

CONSTITUTION

THE FEDERATED CHURCH OF WILLINGTON, CONNECTICUT

As Revised , February 5, 2008. Previous Revisions - June 2, 1964, March 6, 1966, February 1971, February 1975, August 9, 1981, January 6, 1985, February 7, 1989, February 9, 1993, February 13, 1994, and February 1, 2000 and February 3, 2004.

PREAMBLE:

WHEREAS, The Baptist and Congregational Churches of Willington, were Federated in 1911 through the Articles of Federation, and have been working together ever since to promote public worship of God, and the teaching and fellowship of Christ; and WHEREAS, this fellowship has fostered increasing harmony and a feeling of united effort for Christian life in this community, to the point where members are, in effect, one church; THEREFORE, we, the members, hereby adopt the following Constitution to provide a working guide to further the extension of Christian life in our community.

X X X X X X

I. NAME

A. The name of this organization shall be "The Federated Church of Willington."

II. CHURCH POLICY

A. PURPOSE

- 1) The purpose of this Church is to lead all people to know God and to know his Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Savior, by public worship, study, education, and Christian fellowship, to provide channels of Christian service through this Church to all people in the local, national, and world community; to encourage individual Christians to live in brotherly love to the end that each person may contribute, in a particular way, to the realization of God's Kingdom in the lives of people, both now and forever.

B. GOVERNMENT

- 1) This Church acknowledges Christ as its head, and finds the Holy Scriptures, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, through reason, faith and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and self-discipline.
- 2) The government of this church, shall be vested in its members, who shall exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation, granted by the State of Connecticut.

- 3) 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, relating to local Churches.
- 4) This Church shall be a member of the American Baptist Churches of the United States of America, and shall maintain an active relationship with other American Baptist Churches on a National, State and local basis.
- 5) This Church shall cooperate with the Christian Conference of Connecticut, the National Council of Churches U.S.A., and the World Council of Churches.

C. FAITH

- 1) This church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of humanity. 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 prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith their own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

D. COVENANT

- 1) Each member shall have an undisturbed right to follow the Word of God, according to the dictates of one's own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) In joining together to promote Christ's work on earth, we ascribe to the following covenant:
- 3) We believe in the living God, the Creator of all mankind, infinite in wisdom, goodness, and love; in Jesus Christ, as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures as the Lord and Savior of all the world; in the Holy Spirit, who unfolds to us the mysteries and knowledge of God for our daily guidance.
- 4) We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, to exalt the worship of the one true God, and to labor for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood.
- 5) We depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us to all truth as we work and pray for the realization of God's Kingdom in the lives of all people on earth. We look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.
- 6) Furthermore, we covenant with one another to support this Church with a proportionate share of our energy, time, money, and devotion, sharing in its public worship, education, service to

the community, and to the world; to conduct ourselves as becomes followers of Christ in our relationships with all people, accepting our responsibilities for living Christian virtues, and fulfilling our privileges to share life with all people.

- 7) Moreover, we agree that when we remove from this community, we will, with the least possible delay, unite ourselves with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the teachings of God's Word.

E. DISSOLUTION

- 1) In the event of dissolution of this church, or in the case that it shall cease to carry out the purpose herein set forth, all business, property, and assets of the church shall be distributed to one or more nonprofit, Christian organizations selected by the members, provided that such organizations are exempt from Federal Income Tax as charitable organizations under section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue code of 1954 as now in force or hereafter amended.

III. MEMBERSHIP

A. QUALIFICATIONS

- 1) Candidates for membership must apply to the Board of Deacons, and must qualify in one of the following ways:
 - a. By Confession of faith and baptism, or by Confirmation of infant baptismal vows.
 - b. By presentation of satisfactory letter of dismissal or letter of transfer from another Christian Church.
 - c. By Affirmation of faith and Christian experience, and the recommendation of the Board of Deacons.

