

1 **DRAFT** approved January 10, 2016
2 by the Church Council and recommended
3 for Congregational approval

4 **CONSTITUTION**

5
6 **First United Church of Christ**
7 **(Congregational)**
8 **300 Union Street**
9 **Northfield, Minnesota 55057**

10
11
12 **ARTICLE I**

13 **Name**

14
15 This Church shall be known as the First United Church of Christ (Congregational) of Northfield,
16 Minnesota.

17
18
19 **ARTICLE II**

20 **Character**

21
22 **SECTION 1. Fellowship.** This Church declares its fellowship with all churches which seek to promote
23 the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and accepts in particular the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation
24 involved in the fellowship of the United Church of Christ.

25
26 **SECTION 2. Faith.** This Church is in covenant with the United Church of Christ. While granting to
27 every member the freedom to discern the truths of God, this Church subscribes to the following Statement
28 of Faith:

29
30 We believe in You, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Lord Jesus Christ and
31 our God, and to Your deeds we testify: You call the worlds into being,
32 create persons in Your own image and set before each one the ways of life
33 and death. You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.
34 You judge people and nations by Your righteous will declared through
35 prophets and apostles.

36
37 In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, You have
38 come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and
39 reconciling the world to Yourself.

40
41 You bestow upon us Your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the Church of
42 Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and
43 races.

44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84

You call us into Your Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be Your servants in the service of others, 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.

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

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto You. Amen.

SECTION 3. Commitments. This Church has chosen to be a Just Peace Church and an Open and Affirming Church.

ARTICLE III
Membership

SECTION 1. Qualifications. This Church will welcome to membership as full or associate members all persons who desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and who covenant with the Congregation to share in the ministry of the Church. As used in this Constitution, "member" means full or associate member, unless otherwise indicated.

SECTION 2. Full Members. Full members shall be received by letter of transfer, by reaffirmation of faith, or upon confession of faith including baptism if a person was not previously baptized. Full members may act and vote in all transactions of the Church.

SECTION 3. Associate Members. Associate members are those who, due to special circumstances, desire to retain membership in another church, yet wish to share in the work, fellowship, and worship of this Church. Such membership in no way affects their relations with their home church. Associate membership entitles such members to all rights and privileges of full membership, except as otherwise specified in this Constitution. Associate members shall be enumerated for local purposes only.

SECTION 4. Rights of Members.

- A.** Only full members may serve as Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, and Clerk.
- B.** Only full and associate members may serve as Council Members at Large or as Trustees, and act and vote on all transactions of this Church.

85 C. Persons who wish to participate in this Church without becoming members are eligible to serve in all
86 roles not referred to in paragraphs A and B, and may be non-voting participants in Congregational
87 meetings.
88

89 **SECTION 5. Duties of Members.** All members are expected to attend worship services of the Church,
90 to contribute regularly to its support, and to share in the Church’s ministry.
91

92 **SECTION 6. Termination of Membership.** Members may cease to be members of this Church by a
93 request to transfer membership, by retirement if the member has not communicated with this Church or
94 contributed to its support for at least three years in spite of attempts by this Church to correspond with the
95 member, or by acceptance of a letter of resignation from the member.
96

97 **SECTION 7. Restoration of Membership.** Any person whose membership has been terminated and
98 who desires to return to membership may be reinstated upon the member’s written request.
99

100
101 **ARTICLE IV**
102 **Governance**
103

104 **SECTION 1. Congregation.** The governance of the Church is vested in its members, who exercise the
105 right of full and final control of all its affairs. The Congregation as a whole will speak through the Church
106 Council to articulate the mission of the Church.
107

108 **SECTION 2. Church Council.** The Church Council shall include the Moderator, the Vice-Moderator,
109 the Clerk, the Treasurer and three at-large Council members. Clergy shall serve ex officio. The Church
110 Council shall oversee pursuit of the mission and management of the business and affairs of this Church, and
111 shall adopt Policies and Procedures to support this effort.
112

