

**Hope United Church of Christ
Constitution and Bylaws
(Last Revised April 2011)**

The Constitution

Article I. Name and Location

The name of this church, whose place of worship is located at 6273 Eichelberger Street at Tamm Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri, shall be Hope United Church of Christ.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to celebrate the sacraments, to promote and practice Christian fellowship and unity within this congregation and the church universal; to serve humanity and to strive for justice and peace.

Article III. Polity

Section 1. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the constitution and bylaws of the United Church of Christ relating to local churches.

Section 2. The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs as set forth in the Bylaws. Although this congregation is not subject to the authority of any ecclesiastical body, it participates in a covenantal fellowship in its membership in the St. Louis Association and the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Section 3. This church is incorporated under the laws of the state of Missouri, as a not-for-profit corporation within the State, and is, therefore, subject to its laws.

Article IV. Faith and Covenant

Section 1. This church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. It acknowledges as sisters and brothers 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 affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among Reformed Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion.

Section 2. This church affirms the following expressions of our faith, not as tests, but as testimonies to those beliefs commonly held and cherished:

A. The Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ

1. Robert V. Moss adapted version, 1977.
2. Doxological version, voted by General Synod, 1986.

B. The Apostles' Creed

Article V. Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any duly called congregational meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present. Written notice of any proposed amendment(s) shall have been made two weeks prior to the meeting.

Bylaws

Article I. Membership

Section 1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been baptized and confirmed or made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior at a regular worship service, or in extraordinary circumstances, such as illness, infirmity, or some other occasion approved by the pastor(s) in consultation with the Church Council.

Section 2. Members shall pledge themselves to participate in the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion; to share in the life and work of the church; to contribute to its support and benevolence with time and money, and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the members and the community.

Section 3. Members of the church shall consist of those persons who are formally received into fellowship after a vote by the Church Council and who accept the covenant:

- A. upon presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer from other Christian churches; or,
- B. if letters are not available, by reaffirmation of faith; or,
- C. by affirmation of faith and baptism if not previously baptized; or,
- D. if a person does not wish to sever membership permanently in another church, such persons shall be known and carried on the roll as associate members. They shall not be reported on the annual UCC yearbook report. They shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of membership and be subject to all the responsibilities of regular members. Only members or associate members may serve as officers of this church or on the Church Council.

Section 4. The membership roll will be reviewed annually by the pastor(s) in consultation with the Church Council. Members who have attended and/or participated in Hope's mission through service or financial contribution within the last year will be considered *active members*. Those who do not, will be considered *inactive members*. The pastor(s), in consultation with the Church Council, may grant exception for active members who make such requests. Reasons for exceptions would include health problems, financial crises, difficult family situations.

Section 5. The *inactive members* list shall be reviewed annually by pastor(s), in consultation with the Church Council, and after appropriate inquiry, inactive members may be removed by Council vote from the church rolls. Inactive members shall always be welcome in worship and church life and shall be encouraged to become active again. Only active members will be reported in the membership numbers sent to the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the UCC, and to the national offices of the United Church of Christ.

Section 6. Termination of membership shall be subject to the following principles:

- A. Any member who desires a letter of transfer to another church is entitled to receive it upon authorization of the Church Council. Issuance of said letter terminates membership.
- B. Any member who, for reasons sufficient to himself or herself, desires in writing, to terminate membership without removal to another church may be allowed to do so and granted a letter of release.

Article II. Governing Body

The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled in church meeting. The vote of a majority of members present at a meeting duly called shall be the action of the church, except in matters relating to the purchase, sale, mortgage, lease or transfer of real property of the church, and the calling of a minister, in which cases action shall require a two-thirds affirmative vote of those present and voting. A quorum shall consist of fifty voting members.

Article III. Congregational Meetings

Section 1. The official year of the church shall be from January 1 through December 31.

Section 2. It is the prerogative of the congregation at the Annual Meeting or special meetings to decide the annual budget, buying and selling of property, building projects, extensive repairs of church property, or policies of the congregation, changes in the constitution and bylaws, and the calling of a pastor. For the transaction of all other business, the administration of the church is entrusted to the Church Council.

Section 3. At least fourteen (14) days notice shall be given all members of the congregation of the date, time, and place of all congregational meetings. In the case of a special meeting, the notice shall set forth the purpose(s) for which the meeting is called.

Section 4. All members shall have the right to vote in all congregational meetings.

Section 5. Fifty (50) members shall constitute a quorum for the convening of any meeting of the congregation except as stated in ARTICLE X, Section 4.

Section 6. All matters brought before the congregation shall be decided by a simple majority of those voting, unless otherwise specified herein. Voting may be by voice vote, a show of hands or by written paper ballots. A written ballot shall be taken when so requested by any member present.

Section 7. The Annual Congregational Meeting shall be called by the Church Council and held at the church facility for the purpose of transacting necessary church business.

