

West Congregational Church

Bylaws

Adopted November 28, 1999

ARTICLE 1 – NAME

This corporation shall be called WEST Congregational CHURCH of Haverhill Mass as incorporated November 5, 1894 (chapter 404, Acts of 1887).

ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE

The mission of West Church is to love God:

- BY LOOKING UPWARD, delighting in God and His Word
- BY GROWING INWARD, participating in caring Christian community committed to sound doctrine
- BY REACHING OUTWARD, bringing people closer to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

ARTICLE 3 – GOVERNMENT & RELATIONSHIPS

- The government of this church is vested in its members who, as one body, exercise the right of control in all its affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- We are independent of the control of all other ecclesiastical bodies, but
- We commit to mutual counsel and cooperation with churches in agreement with our statement of faith.

ARTICLE 4 – STATEMENTS

SECTION 1 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following seven-point statement of faith shall be the basis for membership in this church:

1. We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
3. We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling power and fullness the Christian is enabled to live a godly life in this present evil world.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ.

We also acknowledge the creeds of the ancient church, such as the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, together with the statements of the Reformed Churches, especially those of our congregational heritage, such as the Cambridge Platform of 1648, as expressions of our faith. We hold to and treasure the original covenant of this church adopted in 1735. (See Appendix B.)

SECTION 2 – STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE *

West Congregational Church supports the sanctity of the institution of marriage as ordained by God in Scripture and, therefore, marriage shall be restricted exclusively as the union between one man and one woman and shall not be altered by changes in civil law or church law. (* **Bylaw Amendment adopted 1/30/04**)

ARTICLE 5 – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1 – BECOMING A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER

Candidates for Membership who meet all of the following requirements may be admitted by vote of the church at any legally called business meeting.

- Complete the membership classes
- Confess their faith in God through His Son Jesus Christ
- Profess agreement to the seven-point statement of faith
- Receive baptism (when previously did not receive Christian baptism)
- Demonstrate a sincere desire to participate in the life of our church by:
 1. Regularly attending the services of this church
 2. Actively participating in a small group for spiritual growth
 3. Giving systematically to the support of this church and its mission
 4. Sharing diligently in the work of this congregation and also of the Christian church around the world through the sharing of the gifts, talents, and abilities that God has given to each one
 5. Accepting WC disciplinary procedures (see Section 3 below)

SECTION 2 – PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

- All Members who are not under discipline may vote in all meetings of this church. They may also hold office in this corporation.
- All Members have a part in building Christian community by exhibiting love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in all their interactions with each other.

SECTION 3 – CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline shall be administered in accordance with scriptural principles to church members under the oversight of Leadership Council (see Article 9). The ultimate purpose of church discipline is to restore the offender to full participation in Christian community whenever possible. * **(Bylaw Amendment adopted 5/22/05).**

No Member who is under discipline by vote of Leadership Council may vote in any business meeting of this church or continue in any leadership position.

Church discipline shall be administered regarding, but not limited to:

- Immoral behavior as defined by Scripture
- Divisiveness that injures the church and/or impairs its functioning
- Departure from the West Church statement of faith (see Article 4)
- Departure from Membership requirements

SECTION 4 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Members who are not under discipline may be dismissed from Membership at their request by any of the following methods:

- A letter of transfer may be granted to any church of like evangelical persuasion
- Members who join another church shall be automatically removed from membership in this church
- A member who is insistent may be released from Membership

Members who move from the community may request to retain Membership for up to one year while seeking a new church home. These Members shall be automatically removed at the end of one year unless there are extenuating circumstances that may include:

- Temporary absence from the community due to education, military, or missionary service.
- Elderly who have served this church and have retired to a distant location
- Other reasons satisfactory to the Senior Pastor and Leadership Council that meet the spirit of this article.

A member who no longer meets the requirements of Membership (see Section 1) shall be contacted at least three times within six months with restoration in view. If there is no response or no change, Membership may be terminated by vote of the church as recommended by Leadership Council. To be reinstated, the Membership Process must be reentered.