B. BAPTISM

- 1) Baptism or dedication of infants is held sacred to the conviction of the parents.
- 2) The minister shall make clear to the parents of infants the difference between baptism and dedication.
- 3) Neither baptism nor dedication confer automatic church membership upon any infant, child, or adult.
- 4) Those baptized as infants or children, upon reaching the age when they can understand the meaning of Christian Commitment, may choose to reaffirm their prior baptism, make their

own confession of faith, and request membership in the Church.

- 5) Those desiring baptism may elect to be baptized by immersion or by sprinkling, according to the individual's conviction and shall receive instruction through the Board of Deacons.

C. ADMISSION

1) Application:

- a. Candidates desiring to unite with this Church shall make known their desire to the Board of Deacons or minister.

2) Examination and Instruction.

- a. The minister shall make inquiry to ascertain each candidate's sincerity and understanding of his/her Christian commitment.
- b. The minister shall arrange instruction as is deemed necessary for the candidate.

3) Reception:

- a. The Board of Deacons shall recommend and present candidates to the Church to be considered for membership.
- b. No candidate may become a member except through election by the Church.
- c. Upon election to membership by the Church, the candidate shall be publicly received and presented the Right Hand of Fellowship at the next observance of the Lord's Supper, or at another appropriate occasion.
- d. The Clerk shall keep a chronological record of all members.

D. DENOMINATIONAL STATUS

- 1) United Church of Christ and American Baptist members shall be listed in accordance with denominational preference.
- 2) New members shall register their denominational preference with the Clerk.
- 3) Associate Membership: Any person who holds active membership in another Church, and worships with and contributes to the support of this Church, may be admitted into the fellowship of this Church as an Associate Member, on approval of the Diaconate.
- 4) Denominational status may be changed at the beginning of the calendar year upon written application to the Clerk at least three months in advance of such change.

- 5) There shall be no difference in rights or privileges because of denominational preference.

E. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 1) Membership in The Federated Church of Willington shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons. If a member of this church shall absent him or herself from worship, and fail to monetarily contribute to the support of this church for a period of two years, the Deacons shall contact this member, along with the minister, and do their best to discover the reason. If possible, an effort shall be made to reactivate the members. Should nothing further be heard from the members for one year, their names shall be placed on the Inactive List; after further contact with no response, or if address is unknown, and after a further period of one year, they shall be retired from the Church roll by vote of the Board of Deacons. Members on the Inactive or Retired List shall not have voting privileges. No Church letter of active membership shall be issued for members on the Retired List, and if possible, the member formally so advised. Any person who has been retired may, for good and sufficient reason, be restored to membership by vote of the Board of Deacons.
- 2) Letters of transfer shall be granted upon request by the member and sent out by the Clerk.
- 3) Membership shall be terminated and the name removed from the roll upon the request of the member.
- 4) Upon the death of a member, the Clerk shall note the date in the Church records, and remove the name from the active list.

IV. OFFICIALS

A. MODERATOR

- 1) There shall be a Moderator elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year.
- 2) The Moderator shall be the lay head of the Church, shall conduct all meetings of the Church and Church Council, except as otherwise provided, and shall act for the Church as directed by the Church or Church Council.
- 3) The Moderator shall be a member ex officio of all Boards and Committees without vote.
- 4) In the absence, or inability of the Moderator, his/ her duties shall be assumed by the Chairpersons of the Boards in the order listed in this Constitution.
- 5) The Moderator shall ensure that all committees and boards meet to organize as soon as practical after the Annual Meeting.

B. CLERK

- 1) There shall be a clerk elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of two years.
- 2) The Clerk shall keep the roll of the Church, and accurate record of all meetings of the Church and Church Council, and shall handle all correspondence as required by the Church, Church Council, or minister.
- 3) The Clerk or minister shall have the power to recruit assistance to handle the clerical needs of the Church.

C. TREASURER

- 1) The Treasurer shall be elected for a two-year term.
- 2) The Treasurer shall be an ex officio member of the Prudential Board.
- 3) The Treasurer shall receive all monies and/or proof of deposit from the Financial Secretary and other sources; the Financial Secretary shall deposit funds received in such depository as the Prudential Board shall direct; the Treasurer shall have custody of such papers as relate to the property of the Church; shall pay all bills of the Church, contract to invest funds, and pay expenses with income from these funds, as directed by the Prudential Board; and shall present a cash flow statement of all accounts at the monthly meetings of the Prudential Board and the Church Council, and a complete financial statement of all accounts at the Annual Meeting.

D. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

- 1) There shall be a Financial Secretary elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of two years.
- 2) The Financial Secretary shall acknowledge all monetary gifts and any other gifts deemed appropriate by the church Council.
- 3) The Financial Secretary shall receive all offerings and special collections; shall keep an accurate record of all subscribers' accounts; shall pay or submit proof of deposit for all monies received to the Treasurer, taking receipt thereof; and shall furnish subscribers with statements of their accounts at least annually. Records of subscribers' accounts shall be held as a sacred trust.

E. AUDITOR

- 1) The Auditor shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of two years.
- 2) The Auditor shall audit the accounts of the Treasurer at the close of the Church fiscal year.

- 3) The Auditor may examine the accounts of any group within the Church, if they deem it proper and necessary.
- 4) The Auditor shall bring it to the attention of any such group, improper accounting procedure or handling of money and failing satisfactory corrections, shall report the same to the Church Council.

F. DELEGATES-AT-LARGE

- 1) There shall be no more than three Delegates-at-Large elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year.
- 2) The Delegates-at-Large shall represent the congregation at Church Council meetings.

G. SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

- 1) There shall be a Superintendent elected at the Annual Meeting for one year beginning June 15 of that year and ending June 14 of the next year.
- 2) The Superintendent shall be a member ex officio of the Board of Christian Education.
- 3) The Sunday School Superintendent is responsible to the Board of Christian Education for the organizing, directing and staffing of the Sunday School ministry, nursery through 12th grade.
- 4) He/she shall maintain the standards set by the Board, striving for an effective learning/teaching experience on Sunday mornings.

H. VACANCIES

- 1) Vacancies in Church offices and on Church Boards shall be filled by vote of the Church Council for the remainder of the Church calendar year.

V. MEETINGS

A. SERVICES

- 1) The Church shall meet as a body every Sunday for Public Worship.
- 2) The Church shall have such special services as the Church Council shall decide.

B. ANNUAL MEETING

- 1) The Annual Meeting shall be held on the first Tuesday in February.

- 2) For reporting purposes, the church fiscal year shall end on December 31st
- 3) All members shall be warned in writing of the annual meeting two weeks in advance.
- 4) Special business to be decided shall be included in the warning.
- 5) The order of business shall be determined by the Church Council.
- 6) Elections of all Officials and Board members whose term has expired shall be held at the Annual Meeting.
- 7) All Officials and Board members shall be members of the Church.
- 8) Nominations for elections shall be presented to the Moderator for review at least one week before the Annual Meeting.
- 9) No Church member may be elected to serve on more than one Board.
- 10) No member may be nominated to any position in the Church for more than two consecutive terms, except by vote of the Church Council.
- 11) All Annual Reports shall be in writing.
- 12) Copies of the Treasurer's Report shall be made available to all members.

C. SPECIAL MEETINGS

- 1) Special meetings may be called by the Moderator, by the Church Council, or by a petition signed by any seven members of the Church.
- 2) Special meetings shall be held directly after Sunday worship service unless otherwise approved by the Church Council.
- 3) Posted warning and announcement at Sunday worship service at least one week in advance shall be deemed sufficient notice.

D. QUORUM

- 1) No Church business shall be transacted unless a quorum is present.
- 2) A quorum shall be defined as the presence of no fewer than ten percent of the resident members of the Church. "Resident" defined as living within a 15 mile radius of the church.

E. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

- 1) All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order when consistent with the stated intention of this Constitution.

VI. THE MINISTER

A. QUALIFICATIONS

- 1) An elected minister of The Federated Church must be ordained (or eligible for ordination) and recognized by a state or national denomination.
- 2) The candidate shall not be considered unless he or she is willing to administer the rite of baptism either by immersion or by sprinkling, as each case may demand.

B. ELECTION OR DISMISSAL OF THE MINISTER

- 1) Immediately upon the resignation, dismissal, or death of a minister, the Board of Deacons shall nominate to the Church body a representative Pulpit Committee which, if approved, shall diligently seek a minister for the Church; such committee shall continue in force until the new minister is installed.
- 2) It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to furnish pulpit supply until a new minister is elected by the Church, and he or she assumes his or her duties.
- 3) The Pulpit Committee shall present only one candidate at a time for election by the Church.
- 4) A minister shall be elected for an indefinite term.
- 5) There shall be a written agreement negotiated by the Prudential Board and the minister, stipulating the terms of agreement between the minister and the Church.
- 6) The minister's term may be terminated by his or her resignation, or by the majority vote of the Church members present and voting, at a special meeting called for the purpose. At least three months' notice of termination must be given in either case, except by mutual agreement of the minister and the Church.
- 7) Prior to dismissal by the Church, the minister may be denied the right to occupy the pulpit during the three months' notice period by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a special meeting called for the purpose.

C. THE MINISTER'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH BUSINESS

- 1) The minister shall be a voting member of the Church Council and an ex-officio member of all Boards and Committees without vote.

- 2) The minister may be elected as a member of any Board or Committee or an official delegate to any pertinent conference or convention.
- 3) A former minister may not serve on Boards or Committees and should not attend the Church regularly for a period of at least one year after the installation of the successor.

VII. CHURCH BOARDS

A. BOARD OF DEACONS

- 1) The Board of Deacons shall be composed of not more than nine members, depending upon the attendance of the fellowship. Up to three shall be elected at each Annual Meeting for a term of three years. A Deacon may serve only two full terms in succession.
- 2) The Board of Deacons shall cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the needs of the church and the community. They shall assist in the preparation and administration of the sacraments and ordinances; in caring for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, the indifferent, and the stranger. They shall serve as and provide greeters and ushers at services of worship.
- 3) With the direction of the minister, the Deacons will receive applicants for membership in this Church, and shall recommend to the Church those deemed prepared. They shall make an annual survey of the Church roll and submit to the Annual Meeting recommendations regarding necessary revisions. They shall provide for supply of the pulpit in case of absence of the Pastor or a vacancy in the Pastorate.
- 4) The Deacons may select a Committee on Pastoral Relations whose duty it shall be to remain in communication with the Pastor regarding the needs of the Pastor and Pastor's family, and annually to review with the Pastor the Pastor's performance for guidance in the coming year.

B. PRUDENTIAL BOARD

- 1) The Prudential Board shall consist of four members, two of whom shall be elected each year for a two-year term. A member may serve only two terms in succession. A quorum of the Board shall consist of a majority.
- 2) The members shall have the care and custody of the Church properties, and shall have charge of the financial affairs of the Church. The Board shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer real property without specific approval given by vote of the Church. The Board shall have authority to expend up to \$1000 for any one purpose not budgeted, without a vote of the Church. This authority, if utilized, may be renewed by vote of the Church. Emergency cases shall be dealt with on their merits, subject to review by the Church at the earliest possible time.

- 3) The Board shall have care and custody of Memorial Gifts and Endowment Funds. The Board shall be responsible for the education of church members concerning the desirability of giving endowment and memorial gifts to the Church. It shall ensure that a written, permanent record of the amount and terms of all of these gifts and bequests, whether restricted or unrestricted, is kept, and shall ensure that such gifts be properly acknowledged. Annually, or from time to time, it shall make recommendations to the Church Council for the use of unrestricted memorial gift accumulations and will follow through with approved recommendations. The Board shall also make recommendations to the Church Council concerning investment of endowment funds. The Board may assign a non-board member to assist with the record keeping of memorial gifts and endowment funds.
- 4) The Board shall develop a proposed budget for the ensuing year, and present it to the Church Council in December. They shall carry out the fund-raising campaign of the Church to meet this budget at least two months prior to the Annual Meeting. The budget in final form shall be presented to the Church for approval at the Annual Meeting of the Church.
- 5) The Board shall care for the Church properties, maintain an inventory and value of assets, secure and supervise custodian, provide for necessary repairs, and submit proposals for improvements or new construction.
- 6) The Board shall empower one of its members, or another church member answering to this Board, to shepherd the church's investment portfolio and to submit a report for the Annual Meeting. The investment portfolio is subject to audit by the Church Auditor and if necessary by a Certified Public Accountant.

C. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

- 1) The Board of Christian Fellowship shall be composed of not more than five members, two of whom shall be elected at one Annual Meeting, and three of whom shall be elected at the next Annual Meeting, for a term of two years.
- 2) The Board shall have charge of the coordination of social activities within the Church. They shall act as the Nominating Committee for the Annual Elections.

D. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

- 1) The Board of Christian Outreach shall be composed of not more than five members, two shall be elected at one Annual Meeting, and three shall be elected the following year at the Annual Meeting, each for a term of two years.
- 2) The Board shall be concerned with missionary activities, evangelism, social action, Christian service and witness, and community service.

- 3) The Board of Christian Outreach shall be responsible for seeking volunteers for the Coffee Break Committee. The Coffee Break Committee shall be responsible for planning and implementing the Coffee Break.
- 4) It is acknowledged that the primary purpose of the Coffee Break is to aid and comfort travelers and to provide a sympathetic Christian ear to those in need. It is also acknowledged that a by-product of this action is that donations are generated from sojourners who partake. These funds shall be used to further the ministry of the Federated Church by distributing the donations equally between the Church General Fund and the Outreach Board Local Causes and Beyond Fund.

E. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- 1) The Board of Christian Education shall be composed of five members, at least one of whom shall not be a teacher in the Sunday School, two shall be elected at one Annual Meeting, and three shall be elected the following year at the Annual Meeting, each for a term of two years.
- 2) The Board shall have general supervision over the planning, implementation, and evaluation both long and short term - of the Church's Christian Education Program. It shall seek to identify educational opportunities in all aspects of the Church's life, developing specific objectives and opportunities for spiritual growth.
- 3) The Board of Christian Education shall be responsible for seeking volunteers for the Vacation Bible School Committee. The Vacation Bible School Committee shall be responsible for planning and implementing Vacation Bible School.

F. BOARD POWER AND ORGANIZATION

- 1) The Boards shall have the power to create committees to assist them in carrying out their own projects, and those requested by the Church and Church Council.
- 2) Each Board shall elect its own officers.
- 3) Any Board Member missing four consecutive meetings shall be reported to the Church Council for action as to continued membership on or dismissing from that Board.

VIII. CHURCH COUNCIL

A. ORGANIZATION

- 1) There shall be a Church Council representing the entire Church.
- 2) The Church Council shall consist of the Minister, the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Delegates-at-Large, the Chairpersons of the five Boards, and one representative of each active Organization within the Church.

B. POWERS

- 1) The Council shall be the policy-making body and shall transact the business of the Church. The Council shall review the proposed budget which was prepared by the Prudential Board and make final changes, if any, for presentation at the Annual Meeting. It 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 by the Council are subject to the will of and revision by the governing body. The Council shall instruct the proper officers on all fiscal matters, including the payment of bills on a monthly basis.

C. MEETINGS

- 1) The Church Council shall meet at least once a month.
- 2) The February meeting shall be at least ten days after the Annual Meeting to permit the organization of groups sending representatives to the Council.
- 3) Special meetings may be called by the Moderator, by the Minister, or through a petition signed by any three Church members desiring to be heard.
- 4) Minutes of all regular Church Council meetings are to be posted within (10) ten days.

IX. AMENDMENTS

- A. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Church present and voting at an Annual Meeting, or a special meeting warned for the purpose for which at least thirty days' notice has been given.
- B. At least once every three years, the Church Council shall appoint a committee to examine this Constitution for possible needed revisions or amendments.