- A. The Annual Meeting of the church shall normally be held in the month of November, and shall require written notification of the church membership at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.
- B. The outreach and operating budgets shall be approved at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Section 8. Special meetings of the church may be called by the Church Council or by a petition to the Council signed by not fewer than twenty-five voting members. The Church Council shall call such meetings within thirty (30) days of its receipt of the petition. All special meetings shall require written notice to the membership and be limited to the purpose(s) stated in the request. The Church Council shall fix the date and time of all special meetings which shall be held at the church facility.

Article IV. Officers of the Congregation

Section 1. The officers of the church shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

Section 2. They shall be elected to one year terms by the Church Council at its first regularly-scheduled meeting in the new year.

Section 3. The President shall preside at the annual meeting, duly called special meetings and meetings of the Church Council.

Section 4. The Vice President shall preside at any meetings of the church or Council from which the President is absent. The Vice President shall also serve as Chairperson of the Nominating Ministry.

Section 5. The Secretary shall keep a careful record of all meetings of the church and Church Council and shall carry on official correspondence for the church or the Church Council. Permanent record of official documents and correspondence will be kept in the church office.

Section 6. The Assistant Secretary shall serve as record-keeper at all meetings of the church or Church Council from which the Secretary is absent.

Section 7. The Treasurer shall give oversight to all the church's funds and record keeping and interpret the church's financial situation and activities to the Church Council in monthly written and verbal financial reports. S/he shall be an ex officio member of the Finance and Insurance Ministry.

Section 8. The Assistant Treasurer shall be conversant in the church's finances, with the ability to act as treasurer in the absence of the treasurer. His/her duties will be determined in cooperation with the treasurer and financial administrator. S/he shall be an ex officio member of the Finance and Insurance Ministry.

Article V. The Church Council and Ministries

Section 1. The Church Council shall be the executive body of the church, elected by the congregation. It shall be composed of the called pastor(s) and 12 other members. Church Council members shall be elected for a period of three years, four members to be elected each year. Church Council members' terms may be renewed for a second term, after which, a year off Church Council is required.

A. Church Council responsibilities: The Church Council shall meet monthly and at such other times as might be necessary in order to:

1. Elect from among its members a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary.
2. Appoint such Ministries or persons as it may deem necessary for the accomplishment of its tasks and goals mandated by the congregation.
3. Coordinate the policy and programs of each officer and Ministry and see that each carries out its respective duties and give direction when needed.
4. Employ salaried personnel.
5. Approve an Annual Budget for presentation to the congregation at the annual meeting of the congregation.
6. Be responsible for financial transactions of the church.
7. Appoint a Pastoral Search Ministry Team.
8. Approve the reception and termination of memberships.
9. Remove a member of the Church Council for good and sufficient reasons.
10. Church Council Ministry liaisons are members of the Church Council who serve as supportive participants or members of assigned Ministry, participating in Ministry projects/events. They also serve as communicators between Ministries and Church Council, bringing Ministry reports, motions, and proposals to Church Council and sharing Church Council information and instructions with Ministries.

B. Church Council member responsibilities: Members of the Church Council, having been duly elected from the congregation, are obligated by their acceptance of a position on that Church Council to faithfully carry out the duties and responsibilities of that position.

Section 2. Ministries: Each Ministry shall be responsible for carrying out the duties and responsibilities described below. Standing Ministries shall submit monthly reports (or as they meet) of all activities and decisions to the Church Council, prepare an annual written report for the Congregational Annual Report, and submit an annual budget proposal to the Budget Ministry. In order to preserve the church's 501(C) 3 tax exempt status, all Ministry budgets shall be accounted within the congregation's operating budget.

Members of standing Ministries are nominated for three-year terms (renewable without limitation), and elected at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation each November. Standing Ministries shall seek Church Council approval when requiring funds beyond approved budgets or adding members during the year.

New standing Ministries may be formed by church members in conjunction with appropriate staff and with the approval of Church Council. Existing standing Ministries can be dissolved as deemed appropriate by Ministry itself in conjunction with appropriate staff and Church Council.

Each ministry will be divided into two parts. First part is the Leadership Team who are nominated for three years and second part is a Support Team, which includes interested individuals who serve at will.

Standing Ministries:

Building and Property Ministry: responsible for the care, operation, use and maintenance of the church facilities. Because of its unique need to respond to unanticipated maintenance items, maintenance items that exceed \$5,000 require Church Council approval.

Church and Ministry Ministry: responsible for supporting staff relationships, In-Care members, and Eden intern.

Educational Ministries Ministry: responsible for educational programs for all ages, as well as all children's activities (education, fellowship, and mission).

Finance and Insurance Ministry: is responsible for overseeing the financial investments and insurance policies of the congregation.

Hospitality Ministry: responsible for Sunday morning fellowship hour, membership bulletin boards, new members' receptions.

Outreach Ministry: responsible for development and promotion of outreach/mission efforts of the congregation, including management of Outreach Budget, special UCC offerings, and various mission projects.

Special Events Ministry: responsible for coordinating a variety of congregational events geared toward increasing fellowship among members.

