

Constitution and Bylaws in Effect in 2023  
Congregational United Church of Christ of Decorah, Iowa

**CONSTITUTION**

*Adopted November 3, 1971, Updated January 16, 1977, Amended 1983, 1988, 2016, and 2023*

**Article I – NAME AND DURATION**

The name of this organization shall be Congregational United Church of Christ of Decorah, Iowa. The period of duration of this corporation shall be perpetual.

**Article II – PURPOSE**

With the Scripture as our guide, we shall proclaim the gospel, labor for the progress of knowledge, promote justice, bring about peace, and build beloved community.

**Article III – POLITY/GOVERNANCE**

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head, and finds in the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Divine Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ, and it shall sustain that relationship described in those portions of its Constitution and Bylaws relating to local churches. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject to the laws of the State of Iowa.

**Article IV – DOCTRINE**

This church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice. It holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

**FAITH**

We accept the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ as an expression of the spirit in which the church interprets the Word of God.

**OPEN AND AFFIRMING**

Inspired by God’s abundant love and guided by our constitution and tradition, we of Congregational United Church of Christ of Decorah, IA, are an Open and Affirming Congregation.

With God’s grace, we welcome all persons, affirming differences of faith background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, age, and mental and physical abilities, as well as racial, ethnic, economic, and social status.

We welcome all to share in the life and leadership, ministry and worship, sacraments, responsibilities, and blessings of participation in our congregation.

**COVENANT WITH GOD**

We covenant with God and one another to seek and respond to the word and the will of God. We purpose to walk together in all God’s ways, made known and yet to be made known to us. We will join in the mission of the church to serve in promoting the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshipping God and striving for truth, justice, and peace, relying on the Holy Spirit to lead

and empower us. We will pray for the coming of the realm of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life. This we will do, with the help of God.

### **COVENANT WITH ONE ANOTHER**

We covenant with one another to create a safe environment and to uphold the dignity of each person in our congregation.

We will consider the impact of our words and actions on others as we seek to make our church a safe place for all.

Our communication with others will be timely, direct, honest, open, and sensitive although we may disagree with another's assumptions, opinions, and decisions.

We understand that conflict is a healthy part of life, including life in the church. We will accept and affirm differences. While we may have strong opinions, we acknowledge that others do also. We will embrace the diversity in our spiritual family, imagine other perspectives, and be enriched by these differences. We will be respectful of one another as we direct our attention to the issues and challenges at hand.

We understand that our church stays strong as each person is heard, and we seek the participation of all our congregants.

We will engage in self-reflection and prayer, seeking ways that our presence will build up our church and its people, as well as our community and our world. We will seek God's guidance and grace to listen attentively as we live into our future.

As a part of this faith community, we will work responsibly for the benefit of the whole and endeavor that all we do and say will be grounded in love.

### **Article V – MEMBERSHIP**

The members of this church shall be persons who have been received into fellowship by publicly accepting its covenant.

### **Article VI – OFFICERS**

The officers of this church shall be as follows: Pastor, Moderator, Moderator-elect, Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

### **Article VII – CHURCH COUNCIL**

The Church Council shall serve as the governing board of the congregation and shall consist of the Pastor, Moderator, Moderator-elect, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and members-at-large as provided in the bylaws.

### **Article VIII – AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended at any regular meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided written notice was given in accordance with the bylaws.

## **BYLAWS**

*Adopted 1971, Amended 1977, 1988, 1993, 2001, 2002, 2016, Revised 2023*

### **Article I – MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Sec. 1 QUALIFICATIONS**

Membership in this church may be granted through profession of covenant and one of the following:

- (a) Satisfactory Letter of Transfer from another church;
- (b) Reaffirmation of faith if a letter is not available;
- (c) Confession of faith and baptism, if not previously baptized;
- (d) Recommendation by the Church Council, when baptism is waived because of personal conviction.

#### **Sec. 2 RIGHTS**

All members are welcome to participate in the full life of the church, and those in active standing may exercise the right to vote in corporate transactions of the church.

#### **Sec. 3 TERMINATION**

- (a) The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and usage of the United Church of Christ, with its congregational polity.
- (b) Any member who desires a letter of dismissal and/or recommendation to another church, upon request to the Pastor or the Church Council, is entitled to receive it.
- (c) Members whose addresses have long been unknown or who for a period of two years have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support may, by vote of the Church Council, be transferred to an inactive list. If after one year, their addresses are still unknown or they are unwilling to renew their active connection with this church, their names may be dropped from the membership roll.

