

# **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

of

## **THE FELLOWSHIP OF CONNECTICUT CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

as amended Sept. 28, 1961; May 24, 1962; Sept. 30, 1962; May 2, 1963; May 8, 1964; May 13, 1965; Oct. 29, 1967; May 26, 1968; May 16, 1971; Oct. 29, 1972; May 20, 1973; May 19, 1974; May 20, 1979; Oct. 24, 1982; May 21, 1989; May 20, 1990; Oct. 17, 1993; May 19, 1996; May 17, 1998, October 22, 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

Certain Congregational Christian Churches which desire to maintain and extend their witness as free churches, by delegates assembled, have associated themselves in a Connecticut Fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches.

Congregational Christian Churches agree in believing that the right of government resides in local churches which are responsible directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Head of the Church Universal and of all particular churches.

Congregational Christian Churches believe, in particular, that each local church is a gathered company of believers, free to determine its own covenant, basis of membership, statement of faith (if any), forms of worship, programs of religious education, ownership and administration of property, choice of minister or other leadership, programs of community service, fellowship, music, pastoral work, and all other religious and civic activities.

Congregational Christian Churches are governed exclusively by their own members and are entirely free from external control. They are gathered companies of believers who have pledged themselves to follow the life and teaching of Jesus, and because they seek to order their lives and works in the service of God as He is made known to them in Jesus Christ, they cannot accept as authoritative or agree to hold in regard, the advice, decisions or other actions of any other body, since to do so would avoid their responsibility of seeking God's will by their own action and in their own right.

Congregational Christian Churches, in their wider relationships, recognize that all churches that worship and serve the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ are parts of Christ's catholic church and have mutual duties subsisting in the obligations of fellowship. Therefore, while establishing this Connecticut Fellowship for the furtherance of their common interests, these churches do maintain the scriptural and inalienable right of each church to self government and administration; and covenant that this Fellowship shall never exercise legislative or judicial authority, nor consent to act as a council of reference.

Congregational Christian Churches and individuals are related to one another and to their wider agencies in a responsible, free fellowship. The local churches voluntarily elect delegates to meetings of wider bodies, and take responsibility for the work undertaken by those delegates, with the usual Congregational reservation, namely, that whatever is undertaken must win the support of their members. The wider bodies are expected to be sensitive to the wishes of the churches, and to the wishes of the individuals in non-member churches.

Congregational Christian Churches join with all other churches which worship and serve God as He is made known to us in Jesus Christ, on the basis of mutual respect and free co-operation.

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **ARTICLE I – NAME**

The name of this Fellowship shall be The Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches, a/k/a Connecticut Fellowship, a/k/a The Fellowship.

## **ARTICLE II – PURPOSE**

The purposes of the Fellowship shall be:

1. To promote Fellowship and co-operation among Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches and individuals, which resolve to maintain Congregational principles in their work and witness for Christ.
2. To perform all those functions customarily performed by Associations or Conferences of Congregational Christian Churches.
3. To express and implement the common concern of the member churches and individuals, that such organizations as may seek the support of membership of Congregational Christian Churches and individuals, shall be founded upon, and shall function in harmony with, the Congregational principles of freedom under God in Christ.

## **ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP**

For the purpose of this Article, a Congregational Christian Church shall be defined as a body of Christians complete under God in spiritual authority and ecclesiastical power, regularly meeting and worshipping in one place, united by a mutually owned covenant, in fellowship with sister Congregational Christian Churches and recognized by the laws of the place of location as a duly constituted Church.

1. Membership in the Fellowship shall be by Congregational Christian Churches, and by individuals of free Congregational persuasion, not belonging to member churches.
2. A Congregational Christian Church may request membership in the Fellowship by congregational action taken at any duly called and held meeting of such Church, which congregational action shall then be certified to the Secretary of the Fellowship by the Church clerk or proper Church official. Upon verification, through the submission of its Constitution and Bylaws, that the church applying is operating as a Congregational Church, and affirmative vote by the Fellowship delegates in Executive Committee or Annual Meeting, such Church shall become a member.
3. Membership may be withdrawn by any member church at any time by like action and certification.
4. Any individual not belonging to a member church may become a member by certifying intention and signing an application for membership which will be supplied by the Executive Secretary. The signed application should then be mailed to the Fellowship Secretary.
5. Any individual not belonging to a member church may resign membership in this Fellowship by declaring such intention and notifying the Fellowship Secretary.

## ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

1. The elected officers of the Fellowship may be lay persons or ministers, and shall be as follows: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Second Assistant Moderator, Executive Secretary, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers as may be provided for in the By-Laws (See VII: Additional Officers).

a. The MODERATOR shall be elected for a term of one year, and shall not be eligible for re-election for at least a two-year period. The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Fellowship and the Executive Committee, working in close co-operation with said Committee, counseling with it as to time and place of all Executive and Fellowship meetings. The Moderator shall become, upon conclusion of the one-year term of office, an ex officio member of the Executive Committee for another year as Immediate Past Moderator.

b. The ASSISTANT MODERATOR shall be elected for one year, and shall preside at any meeting of the Fellowship when the Moderator is absent or shall have requested the Assistant Moderator to preside. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Moderator, the Assistant Moderator shall serve as Moderator and fulfill all the duties of that office until a new Moderator is elected at the next annual meeting. In addition, the Assistant Moderator shall be the convener of the Personnel Committee.

c. The SECOND ASSISTANT MODERATOR shall be elected for one year, and shall preside at any meeting of the Fellowship in the absence of the Moderator and the Assistant Moderator. In addition, the Second Assistant Moderator shall be the convener of the Nominating Committee.

d. The SECRETARY shall be elected for a term of three years and shall keep a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the Fellowship and of the Executive Committee, including membership and attendance; shall receive official communications; shall send notices; shall discharge all correspondence as directed by the Fellowship or the Executive Committee.

e. The ASSISTANT SECRETARY shall be elected for a term of three years, and shall aid in secretarial duties, and act for the Secretary at the latter's request or when the need arises, and shall have the same rights, privileges, obligations, and responsibilities when so acting as would the Secretary under the same circumstances.

f. The TREASURER shall be elected for a term of three years and shall be the custodian of the funds of the Fellowship, receiving all contributions and disbursing funds under the direction of the Executive Committee. The Treasurer shall report on these and all work undertaken to the Executive Committee as requested and to the Fellowship at its Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall require a sufficient bond to be posted by the Treasurer and shall require an annual audit of the books.

g. An EXECUTIVE SECRETARY shall be elected by the Fellowship for a term of three years, to serve concurrently with the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Executive Secretary shall represent the Fellowship in the churches of the Fellowship and elsewhere as directed by the Executive Committee, working in close co-operation therewith, making report thereto at each meeting, and making recommendations of projects to be considered. The Executive Secretary shall be a regular member of the Fishers Island Committee and have the official title of "House Operator". On all other committees of the Fellowship the Executive Secretary shall serve ex officio without vote.

2. The Officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Fellowship.

3. There shall be an EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE consisting of one representative from each member church, each of whom shall be selected by the church. Fellowship officers and chairmen of the standing committees shall be voting members of the Executive Committee only if they are the selected representatives from their church. Otherwise, they shall be members without power to vote.

a. The Executive Committee shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or at the call of the Executive Secretary with the approval of the Moderator, or at the call of any five members of the Executive Committee.

b. The Executive Committee shall act for the Fellowship between its meetings, but the Committee's actions shall be subject to ratification and review by the Fellowship. Minutes of the actions of the Committee shall be kept and presented to the Fellowship for ratification and review at the next regular meeting, or at a special meeting called prior to the next regular meeting.

## **ARTICLE V – MEETINGS**

1. The Annual Meeting of this Fellowship shall be held in May of each year, the exact time and place to be fixed by the Executive Committee unless otherwise ordered by the Fellowship. Announcement of such meetings shall be made by written notice mailed to each member church at least thirty days in advance.

2. Special meetings of the Fellowship shall be convened upon the call of the Executive Committee, or when three member churches request such a meeting. Announcement of such Special Meetings shall be made by written notice mailed to each member church at least thirty days in advance.

3. For business other than amendments to Constitution and By-Laws, a quorum shall consist of the DELEGATES present representing ten per cent of the churches holding membership in the Fellowship.

## **ARTICLE VI – BY-LAWS**

The Fellowship may from time to time make, alter, amend, or repeal By-Laws consistent with the purposes and functions set forth herein.

## **ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS**

At any duly called and held meeting of the Fellowship, if a majority of the member churches of the Fellowship are represented by DELEGATES present at such meeting, this Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the member churches represented at such meeting through their DELEGATES, provided notice of the meeting containing full statement of the action proposed to be taken at such meeting is mailed to each member church at least thirty days before such meeting.