113 **SECTION 3. Church Officers.**

114
115 **A. The Vice-Moderator.** The Vice-Moderator shall serve as presiding officer for the Council and
116 congregational meetings in the absence of the Moderator. The Vice-Moderator shall be elected for a two
117 year term, the first as the Vice-Moderator and the second as Moderator.
118

119 **B. The Moderator.** The Moderator shall preside at meetings of the Church Council, the Annual Church
120 Meeting and at special meetings of the Church.
121

122 **C. The Clerk.** The Clerk shall be a member of the Church Council and serve it as secretary. The Clerk
123 shall be elected for a term of two years.
124

125 **D. The Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall be a member of the Church Council and shall serve as chair of the
126 Trustees Committee. The Treasurer shall be elected for a term of two years.

127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166

SECTION 4. Standing Committees of the Council.

A. Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall ensure that all elected governance positions are filled in a timely manner, either by election at the annual meeting or as needed during the year to fill vacancies that occur. The Nominating Committee shall consist of a chair, an at large member and a representative from the Church Council, all elected by the Congregation.

B. Trustees Committee. The Trustees Committee shall assist the Church Council in its oversight of the Church’s financial resources. The Trustees Committee shall consist of the Church Council Treasurer, serving as chair, and up to five at- large members, all elected by the Congregation. Trustees shall be members of the Church.

C. Stewardship Committee. The Stewardship Committee shall oversee and organize the annual stewardship campaign to support the church’s mission using its financial resources. The Stewardship Committee shall consist of four members elected by the Congregation.

D. Facilities Committee. The Facilities Committee shall oversee and maintain the church building, grounds and use of the church facilities. The Facilities Committee shall consist of up to six members, all elected by the Congregation.

SECTION 5. General Provisions.

A. Terms. The terms of office of members of standing committees and at-large members of the Council shall be three years, except for persons elected or appointed to complete an unexpired term of office, and except as otherwise provided in this Constitution. Terms of office on a standing committee shall be staggered, so that approximately one-third of its members are elected each year.

B. Elections. Officers, at-large members of the Council, and members of standing committees shall be elected by ballot at each Annual Meeting of the Church. Members of standing committees and at-large members of the Council may not serve more than two consecutive terms on the same standing committee or as at-large members of the Council, but a person appointed to fill out an unexpired term is eligible for election to up to two full terms at the conclusion of the unexpired term to which they were appointed.

C. Vacancies. In case of vacancy in the position of a Church officer, the vacancy shall be filled by election at a special Congregational meeting called for that purpose. In case of vacancy in a standing committee or in an at-large position on the Council, the Nominating Committee in consultation with the affected group shall appoint a member for the unexpired term and report the appointment to the Clerk, Minister, and Moderator.

167 **ARTICLE V**

168 **Ministry**

169
170 **SECTION 1.** The Church shall employ called Clergy to order its worship and administer the sacraments,
171 provide for the spiritual needs of its members, and provide leadership for the mission of the Church.

172
173 **SECTION 2. Calling the Clergy.**

174
175 **A.** Before the Senior Minister is called, a Pastoral Search Committee of up to eight members shall be
176 formed. The Nominating Committee shall propose candidates who provide broad representation from
177 within the Church, and the Pastoral Search Committee members shall be elected by the Congregation by a
178 majority vote of those present and voting at a meeting assembled according to Article VI. Once elected, the
179 members of the Pastoral Search Committee shall serve until the new Minister is called.

180
181 **B.** When calling an Associate Minister, the Nominating Committee shall add the Senior Minister as a
182 member of the Pastoral Search Committee.

183
184 **C.** Senior and Associate Ministers shall be called by the Congregation for an indefinite time by a two-thirds
185 vote of the members present and voting at a meeting assembled according to Article VI. The Church
186 Council must approve the terms of the proposed contract with the nominee for Minister before the meeting
187 of the Congregation.

188
189 **D.** Senior and Associate Ministers shall be ordained and have standing or privilege of call in the United
190 Church of Christ. Called Clergy shall become a full member of the church when denominationally possible
191 and shall be installed as soon as practicable after being called and accepting the position.

