

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

570 KLEM ROAD
WEBSTER, NEW YORK 14580

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Revision History

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This document supersedes all previous guidance documents and policies.

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains the structure which the members of United Church of Christ, Congregational, Webster NY, voted to accept at the Congregational meeting held on May 23, 2004. As directed by the United Church of Christ Constitution: “decisions are made ‘by consultation and collaboration’ among the various partners as we “seek to walk together in all God’s ways’ (Constitution, Article 3).” This document is meant to be a “living” document that serves to “guide” rather than “direct” our congregation.

ARTICLE I. NAME

This church shall be known as the “United Church of Christ, Congregational.”

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE AND DOCTRINE

SECTION 1. United Church of Christ

This church and its congregation 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 relating to local churches, first adopted July 4, 1961, and all subsequent revisions.

In our church, people matter most. Our members come from many religious traditions, and our personal convictions have been formed by a wide variety of life experiences, so we have learned to cherish and respect the diversity of beliefs that enrich our life together. We are united, not by a common doctrine or creed, but by our desire to embody the same gracious love that God in Christ has shared with us. We uphold the practices and traditions of our faith, including the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism.

Our congregation has embraced the vision of being an inviting, Christ-centered community where all of God’s people are valued, supported and challenged to grow in faith and service.

We are an Open and Affirming (ONA) church and have adopted this as our ONA statement: “The United Church of Christ, Congregational of Webster is an Open and Affirming community of faith. We welcome and affirm God’s people of every sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, marital status, mental ability, physical ability, economic circumstance, and spiritual tradition to fully participate in the life and ministry of our church family.”

We are a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) church for Mental Health. In living our commitment to being open and affirming to all, we are committed to being sensitive to the challenges faced by the millions of Americans with brain disorders or mental illnesses and their caregivers, family, and friends. We offer support, acceptance, and respect to each person, and strive to provide information and resources with the goal of reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

SECTION 2. Our Vision

Inviting people into the joy of Christian community, where everyone is valued, supported and challenged to grow in faith and service.

SECTION 3. Our Ministry and Mission

- **Worship:** To embrace a welcoming Christ-centered worship where all of God's people are valued, supported and challenged to grow in faith and service
- **Children and Youth:** To help children and youth learn about and live the values of Jesus
- **Outreach:** To establish outreach initiatives that support our community, country, and world
- **Our Home:** To establish our home as a center for church and community activities
- **Communication:** To share our stories, stay connected, and transmit our church family's care

SECTION 4. Who We Are

We are about faith and justice, exploration and understanding. So, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you and your questions are welcome here.

SECTION 5. Our Values

Values that Shape Who We Are

- We encourage people to think for themselves.
- We respect the dignity of all individuals.
- We embrace diversity.

Values that Shape What We Do

- We are committed to nurturing the spiritual development of our children, youth and adults.
- We apply our faith to the relevant issues of our day.
- We share what we have with others.

Values that Shape How We Do Things

- We empower people to step forward, take action, and lead with initiative.
- We meet people where they are.
- We are committed to stepping out in faith, even when it feels uncomfortable or risky.

SECTION 6. Our View of God

The God we know in Jesus is known by many names. Among Christians, we share a tradition of speaking of God as “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” We also speak of God in ways that enrich our faith, such as Mother, Rock, Liberator, Savior, and Friend. Where there is justice, peace, and compassion, we see the living God at work. We belong to such a God.

ARTICLE III. Membership Criteria

SECTION 1. Qualifications

To become a voting member of the United Church of Christ, Congregational in Webster New York, and to retain such membership, a person should meet the following criteria:

By one of the following:

- by making a “Statement of Faith” as they understand it, either publicly, in writing, or to pastor, OR
- by letter of transfer from another church OR
- by confirmation

AND

- by being involved as they are able AND/OR
- by making financial contributions as they are able

SECTION 2. Internal Record Keeping Designations

Active member*

- One who meets the membership criteria and considers themselves an engaged member of this congregation. This may include attending worship,

participating in other church activities, or giving. The frequency doesn't matter. Participation looks different for everyone.

- Entitled to vote in church elections and other congregational votes
- Included in number reported to wider UCC

Inactive Members*

- One who meets the membership criteria and sees Webster UCC as “(their) church” but hasn't been involved for a while and doesn't anticipate doing so soon. This status keeps the individual on our membership rolls while removing them from the official count for the greater UCC.
- Not entitled to vote in church elections and other congregational votes.
- Not included in number reported to wider UCC

Friend*

- One who considers themselves interested and engaged in the activities of this congregation but has not fulfilled the membership criteria outlined in Article III, Section 1.
- Not entitled to vote in church elections and other congregational votes.
- Not included in number reported to wider UCC

Child*

- Minor whose parent or guardian is a member or friend and who has not yet been confirmed
- Not entitled to vote in church elections and other congregational votes.
- Not included in number reported to wider UCC

*All are counted in “Pastoral Responsibility” number, only Active Members are included in official UCC counts.