## **ARTICLE VIII - PRIVATE FOUNDATION RESTRICTIONS**

Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, if at any time the Fellowship is or shall become a private foundation within the meaning of Sec. 509 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code, then the Fellowship will be subject to the following as of such time and thereafter:

1. The Fellowship shall distribute its income for each taxable year at such time and in such a manner as not to become subject to the tax on undistributed income imposed by Sec. 4942 of the Internal Revenue Code.
2. The Fellowship shall not engage in any act of self-dealing as defined in Sec. 2941 (d) of the Internal Revenue Code.
3. The Fellowship shall not retain any excess business holdings as defined in Sec. 4943 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code.
4. The Fellowship shall not make any investments in such manner as to subject it to tax under Sec. 4944 of the Internal Revenue Code.
5. The Fellowship shall not make any taxable expenditures as defined in Sec. 4945 (d) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Reference herein to any provision of the Internal Revenue Code shall be to such provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended and then in effect, or to the corresponding provision of any subsequent federal income tax laws.

## **ARTICLE IX – DISSOLUTION**

Upon dissolution of the Fellowship, its assets shall be distributed to such organization or organizations selected by its Executive Committee, as are then described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended and then in effect, or the corresponding provision of any subsequent federal income tax laws, the purposes and powers of which most nearly carry out the religious purposes of this Fellowship.

## **BY-LAWS**

### **I – VOTING**

1. In all matters submitted to the Fellowship for consideration, voting representation shall be determined on the following basis: A member church shall be entitled to one voting DELEGATE for every twenty-five members, or a part thereof, up to one hundred members and thereafter one DELEGATE for each additional one hundred members, or part thereof, with a maximum of twelve DELEGATES from any member church.
2. Any other church, or individual, interested in this Fellowship may attend any meeting without vote.

## II – TERMS OF OFFICE

The terms of office for all the officers of the Fellowship shall begin immediately following the meeting at which they are elected, and shall continue for one year or until their successors take office, provided, however, that the officers elected at the first meeting of the Fellowship shall take office during the meeting immediately upon their election.

## III – COMMITTEES

1. The Executive Committee may make rules for its own guidance not inconsistent with the Constitution and these By-Laws. Due notice having been given to all members of the Executive Committee, seven shall constitute a quorum at any meeting.

a. The Executive Committee shall be the Fellowship ad interim and shall transact such business as it may deem to be in the interest of the Fellowship. It shall not contravene or exceed the authorization implied, inferred, or explicit in the acts and votes of the Fellowship itself. In the intervals between meetings of the Fellowship, it shall represent that body in all matters not otherwise provided for, but shall in no case exceed the prerogatives of the Fellowship itself.

b. The Executive Committee shall have authority to contract for all necessary expenditures for carrying out policies authorized under the Constitution or authorized by the Fellowship, and to approve claims therefore, but not to an extent beyond what the finances of the Fellowship, as certified by the Treasurer, will permit. It shall make a full report of all its doings, the consideration of which shall be part of the order of business at the next regular meeting of the Fellowship.

c. The Executive Committee may fill any vacancy occurring in its own number, or in any committee or office, in the interval between meetings of the Fellowship; the person so appointed to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the Fellowship.

d. The Executive Committee shall appoint any committee or commission ordered by the Fellowship and not otherwise appointed.

2. A Program Committee composed of at least five members shall be appointed for each Fellowship meeting. The Moderator, Executive Secretary, the minister of the host church, and two members at large appointed by the Executive Committee shall comprise this committee. Its duties shall be to oversee all aspects of each Fellowship meeting, including preparation of the Missions Tea, Registration and credentials, ticket sales, workshops and seminars, and other matters which may rise pursuant thereto.

3. A Nominating Committee, consisting of five members, shall be elected at each Annual Meeting after nominations from the floor. The Committee shall prepare nominations for officers and members of all other committees, except the Executive Committee. Nominations for officers are to be voted upon at the next Annual Meeting. The Committee's nominations shall be transmitted to the Secretary of the Fellowship who shall transmit such list of nominees to all member churches and individual members at least thirty days prior to the Annual Meeting. In addition to any nomination so made, nominations for any elective office may be made from the floor of the meeting. The Moderator shall in every instance call for such nominations from the floor.

Nominations for other committees shall be presented to the Executive Committee for their appointment process.

4. The Religious Education Committee shall be composed of five members chosen by the Executive Committee from member churches and individual members, interested in the Fellowship Education Program. It shall be the duty of this Committee to work with the Christian Education Commission, National Association, and to assist the churches in all educational matters.