A member, who, in the judgement of the Senior Pastor and Leadership Council has not resolved a matter of church discipline, may be terminated from Membership by vote of the church as recommended by Leadership Council.

A member under discipline who chooses to no longer be accountable to scriptural principles as applied by Leadership Council may resign from membership by sending a letter of resignation that shall state the reason for such action. * **(Bylaw Amendment adopted 5/22/05)**. To be reinstated, the membership process must be reentered.

ARTICLE 6 – MEETINGS

SECTION 1 – WORSHIP SERVICES

Worship services shall be held every Sunday morning (unless otherwise voted by the church) and at such other times as may seem advisable.

SECTION 2 – ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Annual Meeting of this church shall be held on a date in January to be set by Leadership Council. The business of the Annual Meeting shall include but not be limited to:

- Election of Officers and Leadership Council Members
- Confirmation of Management Team Members
- Financial report & annual budget
- Business transactions

SECTION 3 – SPECIAL MEETINGS

The Clerk shall be required to call special business meetings when so directed by Leadership Council or when requested in writing and signed by a minimum of ten legal voters of the church. All such meetings require communication to Members at least ten days prior to the meeting by:

- Posting a warrant
- Announcement at all Sunday morning services

This communication shall give notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

SECTION 4 – MEETING QUORUM

Ten percent (10%) of the Members-in-good-standing, with a minimum number of twenty-five (25), shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE 7 – SACRAMENTS

SECTION 1 – COMMUNION

A Communion Service shall be held at least on the first Sunday of each month unless Leadership Council votes otherwise and at other times as directed by the officiating pastor.

SECTION 2 – BAPTISM

Baptism shall be administered to:

- Persons who confess their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior and have been instructed in the meaning of the sacrament

- Infant children of families requesting it where at least one parent shall have confessed their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior and shall have been instructed in the meaning of the sacrament Baptism is a function of the church and shall be a public ceremony except in unusual circumstances.

ARTICLE 8 – OFFICERS

SECTION 1 – OFFICERS

The Officers of this church shall be:

1. Moderator * (**Bylaw Amendment adopted 6/23/02**)
2. Church Clerk
3. Church Treasurer
4. Assistants to the above officers may be nominated and elected and shall assume all the duties and responsibilities of the office as needed. * (**Bylaw Amendment adopted 1/27/08**)

Officers shall be Members-in-good-standing and shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee (see Article 9, Section 4). The Church shall elect Officers for a one-year term. Upon acceptable review by the Leadership Council, Officers may be recommended for re-election. The Officers shall be responsible to the Leadership Council, and ultimately to the church.

Officers may resign by letter to the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council shall appoint an interim for that Office until the next Annual Meeting. With cause (see Article 5, Section 3), Officers may be removed from office by two-thirds vote of Leadership Council. With ten signatures (see Article 6, Section 3), the removed Officer may call a church meeting for the purpose of reinstatement.

* Officers are authorized to act as Signers on behalf of the church, by vote of the membership. At least two of the three officers shall sign all documents. Documents to be signed may include but are not limited to:

- Real estate agreements
- Mortgages & other financial documents
- Construction contracts

(* **Bylaw Amendment Adopted 5/16/04**)

SECTION 2 – MODERATOR *

The Moderator or Assistant Moderator shall moderate all church business meetings. In the absence of the Moderator and Assistant Moderator from a church business meeting, the Clerk shall preside over the election of a temporary moderator for that meeting. The Moderator may also be elected as a Member-at-Large of the Leadership Council. (* **Bylaw Amendment adopted 6/23/02**)

SECTION 3 – CLERK

The Clerk shall be responsible to:

- Maintain up-to-date membership records including:
 1. Dates of baptism
 2. Member admission, termination or death
 3. Legal voters
- Correspond officially for the church and maintain a correspondence file.
- Attend and record the minutes of all business meetings of the church.
- Notify Members regarding the Annual Meeting at the instruction of Leadership Council (see Article 6, Section 2).
- Notify Members regarding special business meetings of the church when requested by ten legal voters or by order of Leadership Council (see Article 6, Section 3).