SECTION 3. Updating of Rolls

At least once per year, the Leadership Council shall designate a subset of Council members to review the current membership list and identify any necessary changes.

At least every three years, the Leadership Council shall designate a subset of Council members and/or members of the congregation to review the list and attempt to contact any individuals who have been inactive for at least two years.

Rolls should be updated at any time upon request of the member/friend, or upon the death of thereof.

ARTICLE IV. Governing Body

SECTION 1. Members of the Congregation

- The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled at a church meeting.
- The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject to laws of the State of New York relating to religious corporations.

SECTION 2. Leadership Council

Voting Members (11)

- Moderator
- Vice Moderator
- Immediate Past Moderator
- Program Team Leaders
 - Building and Grounds
 - Congregational Life
 - Finance
 - Mission
 - Outreach and Family Programing
 - Personnel
 - Stewardship
 - Worship and Music

Non-Voting Members

- Staff
- Finance officers

If there is no elected Team Leader for one of the Ministry Teams, the Leadership Council may appoint a member of the team to exercise the vote for that position

Responsibilities of Leadership Council:

Meet and communicate regularly to:

- Receive Program Team and staff updates as applicable

- Develop, with input and cooperation of the program teams, a budget to support the ministry and mission of our church to be presented to the congregation for approval
- Discuss relevant issues, problem solve and make decisions that are not made at the Team level
- Discern the future plans and journey of the church's ministry and mission
- Communicate relevant discussion topics to broader congregation, as appropriate

Business may be conducted in person or via conference call or email.

Responsibilities of Members of Leadership Council

- Moderator
 - Plan & preside over Leadership Council, congregational meetings and special congregational meetings
 - Define meeting roles: timekeeper, scribe
 - Provide monthly update in church newsletter, *The Congregationalist*, when deemed appropriate
 - Act as a liaison between the Congregation and the Pastor
 - Sign legal documents regarding church business
- Vice-Moderator
 - Attend meetings of Leadership Council
 - Preside over business meetings of Leadership Council and the congregation in the absence of the moderator.
 - Assume the role of Moderator when the current Moderator's term expires
- Immediate Past Moderator
 - Attend meetings of Leadership Council
 - Provide continuity and historical perspective
 - Serve as mentor and advisor to current Moderator and Vice-Moderator
 - Perform other duties as requested by the Moderator
- Team Leader
 - Be a voting member of Leadership Council
 - Meet regularly with Leadership Council
 - Attend annual and other congregational meetings as able
 - Prepare and monitor budget needs

- Communicate decisions, plans and achievements to the Leadership Council
- Recruit and meet with volunteers who will support team's responsibilities
 - Coordinate the roles and responsibilities of their teams
 - Plan and preside over the meetings of team members (as needed) to discuss needs specific to team's function
 - Lead decision making at the team level
 - Recognize contributions of team and/or team members

SECTION 3. Program Teams

Team Responsibilities

Congregational Life

- Offer ideas and assistance for programming events and ministries that benefit our congregation and promote our church in the greater community
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Worship and Music

- Support the pastor in needs related to our worship experience
- Support the director of music and the music program
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Outreach and Family Programming

- Support the adult, youth and children's educational programs and outreach
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Mission

- Provide support and coordination for the mission work that is done within our church and for our wider community
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Finance

- Support program teams in the development and implementation of an annual balanced operating budget

- Report the finance status to the congregation through newsletter updates and at congregational meetings
- Approve non-routine expenditures
- Oversee investments
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Building and Grounds

- Provide oversight regarding our church's infrastructure
- Assess building and grounds needs and plan for maintenance and/or improvements accordingly
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Personnel

- Provide support for the staff regarding yearly evaluations
- Oversee employee contracts and job descriptions
- Ensure employee-related policies are in place that meet labor law and insurance requirements
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

Stewardship

- Coordinate church fundraising
- Complete duties as described in the documented position description

SECTION 4. Elected Finance Officers

- Elected by congregational vote
- Officers are elected officials who oversee the accounting of income, expenses and allocations of dedicated funds
- These officers are granted voice without a vote at Leadership Council meetings
- Elected Finance Officers comprise the Finance Team, under the leadership of Finance Lead.

Finance Secretary and Assistant Finance Secretary

- Count, allocate, and deposit money (Accounts Receivable)
- Track and report income/resources monthly
- Reconcile balance sheet with Treasurer

- Issue mid-year pledge status and annual contribution statements
- Assistant stands-in for Finance Secretary in case of absence or vacancy

Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

- Pay bills (Accounts Payable)
 - Track and report monthly reporting
 - Reconcile balance sheet with Finance Secretary
 - Assistant stands-in for Treasurer in case of absence or vacancy
- Note: Treasurer does not have purchase approval authority.