5. The Fishers Island Committee shall be composed of a minimum of five members chosen by the Executive Committee from member churches and individual members. The Executive Secretary shall be a voting member of this Committee. The Committee shall elect its own chairman and shall hold meetings at frequent intervals throughout the year.

This Committee is charged with the physical and financial supervision of the Fishers Island property and with the use of the property by individuals and churches, with particular attention being given to a summer camp or conference program.

The Committee shall be responsible for giving a report of its activities and finances at each regular and special meeting of the Fellowship and of the Executive Committee.

6. The Youth Committee shall be composed of a minimum of five members, chosen by the Executive Committee from member churches and individual members. It shall be the duty of this committee to work with the Youth Commission of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and to assist the churches in all areas of youth work.

7. The Committee on Missions shall be composed of five members. This Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee and be responsible to it. This Committee shall elect its own Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. It shall be responsible for the giving of a report of all missionary activities at each regular and special meeting of the Fellowship.

8. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be composed of three members, two ministers and one layman, chosen by the Executive Committee. This Committee shall assist the churches of our Fellowship in securing suitable pastors of continuing Congregational convictions. This Committee shall work closely with the Pastoral Relations Executive Secretary of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. This Committee shall consider the qualifications of ministers seeking standing in the Fellowship, and shall make recommendations to the Fellowship regarding these ministers. The Executive Secretary shall consult with this Committee on all matters of pastoral relations brought to his attention.

9. The Church Assistance and Development (CAD) Committee shall be composed of five members, chosen by the Executive Committee from member churches and individual members.

The duties of the Committee shall be to receive from the member churches and other Congregational Churches expressions of their needs. It shall determine the opportunity of the Fellowship to respond to their needs. It shall also determine the feasibility of planting new churches, and work with local Congregationalists toward that end.

The Committee shall prepare in conjunction with representatives of the particular churches appropriate plans for meeting such needs and related fund raising. Each proposal by this Committee shall be presented to members of the Executive Committee in writing at least two weeks prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee at which action may be taken on the proposal. No Committee member shall be permitted to vote, either as a committee member or as a member of the Executive committee, upon any proposal for assistance to any Church in which he or she is a member, or where he or she is a member of the Ecclesiastical Society of any such church. The Committee shall, upon receiving the approval of the proposed plans from the Executive Committee of the Fellowship, be responsible for the implementation of each project.

10. A seven member Budget and Investments Committee interlocking the Fellowship and its Ecclesiastical Society, including the two Fellowship Treasurers and the two Ecclesiastical Society Treasurers, shall have its other three members appointed by the Executive Committee of the Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches/Board of Trustees of the Ecclesiastical Society, one of whom shall be a representative of the Fishers Island Committee. This Committee shall elect its own Chairman, it being the duty of this Committee to oversee both the day-to-day financial operations of the Fellowship, including preparation of complete budgets, oversight of fundraising efforts, and monitoring expenditures, as well as to oversee and steward the various financial holdings and instruments of the Fellowship's Ecclesiastical Society.

11. A Personnel Committee shall be composed of five members, including the Moderator, the Immediate Past Moderator, a past Executive Secretary, and two members at large. The duties of this Committee shall be to review performance, compensation, benefits, and other personnel matters of the Executive Secretary and Fellowship office staff.

12. Other committees or commissions may be named by the Fellowship as it shall from time to time determine.

#### **IV – ELIGIBILITY**

Any member in good standing of any church which is a member of this Fellowship, or any individual member, shall be eligible to hold office or to be a member of any committee.

#### **V – FINANCES**

The expenses of the Fellowship shall be met by voluntary contributions solicited from churches and individuals in response to recommendations from the Executive Committee, and also from such receipts as may come to the Fellowship at its meetings, or through special gifts.

The fiscal year of the Fellowship shall be from May 1 to April 30 of each year.

#### **VI – STANDING RULES**

Standing Rules for the Fellowship may be adopted from time to time by a two-thirds vote of the Delegates present and voting at any meeting of the Fellowship. Meetings shall be conducted in a Christian Spirit according to generally accepted rules of parliamentary procedure.

#### **VII – ADDITIONAL OFFICERS**

The ASSISTANT TREASURER shall be elected for a term of three years, and upon request of the Treasurer or the Executive Committee, shall assume any or all of the duties of the Treasurer as outlined in Article IV – Sec. 1(f) of the Constitution of this Fellowship. The Executive Committee may require the Assistant Treasurer to post a sufficient bond when assuming said duties.