SECTION 4 – TREASURER

The Treasurer shall be responsible to:

- Maintain accurate records of all income and disbursements
- Pay authorized bills in a timely manner (according to policies and procedures)
- Reconcile all bank and investment accounts in a timely manner
- Present accurate reports of all income and disbursements

- Submit books and records to auditors as requested
- Act as a signer on all bank and investment accounts
- Promptly notify appropriate church officials of any discrepancy in accounts or records (according to policies and procedures)

ARTICLE 9 – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

SECTION 1 – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Leadership Council shall consist of * seven to nine (7 – 9) elected Members-at-large (including the Chairperson), the Senior Pastor, and a Pastoral Team Member designated by the Senior Pastor. **(* Bylaw Amendment adopted 6/23/02)**

Requirements for Leadership Council Members include:

- Church membership
- Scriptural qualifications for overseer (I Tim 3)
- Spiritual gifts and experience for the position

Members-at-large shall be elected for one year. Upon acceptable review by the Leadership Council, Members-at-large may be recommended for re-election.

Members-at-large may resign by letter to the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council shall appoint an interim for the position until the next Annual Meeting. With cause (see Article 5, Section 3), Members-at-large may be removed from office by two-thirds vote of Leadership Council. With ten signatures (see Article 6, Section 3), the removed Member-at-large may call a church meeting for the purpose of reinstatement.

SECTION 2 - RESPONSIBILITIES

The Leadership Council is responsible to:

- * Appoint one of its Members-at-Large to be Chairperson annually **(*Bylaw Amendment adopted 6/23/02)**
- Provide vision
- Govern through Policy in the following areas:
 - Spiritual oversight
 - Spiritual discipline
 - Financial oversight
 - Property oversight
- Set Annual and Special Church Business Meetings
- Assemble a Nominating Committee for annual elections
- Administrate the Senior Pastor search
- Administrate reviews of elected officers and members-at-large
- Pray for the church

The assembled council's "one voice" has authority, not the individual council member.

Leadership Council is authorized, without calling a business meeting, to approve individual non-budgeted expenditures up to two percent (2%) of the operating budget with an annual cumulative cap of three percent (3%) of the operating budget. * **(*Bylaw Amendment adopted 5/22/05).**

SECTION 3 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Leadership Council will safeguard and govern the church through Policy Development. They will develop and maintain written Leadership Council Policies that reflect Scriptural values and the intent of the Bylaws and the original Covenant of our church (see Appendix B). These Policies shall be available for perusal in the church office and shall include Executive Limitations concerning:

- Finances
- Bank Accounts
- Budgets
- Risk Management

A Leadership Council Policy/decision may be addressed by a Member-in-good-standing by arranging an appointment with the Leadership Council for a hearing. If the outcome is not satisfactory to the Member-in-good-standing, the Policy/decision in question may be brought to a church business meeting (see Article 6, Section 3). A Leadership Council Policy/decision may be revised or negated by a majority vote of Church Members-in-good-standing who are present at any regularly called business meeting of the church.

SECTION 4 - COMMITTEES

A Nominating Committee shall be assembled annually by Leadership Council. The Nominating Committee will manage nominations of Officers and Members-at-large. Vacant Leadership Council positions will be published and the recommendation of names will be solicited from the congregation. Nominations for all positions shall be presented for election at the annual meeting.

A Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be formed by Leadership Council whenever one is needed to seek out a Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor Search Committee's recommendation will constitute a nomination. They shall recommend only one candidate at a time. The Leadership Council shall appoint three of its elected Members-at-large and four additional church members to form a representative cross-section of the congregation. The Chairperson shall be appointed by Leadership Council and shall make timely progress reports to Leadership Council, to whom the Chairperson shall be responsible.