Memorial/Special Gifts Treasurer

- Receive and acknowledge gifts
- Track expenses
- Recommend use of funds and report how they're used

Investment Team

- Track investments
- Receive funds for investment
- Recommend use of investment funds and report how they're used

SECTION 5 Terms

Leadership progression

To maintain leadership continuity, institutional knowledge transfer, and strategic alignment, the individual elected as Vice-Moderator shall automatically progress to the position of Moderator after serving a two-year term and subsequently to Immediate Past Moderator for another two-year term.

Other elected Council members and Finance Officers shall

- Serve a two-year term; a second two-year term may be served if desired and approved by a congregational vote.
- Subsequent terms may be allowed upon review and approval by Leadership Council and subsequent congregational vote
- The new Leadership slate shall take office at the conclusion of the vote at the mid-year Congregational Meeting.

Vacancies

In the event that a seated council member is unable or unwilling to complete their term, the Council may fill the role until the next congregational meeting. Preference will be given to current members of the corresponding team.

If a vacant position has no candidate identified, Leadership Council shall determine the essential functions of the role and assign them to other council members, volunteers, or outsourced providers.

SECTION 6 Trustees

The Moderator, Building and Grounds lead, and Finance Lead shall be designated as Trustees and uphold responsibilities in accordance with the New York State Religious Corporations Law. In the event of a vacancy in any of the three positions, Leadership Council shall appoint an alternate member, ensuring there are always at least three Trustees.

SECTION 7 Pastoral Vacancy

The church will follow the search and call process of the NY Conference of the United Church of Christ, including any interim activity recommended by the Conference.

Interim or Bridge Search

Searches for Interim or Bridge/Designated Term ministers shall be conducted according to Conference guidance by a minimum of three designated members of the Leadership Council.

Settled Pastor Search

Leadership Council will oversee the formation of a Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) to conduct a search for a settled pastor. The PSC shall be formed by:

- Developing a nomination process
- Creating a slate of agreed upon nominees that are representative of a demographic cross-section of church members
- Presenting the slate for approval to the congregation

Once established, the PSC will work with and within the NYS Conference to develop a church profile, review candidates and narrow the search to a single recommended candidate.

Once a candidate has been agreed upon by the PSC, the candidate shall be presented to the congregation for an informal gathering and will lead a Worship service. Notice of

the event will follow the requirements for the notice of a “Special” congregational meeting as stated in ARTICLE V Section 2.

Immediately following the service the candidate will be excused and the congregational vote will be held.

- A quorum must be present as defined in Article V Section 3. A two-thirds majority vote of active members present is required to approve the call of the candidate.

Once a pastor is elected:

- The term of office shall be indefinite as long as the pastor maintains:
 - 1) Ministerial standing in the NYS Conference and
 - 2) Contractual responsibilities as specified in the Call Agreement.
- The term shall/may be dissolved by giving sixty days notice if:
 - 1) One or both of the above criteria are not upheld or
 - 2) The pastor should decide on her/his own accord to dissolve the pastoral relationship

In the even of a conflict between the pastor and the congregation, the Chair of the Committee on Church and Ministry of the Genesee Valley Association of the United Church of Christ shall be engaged.

ARTICLE V. Services and Meetings

SECTION 1. Worship

- Service(s) of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday except when temporarily suspended by the pastor and/or Council
- Additional services may be held on other days.
- The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, shall be celebrated a minimum of six times during the church year
- The Sacrament of Baptism, either of children or adults, will be observed upon request and in consultation with the pastor

SECTION 2. Business Meetings

Congregational Meetings will be held no less than twice a year.

- The annual meeting will be held as early as practicable in the first quarter of the year:
 1. Approve the budget for the new year as presented by the Leadership Council
 2. Share information of importance to the church
 3. Vote on any motions brought before the congregation by way of Leadership Council or individual
- A congregational meeting will be held approximately mid-year, preferably in June, to:
 - 1) Approve proposed slate for Leadership Council members and finance officers
 - 2) Share information of importance to the church
 - 3) Vote on any motions brought before the congregation by way of Leadership Council or individual

Scheduled Meetings shall be announced at least 2 weeks in advance

- At Worship service(s)
- In the monthly newsletter, *The Congregationalist*
- Through church email

Special Meetings

- Special Church meetings may be called by:
 - The Pastor
 - The Moderator
 - Or by a petition to the Leadership Council signed by not fewer than five active voting members of the congregation
- Notification of such meetings must be made to the congregation no less than one week prior to the meeting:
 - During Worship service(s)
 - In the worship bulletin
 - Through church email
 and include the stated purpose of the meeting.