Stewardship Ministry: responsible for education and interpretation of stewardship issues throughout each year, culminating in a program each fall.

Worship and Liturgical Arts Ministry: responsible for administration of various elements of worship services, including music ministry, sacrament preparation, ushers, acolytes, liturgists, conference call and liturgical arts. In addition, the ministry offers seasonal congregational activities related to worship and artistic fields.

Time-limited Ministries or task forces can be established by church members in conjunction with staff and with the approval of the Church Council.

Article VI. Nominations, Elections, and Appointments of Church Council Members, Ministry Members, and Delegates

Section 1. Nominations

- A. The Church Council shall appoint a Nominating Ministry headed by the Vice President of Church Council.
- B. The Nominating Ministry shall fill all active Church Council, Ministry, and Delegate openings, with support and advice from each Ministry.
- C. The recommendations of the Nominating Ministry, after having been approved by the Church Council, shall be available for review in the written annual report.
- D. All members nominated for vacancies on the Church Council must have membership of at least two (2) months before the start of the term of service. Non members are eligible to serve on Ministries.

Section 2. Elections

- A. Time of Election: Elections shall be held at the Annual Meeting.
- B. Election by Contest: If more than four lay members have been nominated, those nominations shall be subject to election by ballot. The four nominees receiving the greatest number of votes shall be declared elected by the President.

Section 3. The Church Council shall fill any Church Council, Ministry, or Delegate vacancies until the next Congregation Meeting, as needed.

ARTICLE VII. Pastor(s)

Section 1. The Pastor(s) shall be elected by the congregation for an indefinite term.

Section 2. In the election of a Pastor, the Pastoral Search Ministry shall nominate one candidate at a time. The congregation shall vote by written ballot at a congregation meeting. If elected, the candidate shall be called to the office of Pastor and Teacher of the Congregation according to the form prescribed by the St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Section 3. To dissolve the covenant between Pastor and the congregation, a three (3) month written notice shall be given by either Pastor or congregation, setting forth the reason or reasons for such action. The above three (3) month period is negotiable between Pastor and Church Council.

Section 4. Duties of the Pastor(s): The Pastor shall perform all such duties as belong to the office of Pastor and Teacher in the United Church of Christ (see Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ). A specific job description for each Pastor is established by Pastor and Church and Ministry ministry, for annual review and updating.

Section 5. Rights of Pastor(s): Each Pastor is a voting member of the Church Council and congregation and an ex officio member of all Ministries and organizations. As long as each Pastor holds that position, no other minister shall perform any religious ceremony in the church without consent of the Pastor(s). The Pastor's(s) salary and benefits shall be paid promptly.

Section 6. The Pastor(s), as in the case of all staff, shall comply with the regulations of the congregation's adopted Safe Church Policy.

ARTICLE VIII. Organizations

Groups that are not standing or temporary Ministries (social, sports, cultural, devotional) shall be responsible to the Church Council. To fully reflect the ministry of the church, they shall be invited to report annually in writing to the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting. As with Ministries, in order to preserve the church's 501(C) 3 tax exempt status, they may not hold funds and/or maintain financial accounts apart from the church's operating budget. It shall be the privilege and responsibility of all organizations of the church to support in every way the ministry and mission of the church.

ARTICLE IX. Property

Section 1. The congregation may, in its corporate name, hold, purchase, and receive title by gift, grant, or any other conveyance of and to any property, real or personal, with power to mortgage, sell, or convey the same, as authorized by the Statutes and Laws of the State of Missouri.

Section 2. Use of the church property by individuals or organizations outside of the church must be authorized as provided for by the Church Council. Fees for such use and their allocation shall be established by the Church Council.

ARTICLE X. Endowment Trust Account

Section 1. The intent of the endowment Trust Account is to provide a perpetual fund consisting of a \$25,000 principal amount that shall be increased by additional deposits and one-third of the yearly interest generated by its investment. This fund shall not be used for any other purpose than to perpetuate itself and increase in value.

Section 2. The Treasurer shall invest this fund in accordance with recommendations of a Finance and Insurance Ministry that are approved by the Church Council, and the progress of the investment shall be accounted for in the monthly financial reports to the Church Council and to the congregation at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3. The fund shall be reviewed annually by the Finance and Insurance Ministry, and the propriety of the investment shall be assessed and reported to the Church Council along with recommendations for future investment procedure. The Treasurer of the Church Council shall in turn report the status of the fund and any recommendations adopted to the congregation at the annual meeting for its approval.

Section 4. Any exception to the intent of this Article shall require a congregational meeting. A favorable written vote of two-thirds of those present is required.

Article XI. Amendments

The Constitution and Bylaws may be amended at any regular or specially called meeting of the congregation provided, however, that a notice of such proposed amendment shall have been submitted in writing to all voting members of the church at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting. In order to become effective, all amendments to the Constitution must receive a two-thirds (2/3) majority of all votes cast at such meeting and must be further approved as required by the laws of the State. All amendments to the Bylaws shall require a majority vote of all votes cast at such meeting.