ARTICLE 10 – SENIOR PASTOR

Note: At any place the title Senior Pastor is used in these bylaws, the title Lead Pastor may be substituted with the same meaning. (*Bylaw Amendment adopted 1/29/12)

The Senior Pastor shall be the executive leader of the church, providing administrative and spiritual leadership to the work of the church. He shall be ultimately responsible for:

- Proclamation of the gospel
- Services of worship
- Administration of the sacraments
- Overall spiritual welfare of the church.
- Assembling, leading and dismissing (dismissal with Leadership Council assent) the Management Team (see Article 11)
- Selecting and removing non-Management Team paid staff, within the constraints of the budget authorization (dismissal with Leadership Council assent) **(*Bylaw Amendment adopted 5/22/05)**
- Selecting, reviewing, re-directing and removing volunteers **(*Bylaw Amendment adopted 5/22/05)**
- Membership concerns (see Article 5)
- Leading the church in the achievement of its vision and purpose within the parameters of the Bylaws and Leadership Council's Governing Policies

The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Leadership Council and accountable to it and ultimately responsible to the church as a whole.

The Senior Pastor shall be a Member of this church by virtue of his call. He shall be called at a regular or special business meeting of the church. He shall be called by a two-thirds vote of * those members present and voting. **(*Bylaw Amendment adopted 10/10/01)**. His call shall be for an indefinite period of time, with a minimum of six weeks notice required by the church or Senior Pastor for termination of his pastoral services. His written resignation shall be submitted to the Leadership Council and acted on at any regular or special business meeting of the church called for that purpose.

Any charges against the Senior Pastor shall be submitted in writing to the Leadership Council. If, after due investigation, deliberation, and prayer, the Leadership Council determines that he errs in doctrine or conduct (see Article 5, Section 3), they shall direct the Clerk to call a special meeting of the church to consider the charges. It is also suggested that the Leadership Council and the church seek counsel from the denomination (Conservative Congregational Christian Conference) and/or pastors of local evangelical churches in fellowship with this church.

ARTICLE 11 – MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Senior Pastor appoints Management Team Members, with Leadership Council approval, and leads the Management Team that may include:

1. paid Pastoral Staff
2. paid non-pastoral staff
3. unpaid Ministry Leaders

Each Management Team Member shall meet the Scriptural qualifications of leadership in the church and have spiritual gifts, experience and/or training appropriate to the areas assigned. Management Team Members are appointed for one year. Management Team Members will be reviewed annually by the Senior Pastor. All Management Team Members shall be confirmed at the annual meeting.

New Management Areas shall be reviewed for Leadership Council approval when the Management Team appointment is submitted for approval. A new Management Area and its Leader should receive Leadership Council approval before confirmation at the Annual Meeting.

The Management Team shall manage ministry within the parameters of the Bylaws and Leadership Council's Governing Policies. It is the Management Team's responsibility to support, coach, and equip individual Team Leaders to lead their teams to do the work of ministry, including the day-to-day operations of the church.

ARTICLE 12 – MINISTRY TEAMS

Ministry Teams shall be formed to do the work of ministry including the day-to-day operations of the church. A Team may be formed for a short-term project and shall be dismissed when the project is completed.

Team Leaders shall be selected according to spiritual maturity, spiritual gifts, passion, skills and experience. They shall be accountable to a designated Management Team Member. They shall serve for one year. Upon acceptable review, a Team Leader may continue to serve for another year.

ARTICLE 13 – AMENDMENTS

Amendment to the bylaws of this church may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of Church Members-in-good standing who are present at any regularly called business meeting of the church, provided members have been sent communication concerning such amendments at least ten days prior to the meeting. All rules and bylaws go into effect when adopted, unless otherwise stated at the time, and all other conflicting bylaws of the church are thereby repealed.

ARTICLE 14 - VALIDATION

The ratification of these Bylaws by two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a duly called business meeting of the church makes null and void any previous bylaws and amendments.

Also included:

APPENDIX A: organizational plan (attached).

APPENDIX B:

- Apostle's Creed
- Nicean Creed
- Original Covenant of this church adopted 1735 (attached).