192
193 **SECTION 3. Senior Minister.** The Church Council delegates to the Senior Minister authority and
194 responsibility to lead and direct the spiritual, programmatic and administrative work of the Church.

195
196 **SECTION 4. Termination of Clergy.**

197
198 **A.** The relationship between the Senior Minister and Congregation may be dissolved by either party upon
199 60 days written notice. The Congregation may vote, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and
200 voting at a meeting assembled according to Article VI, to terminate the relationship between the
201 Congregation and the Minister. The vote shall be by secret, written ballot.

202
203 **B.** The relationship between the Associate Minister and Congregation may be dissolved by either party upon
204 60 days written notice. The Congregation may vote, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and
205 voting at a meeting assembled according to Article VI, to terminate the relationship between the
206 Congregation and the Associate Minister upon recommendation for dismissal by the Senior Minister and
207 Council. The vote shall be by secret, written ballot.

209 C. If an ordained Minister is charged with misconduct, the Minister and Congregation shall follow the
210 Disciplinary Review Procedure of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, as amended.
211

212

213

214

215

ARTICLE VI
Meetings of the Congregation

216 **SECTION 1. Annual Meeting.** The Congregation shall meet annually to conduct elections and transact
217 other business of the Church.

218

219 **SECTION 2. Special Meetings.**

220

221 A. Special meetings of the Congregation may be called by the Moderator, the Minister, or the Clerk on the
222 request of the Church Council or on the written request of any five members of the Church. Notice of
223 meeting shall specify the object of the meeting and shall be included in Church communications and read at
224 the Sunday worship service preceding the meeting date. No special meeting shall be held on the same day
225 on which the notice is given.

226

227 B. A special meeting of the Congregation to call Clergy shall be called by the Moderator or the Clerk
228 as directed by the Church Council. Written notice of the meeting and information about the nominee(s)
229 shall be mailed to the Congregation at least 21 days before the date of the meeting. Notice of the meeting
230 shall be included in Church communications and read at each Sunday worship service between the date the
231 written notice is mailed to the Congregation and the meeting date. No issue other than calling Clergy shall
232 be acted on at the meeting.

233

234 **SECTION 3. General Provisions.**

235

236 A. Quorum shall consist of twenty-five members of the Church.

237

238 B. A majority of the members present and voting at any meeting at which a quorum is present shall be
239 decisive, with two exceptions. A two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a meeting called for
240 that purpose shall be required to call or terminate Clergy or to amend the Constitution.

241

242 C. Meetings of the Congregation shall be conducted in accordance with the current edition of Robert's
243 Rules of Order, Newly Revised, except when it is inconsistent with this Constitution or any special rules of
244 order the Congregation may adopt.

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

252
253
254
255
256
257
258
259
260
261
262
263
264
265
266
267
268
269
270
271
272
273
274
275
276
277
278
279
280
281
282
283
284

ARTICLE VII
Amendments

When a quorum is present, this Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any Annual Meeting of the Church or at a special meeting called for that purpose. Notice of the meeting and the amendments to be considered shall be included in Church communications and announced during the Sunday worship service at least one week prior to the meeting. Any action taken at such meeting shall be reported at the worship service on the Sunday following such meeting and in Church communications.

ARTICLE VIII
Relationship with other Churches

The Church may enter into agreements, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution or with the laws of the State of Minnesota, with churches of other denominations for the federation or association of the respective church bodies. Any such agreement shall be made only for the purposes of fostering and strengthening the spiritual welfare of the members of the contracting churches which shall not, by its terms, be altered in their individual organizational status or deprived of their denominational identities. It shall contain such terms and conditions, dealing with right of representation, conduct of joint church affairs, operational agreement and related matters, as members of the First United Church of Christ (Congregational) may approve at an Annual Meeting or a meeting specially called for the purpose.

ARTICLE IX
Dissolution

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 the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ.