

Barrington Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

BY-LAWS

2024



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ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church is the Barrington Congregational Church, United Church of Christ.

Gathered in 1717 and granted a charter by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations on December 20, 1797, this church is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Rhode Island and is located in the Town of Barrington.

ARTICLE II. MISSION STATEMENT

The Barrington Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is a Christian community that worships God, embraces all people, ministers to one another, works for justice and peace, and renders loving service to God's world.

ARTICLE III. GOVERNANCE AND MINISTRY

A. CONGREGATION

The central authority of this church is the membership assembled in church meeting. The powers of the membership assembled includes, but are not limited to, the right to retain or adopt its own methods of organization, constitution and by-laws; to formulate its own covenants and confessions of faith; to admit members in its own way, to call or dismiss its ordained ministers by such procedure as it determines; to acquire, own, manage, and dispose of property and funds; to control its own benevolence; and to withdraw from the United Church of Christ or any Conference or other joint endeavor at any time without forfeiture of ownership or control of any real, intangible or personal property owned by this church.

1. Responsibilities

The congregation shall

- a. Approve the by-laws, mission, and vision of the congregation.
- b. Approve the annual budget and goals of the congregation.
- c. Elect the church's Officers, Governing Board Members, Director of Ministries, Ministry Coordinators, and Deacons.
- d. Receive yearly reports on the ministry, budget, and goals of the congregation as well as during the interim if a significant variance is experienced or expected.

2. Meetings

The congregation shall meet at a minimum of once a year to carry out its responsibilities. All meetings of the congregation are to be called in accordance with the procedures laid out in the Congregation Policy.

3. Membership

Membership in this church is open to any person who has been baptized, and who either has been confirmed or has affirmed a belief in the mission and faith of this church and the United Church of Christ, without any restriction as to age, race, gender, class, ethnic background, sexual orientation or expression.

Classes of Members – the following classes of members are recognized:

- a. Active Members: Those who have been accepted as members, regularly attend the services, share in the program, and/or support the work of this church.
- b. Associate Members: Those who are members of other churches and who do not wish to transfer their membership from such other churches may, upon approval by the Deacons and by the procedure outlined in the Congregation Policy, become Associate Members of this church. They have all the rights and obligations of members including the right to vote but are not entitled to a letter of transfer or to serve as an officer of this church.
- c. Inactive Members: All those who are not classified within a) or b) above. Inactive members are not eligible for participation as members as provided in these by-laws.

B. GOVERNING BOARD

When a church meeting is not in session, the Governing Board acts on behalf of the membership to keep the congregation's money, people, and property safe. It shall work closely with the Director of Ministries to ensure that the congregation is living in harmony with its mission. It shall also engage in regular communication with the congregation and is ultimately accountable to the membership.

1. Responsibilities

The Governing Board is responsible for

- a. issuing policies for the functioning of the church regarding the Governing Board, Director of Ministries, Ministry Coordinators, Ministry Teams, and any other areas deemed necessary.
- b. approving the annual budget and goals before presenting them to the congregation for approval.
- c. leading the congregation in an ongoing process of establishing and implementing long-term goals and strategies.
- d. delegating authority to those who lead the daily work of the church while holding them accountable for their performance.

2. Meetings

The Governing Board shall establish its own schedule, meeting as frequently as necessary to accomplish its responsibilities. It shall meet no fewer than four (4) times a year.

3. Membership

- a. The Governing Board shall consist of five (5), seven (7) or nine (9) members depending on the needs of the congregation and availability of nominees. The congregation will strive for a diverse representation of members serving on the Board. Each member shall serve a two (2) year term, limited to three (3) consecutive terms.
- b. The head of the Governing Board is its Chair, who is elected as such by the congregation at the Annual Meeting. The chair is counted among its total members and restricted by the same term limits.
- c. The Clerk shall attend all meetings of the Governing Board to keep records and is not granted a vote or counted among its members.

C. MINISTRY

1. Director of Ministries

a. Responsibilities

The Director of Ministries is responsible for ensuring that the ministry of the congregation is carried out in accordance with the mission of the church. To accomplish this, the Director shall

- i. work with the Governing Board to recommend church-wide goals.
- ii. define and establish in consultation with the Governing Board, the ministry areas necessary for the church to be able to carry out its mission.
- iii. work closely with the Ministry Coordinators to support all teams under their supervision and help develop new teams for core ministries established by the Governing Board.
- iv. assist the Finance Coordinator in preparing the annual budget for review by the Governing Board and approval by the congregation.
- v. meet regularly with the Governing Board, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of how the church's ministries are progressing.

b. Personnel

The Director of Ministries will typically be the Senior Minister. Alternatively, the Director can be an elected lay or staff member of the congregation.

2. Ministry Coordinators

a. Responsibilities

Ministry Coordinators are responsible for the oversight and development of ministry areas to which they have been called. Their role is to support and encourage the individuals and Ministry Teams within their purview.

They are responsible for overseeing their ministry area budget and working with their ministry teams toward the responsible implementation of that budget.

Ministry Coordinators are accountable to the Director of Ministries.

b. Personnel

Ministry Coordinators can either be paid staff or elected lay members of the congregation. If elected lay members, they shall be elected annually.

3. Ministry Teams

a. Description

Ministry Teams are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day work of the church. Each has a clearly defined function.

- i. Certain teams, generally those that represent the outward ministry of the church, are deemed inspired teams. These teams address specific aspects of the church's Mission Statement. They are considered temporary as they may arise and depart based on the needs of the community and the direct inspiration of the church's membership.
- ii. Other teams that have responsibilities essential for the fulfilment of the church's mission are deemed core teams. They will be designated by the Governing Board and will include most of the ministries involving property, finance and administration, and others the Board deems essential.

Because of their important role in our Congregational heritage the Deacons are designated a core team. The personnel and role of the Deacons are defined in the Ministry Policy.

- iii. Teams will work with the Ministry Coordinators to develop their annual budgets.

b. Personnel

- i. Inspired Ministry Teams are made up entirely of volunteers who choose to serve on such ministries. They may serve in any manner and for any length of time as they feel called by God to do so.
- ii. Core Ministry Teams may be staffed by a combination of appointed, elected, hired, or volunteer personnel. Those who are appointed or elected serve on an annual basis.

ARTICLE IV. ORDAINED CLERGY

A. DESCRIPTION

The Ordained Ministry consists of the following now serving or called by this church or who may hereafter be called by this church in accordance with the organization of the United Church of Christ, to any of the following offices: Senior Minister, Associate Minister, or such similarly, professionally trained persons as this church may from time-to-time call.

B. SENIOR MINISTER

1. The Senior Minister is the spiritual leader of the church, and serves as preacher, teacher and counselor for the congregation in all aspects of the life of the church.
2. The Senior Minister enlists people of all ages as followers of Christ; preaches the Gospel; administers the Sacraments; provides for services of public worship and is responsible along with the church members, officers, and ministry teams for the administration of the programs and activities of the church.
3. The Senior Minister works with the Deacons in a consensus-guided partnership that is responsible for and has general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church.
4. The Senior Minister is a member ex-officio of all ministry teams, with the right to vote, and is given notice of all said meetings.
5. The Senior Minister may designate other members of the Ordained Ministry to attend in like manner, the meetings of the ministry teams.
6. The Senior Minister, with the support of a team or teams, is responsible for all oversight of the staff. This oversight includes but is not limited to maintaining a current job description, the hiring, supervision, evaluation, and termination of said employees, and making annual compensation recommendations.

C. ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE MINISTER(S)

1. Other members of the ordained Ministry share in the responsibility and work of ministry and are subject to the direction of the Senior Minister.
2. The methods of call, election, installation, discipline, and termination are the same as for the Senior Minister.

D. VACANCY

1. Notification

When a permanent vacancy occurs in the ordained ministry of the church, the Clerk reports such a vacancy to the appropriate judicatory body of the United Church of Christ.

2. Search Committee
 - a. Formation

When a vacancy in the ordained ministry of the church occurs, the Deacons shall propose a Search Committee to a meeting of the membership. Members of this committee are selected for their knowledge of the areas of activity and concern of the church, as well as for their personal commitment and activity. Such a committee should strive for a broad representation of the membership.

The Senior Minister is a member of the Search Committee convened to call any other member of the ordained ministry.

b. Duty

The Search Committee, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the assistance of appropriate denominational agencies and executives, makes a canvass and evaluation of available ministers.

c. Recommendation

The Search Committee presents to the church, at a meeting of the membership called for this purpose, the name of the person recommended to fill the vacancy on a permanent basis.

3. Interim Arrangements

The Deacons shall ensure that pastoral care and preaching is provided until a successor is called to fill a vacant position on a permanent basis.

E. CALL

1. Duration

The call to any office of ordained ministry is for an indefinite period of time.

2. Terms of Call

a. In the call, the terms of the relationship are fully stated, including salary, allowances, insurance, annuity, sabbatical, performance review, vacation, housing, and such other arrangements or duties as may be agreed upon by the minister and the Search Committee in accordance with these By-Laws, and subject to approval by the congregation at a meeting of the membership called for the purpose of presenting a candidate.

b. The call also specifies any particular duties for any minister that are not set forth in Article IV.

c. The minister, the church Clerk, and the Registrar of the Rhode Island Association of the United Church of Christ each receive a signed copy of the call and the minister's letter of acceptance.

3. Church Membership

- a. Persons accepting a call to the ministry of this congregation are, under normal circumstances, to become members of the church.
- b. A minister who does not become a member of the church may participate in meetings of the church but does not have the privilege of voting.

4. Installation

A Minister accepting a call, following reception into membership, may request the church to call upon the Rhode Island Association of the United Church of Christ to conduct a Service of Installation.

5. Discipline

Professional discipline of any minister is done in conformity with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

F. TERMINATION

1. In order to terminate a ministerial relationship, a minimum of three (3) months prior written notice is required by either party.
2. The church may act to terminate the relationship, at a meeting called for this purpose, by a two-thirds vote of those members present, entitled to vote, and voting.
3. The Clerk then sends written notice of such action to the minister, the Rhode Island Association, and the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ.
4. If for any reason a minister of this church should lose ministerial standing, contract obligations cease at once in their entirety.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS AND DELEGATES

All officers and delegates are to be members of this church but may not be employees of the church. Officers are elected annually and hold office until their successors are elected.

A. GOVERNING BOARD CHAIR

The Chair of the Governing Board is the presiding officer of the church and presides at meetings of the membership. If the Chair is unable to serve at any such meeting, another member of the Governing Board is appointed to preside.

B. CLERK

The Clerk keeps a faithful record of meetings of the membership and Governing Board. The Clerk also posts necessary legal notices of all church meetings as provided in Article III.A. and ensures all records are made available to the membership. If the Clerk is unable to be present at any such meeting, a Clerk pro tempore is appointed to record the proceedings of that meeting only.

C. TREASURER(S)

The Treasurer is responsible for the care of the funds, with the exception of the Deacons Fund, and the signing of certain documents as defined elsewhere in these by-laws.

D. DELEGATES

Delegates for meetings of the Rhode Island Association and Southern New England Conference shall be elected by the congregation or appointed by the Governing Board in accordance with each organization's by-laws.

ARTICLE VI. FINANCES

A. CHECKS AND DRAFTS

Unless otherwise authorized by the Governing Board, the (Co-)Treasurer or the Assistant Treasurer signs all checks and drafts.

B. GIFTS

Unless otherwise provided by the donor or family involved in memorial gifts, any funds or property gifted, bequeathed or devised to the church over \$10,000 are placed in the Endowment Funds for investment.

C. SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

1. Borrowing

Any borrowing of funds that causes church indebtedness is authorized in accordance with paragraph (4)

2. Real Estate Transactions

Any sale, lease, mortgage, purchase, or substantial improvement of any real estate, including buildings thereon, which is owned or is to be acquired by this church, is authorized in accordance with paragraph (4).

3. Distribution of Endowment

Distributions from the Endowment Funds' assets, other than annual distributions determined considering the sustainability of the Funds in relation to inflation, are to be made only under extraordinary circumstances subject to the approval of distribution as provided in paragraph (4). However, no funds designated as permanent gifts to the Endowment Funds are subject to distribution.

4. Approval Process for Significant Financial Transactions

Approval of significant financial transactions are authorized in accordance with the following:

- a. The Governing Board Chair or Clerk calls a joint meeting of the Governing Board, the Finance Coordinator, and Director of Ministries by giving each member thereof at least seven (7) days prior written notice, either by post or by e-mail, of such a meeting and its purpose, and a majority of invited members adopt a resolution at the joint meeting approving the transaction; And
 - b. The resolution approved in (a) above is submitted to the membership at two special meetings called for that purpose, and a resolution authorizing the transaction receives the affirmative vote of 2/3 of those members present, entitled to vote and voting at each of the meetings scheduled at a minimum two-week interval.
 - c. Certification of the Clerk as to the vote at the meeting approving the transaction is conclusive of the due authorization thereof.
5. Execution of Contracts and Other Instruments
- Any transaction under paragraphs (1) or (2) approved under the provisions of paragraph (4) are executed by the (Co-)Treasurer and countersigned by the Clerk, unless otherwise provided in the operative resolution.

ARTICLE VII. DISSOLUTION

A. PROCEDURE

This church may be dissolved in accordance with the procedures required to authorize the transfer of church real estate in Article VI.C.

B. TRANSFER OF ASSETS

Upon dissolution of this church, its assets are to be transferred to a religious organization or organizations specified in or selected by a procedure approved by the membership in authorizing the dissolution, provided that no assets are to be transferred to any individual or individuals or to any organization which is not recognized as a charitable organization by the internal revenue laws then in effect.

ARTICLE VIII. BY-LAWS

The process to amend the By-Laws is as follows:

1. The proposed revision and meeting are announced according to the process established in Article III.A.
2. The meeting is called to order, the proposal is read, and time allotted for discussion.
3. Except for amendments to Article VI.C.4.b, the proposed amendment is adopted if an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the qualified members present is attained. Amendments made for Article VI.C.4.b must abide by the provisions established in Article VI.C.4.b.

Approved by the Barrington Congregational Church on Sunday, January 28, 2024