SECTION 3. Rules and Regulations Governing Business Meetings

• Rules of Order

Simplified Parliamentary Procedure shall be followed.

• Quorum

A necessary quorum for conducting business at Congregational Meetings shall consist of at least 30 voting members of the Church. A necessary quorum for conducting business at Leadership Council meetings shall consist of a simple

majority of seated Leadership Council members (> 50% of current Leadership Council members).

- **Voting**

All active members of the church are entitled to vote during a Congregational meeting. Unless otherwise stated, a majority vote is decisive.

Alternative methods of voting (e.g. online, via email, etc.) may be implemented upon majority vote of Leadership Council.

ARTICLE VI. *The Pastoral Relations Team*

Purposes of the Team:

- To be an advisory group to the pastor – sharing ideas, dreams, hopes, expectations, and concerns for the congregation with the pastor
- As support for the pastor's leadership – interpreting roles, functions, and needs of the pastor to the congregation
- To build a framework in which conflict can be dealt with creatively
- To provide for the professional growth and well-being of the pastor, and
- To promote the mutual ministry of the pastor and congregation

Composition of the Team:

- The Team will have three to five members, selected in consultation between the pastor, the Moderator, and the outgoing chair of the Team (in the case of an ongoing settled pastorate) or the chair(s) of the Search Team (in the case of a newly-called pastor)
 - Each team member will serve a two-year term, renewable once.
 - The exception is the first team to be formed. In that case, one member will have a first term of one year, the other two will serve a full two-year term.
 - The Team will seek input from the Leadership and general membership of the church.
 - The Team will actively and continually recruit new members
 - The Team will choose its own chairperson.

Scope of the Team's Work:

- The Team will operate according to the documented Team description
- The emphasis of the Team is support of the church's ministry, as outlined in the purposes section above.

In the event a non-settled minister is in place (e.g. bridge, interim, designated term) a modified version of the Pastoral Relations Team may be implemented.

ARTICLE VII. Finance Allocations

SECTION 1. Mission Giving

Our church is committed to providing support and outreach to our community and the world. A portion of the church budget will be allocated to this mission giving. The mission budget will be determined by Leadership Council as part of the budget development process. The budget amount may vary, but is recommended to be between 5% - 10% of the pledged amount for that year.

- The church budget will have a line item for Mission giving.
 - The Mission team determines the allocation of the Mission budget.
 - We will support the wider church as we are able (e.g. Our Church's Wider Mission, GVA dues, etc.)

SECTION 2. Memorial Giving

Definition

- Memorial Giving is an opportunity for people to give in memory or honor of loved ones
- The Memorial Giving Fund shall receive all funds designated as a memorial gift

Purpose

- To enhance the ministries of the Webster United Church of Christ, Congregational
- To honor the lives of loved ones through gifts that are made in their memory

Receipt and Management of Funds

- All contributions made to the Memorial and Special Gifts Fund will be accounted for separate from the church operating budget.
- Individuals who make contributions to the Memorial and Special Gifts Fund will receive a written thank you and receipt for their gift
- A list of all people who contributed to a person's memorial will be sent to the next of kin

Distribution of Funds

- The Memorials and Special Gifts Treasurer shall maintain a "wish list" of items wanted to enhance the ministry of our church after consultation with pastoral staff
- The Memorials and Special Gifts Treasurer will authorize and then report memorial fund purchases to the Finance Team Co-Leaders
- Although separate accounts will not be maintained for each person in whose memory contributions have been made to the Memorial and Special Gifts Fund, the

next of kin may request that funds received in memory of a family member be used to support a specific area of the church's ministry.

SECTION 3. Endowment Giving

Definition and Purpose

- Endowment Giving is an opportunity for people to give an enduring gift that will be used to advance the ministry of the United Church of Christ, Congregational
- The Endowment Fund shall receive all bequests and gifts, which are designated by the giver for this specific purpose
- The Leadership Council may place unspecified bequests and gifts in the Endowment Fund

Receipt and Management of Funds

- 6% of the total value of the Investment Funds will be made available to be allocated to the church budget each year. The distribution will be based on the value of the fund as of January 1 of that year.
- Additional use of the Fund, other than as detailed above, can only be used in cases of emergency with approval by congregational vote.
- Through consultation with the Finance Team leader, the Investment Team is responsible for the management of the Endowment Fund and for reporting its status semi-annually to the congregation

SECTION 4. Special Project Giving

On occasion the church may receive gifts that are designated to enhance specific elements of the ministry of the United Church of Christ, Congregational

The Treasurer shall record and manage these gifts per their designated purpose.

Examples may include contributions towards:

- Financing building projects
- Supporting initiatives within our church (e.g. WISE, ONA, etc.)
- Furthering the mission of our church by supporting projects in the surrounding community, in our nation, and in the world