

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS  
of  
**THE FELLOWSHIP OF NORTHEAST CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

PREAMBLE

Certain Congregational Christian Churches which desire to maintain and extend their witness as free churches, by delegates assembled, have associated themselves in the Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches, and this Corporation is associated in its purposes and activities with that Fellowship.

Christian Congregationalism, here defined, consists of (1) a church whose membership is composed of Christian believers, (2) a system of autonomous congregations with spiritual equality among believers, and (3) those who acknowledge the debt of love and fellowship among believers and congregations.

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. We believe in the priesthood of all believers, that the Holy Spirit works among and through every believer, and that every believer possesses liberty of conscience.

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 join with all other churches which worship and serve God made known to us in Jesus Christ. We discern the will of God together in community through congregational meetings in which the voices of the gathered members are respected and heard.

Furthermore, Congregational Christian Churches began as a grassroots Protestant reform movement to purify the Church of England on Biblical principles. They arrived in America on the Mayflower (1620) and established both the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1630) and Harvard College (1636).

Congregationalists hold a joint and acknowledged history of American patriotism with the earliest beginnings of the Independence Movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This commitment to freedom continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Congregational Churches were on the leading edge of evangelistic missions and social justice, including Abolitionism. In the present day, Congregationalists are committed to an educated clergy

and the progressive pilgrim principle that “God hath yet more truth and light to break out of his Holy Word.”

## CONSTITUTION

### ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be The Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches, also known as The Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches.

### ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purposes of the Fellowship shall be:

1. To promote fellowship and cooperation among Northeast Congregational Christian Churches and individuals, which resolve to maintain Congregational principles in their work and witness for Christ.
2. To participate in vicinage councils, ordinations, installations, and other services customarily performed by Congregational Christian Churches.
3. To be a resource organization to the common concerns of the member churches.

### 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 consist of Congregational Christian 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 Executive Director 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 Christian Church, and affirmative vote of active member churches of the Fellowship, such Church shall become a member.
3. Membership may be withdrawn by any member church at any time by like action and certification.
4. A member church may be removed from membership by two-thirds of delegates present at an Annual Meeting of the Fellowship.

5. A member church may be moved to inactive status by request of the church, or by a vote of the Executive Committee for lack of participation in Fellowship activities over a period of three years. A church on inactive status forfeits right of voice and vote and is ineligible to receive loans, grants, and all other benefits of membership.

#### ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

1. The elected officers of the Fellowship may be lay persons or ministers of active member churches, and shall be as follows: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Clerk, 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 three years and shall not be eligible for re-election for at least a three-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.

b. The ASSISTANT MODERATOR shall be elected for three years 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 CLERK 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.

d. 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 request an audit of the books from time to time.

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.

a. The Executive Committee shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or at the call of the Executive Director 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. subject to ratification and review by the Fellowship.

## 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 sent by electronic email (unless a written mailed notice is requested) 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 five (5) member churches request the Executive Committee call such a meeting. Announcement of such Special Meetings shall be sent by electronic email (unless a written mailed notice is requested) to each member church at least thirty days in advance.

## 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 25% of the active 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 active 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 sent by electronic email (unless a written mailed notice is requested) to each member church at least thirty days before such meeting.

## ARTICLE VIII– 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: an active member church shall be entitled to three voting delegates (for example, the May Annual Meeting and Special Meetings).
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 as specified in Article IV of our Constitution, 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 any committee or office, in the interval between meetings of the Fellowship; the persons so appointed to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the Fellowship.

d. The Executive Committee shall conduct all business of the Fellowship and shall appoint ad-hoc task teams as needed to complete the work of the organization.

2. 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 Clerk 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.

3. A Personnel Committee shall be composed of five members, including the Moderator, the Immediate Past Moderator, a past Executive Director (whenever possible), and two members at large (or three whenever it is not possible for the past Executive Director to serve). The duties of this Committee shall be to review performance, compensation, benefits, and other personnel matters of the Executive Director and Fellowship staff.

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

#### IV – ELIGIBILITY

Any member in good standing of any church which is an active member of this Fellowship 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 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 June 1 to May 31 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

Additional officers may be elected as needed to assist named officers upon the request of the Executive Committee.

Moderator, Rev. Dr. Irven A. Gammon \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Moderator, Meghan Tanner \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk, Rev. Norm Erlendson \_\_\_\_\_

As adopted by vote of the church delegates present at the 2020 May Annual Meeting of the Fellowship, October 18, 2020