#### **Sec. 4 RESTORATION TO MEMBERSHIP**

Any person whose membership has been terminated or placed on the inactive list may be restored by meeting the qualifications for membership above.

### **Article II – SERVICES AND MEETINGS**

#### **Sec. 1 WORSHIP**

- (a) Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday, except when temporarily suspended by vote of the Church.
- (b) The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at such times as the Church Council may determine.
- (c) The baptism of adults and the baptism or consecration of children shall be administered at such times as the Pastor may determine. When there is not a called Pastor, the Church Council may determine it.
- (d) Other services for worship, inspiration, prayer, study, etc. may be held as determined by the church, pastor, or recognized groups.

#### **Sec. 2 BUSINESS MEETINGS**

- (a) Annual Meeting. The annual meeting shall be held during the month of January each year. The date is to be determined by the Church Council at its November meeting. The yearly reports of

officers, organizations, and committees shall be included in the Annual Report. The agenda shall include election of officers, old and new business, and planning for the new year. The proposed budget shall be available to the members of church no later than the Sunday prior to the annual meeting.

(b) Special Meetings. Special meetings for business may be called by the Pastor, the Church Council, or on written request of five adult members of the church. The meeting shall be called by the Clerk. No business other than that stated in the Call shall be transacted.

(c) Notices. Notices for the annual and special meetings shall be given verbally and in writing for two Sundays prior to the meeting.

(d) Quorum. A quorum shall consist of 15 voting members present, in-person and by virtual connection.

(e) Voting. Elections shall be by ballot, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws. Unless otherwise required, a majority vote is decisive. All members of the church are entitled to vote. Officers shall assume their duties when elected.

(f) Official Year. The official year of the church shall begin with the calendar year.

(g) Reports. The Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer shall report at the annual meeting and at such other times as may be required by the church. The Church Council may also request reports from certain individuals, organizations, ministry teams, and appointed committees as needed at the annual meeting. All reports presented at the annual meeting shall be written and provided to the Clerk as requested. Individuals and committees appointed by the Council are responsible to the Council, and their reports shall be presented to the Council whenever the Council requests.

(h) Robert's Rules of Order. The Rules shall provide the parliamentary authority for business meetings.

### **Sec. 3 EDUCATION**

The church shall conduct educational opportunities for children, youth, and adults. The expenses of such shall be included in the regular budget of the church. Educational opportunities shall be for the purpose of spiritual formation and increasing the desire and ability to participate in the church's life and work.

### **Sec. 4 ORGANIZATIONS**

Special organization or groups, such as young people's groups, women's organizations, men's organizations, and the like, may be organized or sponsored with the consent of the Church Council.

## **Article III – OFFICERS**

The officers of the church shall be the following:

### **Sec. 1 PASTOR**

(a) The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite time.

(b) When a vacancy exists, a search and call committee shall be formed composed of at least one member from the Church Council, which will typically include the Moderator or the Moderator-elect. The search committee shall not exceed 9 members. The committee shall seek the guidance of the Divine Spirit. They shall work with Conference staff to create a church profile and to review candidates. The search committee shall introduce the candidate to the church and, at a duly called special meeting, propose the Pastor's election. A call shall be extended to the candidate if the congregational vote exceeds three-fourths of the votes cast.

(c) When a Pastor has been called and has accepted the call, the Pastor's Installation Service shall be arranged by the Church Council when it is agreeable to all parties concerned.

(d) While the term of the Pastor shall be indefinite, the church may at any time, by a three-fourths vote at a meeting called for the purpose, request the Pastor's resignation with the expectation that the Pastor's services will cease within sixty days. Likewise, the Pastor shall give sixty days notice if the Pastor wishes to leave. In the case of the Pastor's loss of ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ, the call shall cease to exist at once.

(e) The Pastor shall care for the spiritual welfare of the church with the assistance of the Church Council. The Pastor shall seek to enlist members and friends as followers of Jesus, preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and have under their care all services of public worship. The Pastor shall administer the activities of the church in cooperation with the various boards and committees. The pastor shall be a non-voting member of the Church Council.

(f) The Pastor shall have a job description. The job description shall be established by the search and call committee. It may be amended by the Church Council.

(g) The Pastor shall be the head of staff. The Pastor works in conjunction with the Church Council to ensure appropriate staffing.

(h) Associate or Assistant Pastor. The church may, at its discretion, choose an associate or assistant Pastor.

