks of personnel to insure the safety and welfare of children participating in church programs. At its discretion, the committee shall secure a Sunday school superintendent and a curriculum.

**Diaconate:** The diaconate shall consist of twelve members, called “deacons,” each of whom shall be a church member and shall serve for a term of three years. Terms shall be staggered, and deacons shall not serve successive terms. Previous members of the diaconate may be asked to carry out deacon worship duties if needed. Deacons shall assist the pastor in various parts of the worship service, including preparing and administering Communion and having custody of the Communion property and articles of the altar service; providing hospitality in worship; and welcoming new members. Deacons shall support the pastor in special liturgies (e.g., confirmation and baptism) and in special services (e.g., Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve). This committee shall strive to be aware of and follow up on any unusual nonparticipation or nonattendance by a parishioner or member in order to offer caring support to that person. In all respects, the deacons and pastor shall work closely together regarding faith formation and faith education opportunities for young people and adults and in promoting the spiritual interest and life of the church.

**Music Committee:** The music committee shall consist of six members, plus, *ex officio*, the music director, and accompanist. Terms of service shall be three years, so staggered that no more than three members will be new each year. The music committee shall define and provide vision for the music ministry. It shall supervise, encourage, and support the music ministry staff and be responsible for job descriptions, evaluations, and recruiting of music staff as required.

**Pastor/Parish Relations Committee:** The pastor/parish relations committee shall consist of six members, one of whom will be a diaconate representative and one chosen by the pastor. Terms shall be three years, staggered to assure continuity. Members may serve two successive terms. The committee will meet periodically throughout the year to discuss congregational, pastoral, and communications issues, giving feedback and support to the pastor. A concern or problem brought to the committee by either the pastor or a parishioner will be addressed in a positive and supportive manner with a goal of achieving a remedy and/or solution. Concerns are treated in a confidential manner and will be referred to the church council for further discussion if required. The committee will work with the pastor to suggest an annual compensation package, establish goals, and assess the achievement of goals on an ongoing basis.

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Trustees of Church Property: This committee shall consist of six to nine members, serving staggered three-year terms. All business of the trustees shall be carried out at regularly scheduled meetings, typically held monthly, with a quorum consisting of half of the committee's members. The committee's primary objective is to assure the care and upkeep of the church's property, including the church building itself, the parish hall, and the parsonage. The trustees will supervise all repairs and maintenance, including janitorial services, and will assure that the properties are properly insured and provided with adequate fuel and electricity. The trustees shall share supervision of the church secretary with the pastor. Most of the secretary's activities will be assigned by the pastor, but administrative oversight will rest with the trustees. The trustees will coordinate with other committees and church leaders regarding requests and suggestions concerning church property and its use.

World Service Committee: The world service committee shall be comprised of volunteers, numbering at least six but not more than twelve, who are not elected at annual meeting but who express a wish to serve on the committee. They may serve with no term limits. The world service committee will work to educate the congregation about issues and needs in the community, in the country, and throughout the world. It shall communicate these needs to the congregation by bringing to life the vision of demonstrating God's love through justice and in practical ways. The world service committee will be given monies each year for disaster relief and assistance and for other service initiatives. It is in charge of the disbursement of the monies in its budget and shall give an account of such disbursements in its annual report to the church. The world service committee shall determine when additional offerings are taken during Sunday worship to support neighbors around the world when critical needs arise.

#### ARTICLE VIII — MEETINGS

The annual meeting of the church shall take place on the second Sunday in February directly after the morning worship service. Special meetings may be called by the church council or by a petition giving cause and signed by twelve church members. The church clerk shall notify members of all annual meetings and special meetings (see Article V). Notice must be read from the pulpit at least one Sunday prior to the date of the meeting. Twenty-five members shall constitute a quorum at all annual and special meetings.

At the annual meeting, the council shall present to the congregation for approval the proposed budget for the upcoming year, as well as a list of candidates for officer positions, except pastor, and open positions on standing committees, except world service. The congregation's vote shall be taken on the budget and the slate of nominees as presented.

#### ARTICLE IX — ANNUAL REPORT

An annual report for the church shall be prepared each year for presentation at the annual meeting. The report will consist of, but not be limited to, minutes from the previous year's annual meeting, reports from the pastor, moderator, and standing committees, the auditor's report, the proposed budget, a record of membership changes, and a record of baptisms, funerals, and weddings held in the sanctuary.

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## ARTICLE X – AUDITORS

The church council shall appoint two auditors, who shall conduct random samplings of financial transactions as kept by the treasurer, verifying same for authenticity. These samplings shall be conducted annually or as specified by the council. The auditors shall prepare a report for presentation at the annual meeting.

## ARTICLE XI — AMENDMENTS

The bylaws may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at the annual meeting of the church or at a special meeting called for that purpose, provided that in the call for such meeting notice shall have been given that such alteration, repeal, or addition will be proposed.

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