## **Sec. 2 MODERATOR**

The Moderator shall be elected for a two-year progression: one year as Moderator-elect and one year as Moderator. The Moderator shall work and communicate with the Pastor, shall preside at all church meetings and shall be Chair of the Church Council.

## **Sec. 3 MODERATOR-ELECT**

The Moderator-elect serves as Moderator when the Moderator is unable to do so, and performs such other duties as the Moderator or the Church Council may assign.

## **Sec. 4 CLERK**

The Clerk shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of two years. The Clerk shall keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the Congregational meetings and the Church Council.

## **Sec. 5 FINANCIAL SECRETARY**

The Financial Secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of two years. The Financial Secretary shall have charge of all offerings and special collections, and deposit them in their proper accounts, make an annual report, keep an accurate account with each donor, and furnish donors with semi-annual statements of their accounts.

## **Sec. 6 TREASURER**

The Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of two years. The Treasurer shall ensure payment of bills of the church; oversee the accurate account of all receipts and disbursements; provide regular financial reports to the Church Council, and prepare annual budget materials for presentation and approval at the annual meeting.

## **Article IV – CHURCH COUNCIL**

(a) The Church Council shall serve as the governing board of the church. It shall have responsibility for facilitating congregational discernment about mission and vision, establishing strategic plans and goals, and working in partnership with the Pastor to ensure that church resources are properly and effectively used for the fulfillment of its mission.

- (b) Members of the Church Council are the Moderator as chairperson, Moderator-elect, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and two members-at-large who are elected at the annual meeting for a two-year term. The Pastor serves as a non-voting, ex-officio member.
- (c) For matters requiring a vote, a quorum shall consist of four voting members.
- (d) The Church Council may adopt policies to delegate authority, establish guidance and limitations, and provide for oversight of the work of the church.
- (e) The Church Council may appoint committees or ministry teams to advise and assist it in planning and implementation of worship and programs, goal setting, policy making, and oversight, but not to manage or supervise church staff or ministry teams.
- (f) The Church Council shall meet monthly. Additional meetings may be called by the Moderator, the Pastor, or any three Church Council members.
- (g) The Church Council shall be attentive to and encourage the outreach work of the church. This commitment should be reflected in the setting of the mission and vision of the church as well as its programs and activities. They shall oversee and support the work of the church and relationships between the church and the community. They shall be attentive and respond to the needs of the community and the world.
- (h) Under the direction of the church and except as otherwise provided, the Church Council shall establish contracts; have care and custody of the property of the church, its legacies, investments and trusts; and have charge of its financial affairs, always subject to regulations prescribed by the law of the State of Iowa and the Articles of Incorporation of this church. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real property without specific authority by vote of the church.
- (i) The Church Council shall provide an annual written report of all church financial transactions and accounts and shall prepare a budget to be presented for approval at the annual meeting.
- (j) The Church Council shall act as nominating committee. They shall obtain the consent of all persons to be nominated, and prepare a ballot that nominates at least one person for each office to be filled at the annual meeting.
- (k) The Church Council shall appoint the church's delegates to meetings of our UCC conference, association, and any other organizations to which the church should regularly send delegates.
- (l) The Church Council, with the leadership of the Pastor, shall encourage stewardship with a goal of securing funds to operate the church and provide for its future financial stability. They shall also be responsible for other fund-raising efforts, as the need may arise.

#### **Article V – ELECTIONS**

- (a) The Church Council shall present a slate of nominees that reflects the church's commitment to broad representation and participation.
- (b) The following positions are elected by majority vote at the Annual Meeting:
- The Moderator is elected for a two-year progression: one year as Moderator-elect and one year as Moderator
  - The Clerk is elected to a two-year term
  - The Financial Secretary is elected to a two-year term
  - The Treasurer is elected to a two-year term
  - Church Council members-at-large are elected to two-year terms on a schedule to be determined by the Church Council
- (c) The Church Council may fill vacant positions in any congregationally-elected position until the next Annual Meeting when an election can be held to fill the position for the unexpired portion of the term.

(d) With the exception of the Pastor, all officers and members of the Church Council shall remain in office no more than three consecutive full terms. After such time they must wait one year before being elected again to the same office; but they may be elected immediately to some other office.

(e) Only one member of any household shall concurrently serve in a position with fiduciary responsibilities (Church Council, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary).

#### **ARTICLE VI – AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote of members present, provided written and verbal notice is given in accordance with Article II of these bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE VII**

The effective date of these amended and restated Constitution and Bylaws shall be April 30, 2023.