

**THE CONSTITUTION OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - RIVER FALLS, WI INC.
AS REWRITTEN AND APPROVED ON FEBRUARY 7, 2016**

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, in 1855 pioneering residents established the First Congregational Church of Greenwood and adopted a Constitution, and

WHEREAS, in 1867 this church became a legally constituted body as the Congregational Church with papers filed with the Pierce County Register of Deeds, and

WHEREAS, this church joined in the 1931 merger of the Congregational and Christian Churches, forming the Congregational Christian Church national denomination, and

WHEREAS, this church in November 1960 by vote of members joined the United Church of Christ, the national denomination formed from the 1957 merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church, and

WHEREAS, this church was incorporated on January 5, 2015 as the First Congregational United Church of Christ – River Falls, WI Inc.

NOW THEREFORE, We, the members of this Church, recognizing our unity in Christ, and our common practices in the Christian faith, desiring to express our fellowship in worship and work, knowing our spiritual needs, being mindful of our Christian privileges and obligations, and wishing to observe orderly cooperation, do ordain and establish this constitution.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church shall be First Congregational United Church of Christ - River Falls, WI Inc.,
110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

ARTICLE II. MISSION

The mission of this church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God and in making God's will dominant in the lives of persons, individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings, death, and living presence of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE III. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

SECTION 1. This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head, and finds in the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by the Divine Spirit through reason, faith and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline.

SECTION 2. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation granted it January 5, 2015 by the State of Wisconsin under Ch. 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, repealed and recreated by the 1997 Wisconsin Act 79 and subject to taxation as a 501(c)3 organization.

SECTION 3. This church is not bound by any ecclesiastical judicatory beyond itself, but accepts its covenant relationships with the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, The Northwest Association of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ.

SECTION 4. Should the United Church of Christ ever modify its structure or merge with any other denomination or church, this church reserves to itself the right to determine its future relationship with the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE IV. DOCTRINE

This church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of his/her own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. We accept the Statements of Faith approved by the General Synods of the United Church of Christ. We accept these Statements of Faith, not as a test of faith but as an expression of the spirit in which Christians interpret the Word of God.

**United Church Of Christ
Statement Of Faith In The Form Of A Doxology**

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant, faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service to others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen

ARTICLE V. COVENANT

We acknowledge as the sole head of the United Church of Christ, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of men and women and acknowledge as brothers and sisters in Christ all who share in this confession. We look to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper the creative and redemptive work of the Church in the world. We claim as our own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. We affirm the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teachings of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, we recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

SECTION 1. WORSHIP

a. Services of Worship. Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday except when temporarily suspended by vote of the church.

b. The Sacraments. The sacrament of Holy Communion may be celebrated regularly. Other services of Communion may be held as the need arises. Baptism of adults and children shall be administered at such time as the Minister(s) or in his/her absence, the Board of Deacons, may appoint.

c. Other Services. Other services may be held as determined by the Minister(s) or the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1.

This church will welcome all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and whose purpose is to live according to Christ's law of love. No matter who people are or where they are on their spiritual journeys, they are welcome. The members of this church shall be persons who publicly declare a desire to be part of this fellowship and are in sympathy with its spirit, purpose and mission as reflected in the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, this Church's Mission Statement and the sacrament of baptism.

SECTION 2.

The two classes of membership shall be active and associate members.

(See also Article I of the By-Laws)

ARTICLE VII. LAY AND ORDAINED OFFICERS & ELECTED AGENTS

SECTION 1. ELECTED LAY OFFICERS AND AGENTS

The elected lay officers of this church are the Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, Secretary, and Treasurer. Elected agents are the representatives to the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ and members of the Nominating Committee.

SECTION 2. OFFICERS

The ordained officer of this church is the Senior Minister. The lay officers are the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer. See article IV of the By-laws for roles and responsibilities.

SECTION 3. ELECTED AGENTS

a. Association and Conference Delegates. The church shall elect for terms of one year the number of delegates to the Association and Conference to which the church is entitled by each body. Any church member may serve as delegate to both the Association and Conference. In the event the elected delegate is unable to attend the necessary meetings, the Church Council shall be responsible for securing a substitute. Delegates shall attend meetings uninstructed except by vote of a meeting of the church.

b. Nominating Committee Members. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members elected at the annual meeting. Members serve for three years with a subset of the membership elected annually.

ARTICLE VIII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SECTION I. MEMBERSHIP

The Executive Committee shall include persons holding the following positions: The Senior Minister, Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer.

SECTION II. PURPOSE

The Executive Committee is authorized to act on behalf of the church when a meeting of church council is not possible and circumstances require immediate actions and or decisions.

ARTICLE IX. BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

SECTION 1. THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council shall be the governing body of the church. It shall be the duty of the Church Council to coordinate the total program of the church, to observe and study the church program with a view to its improvement, and to submit recommendations regarding the general program of the church to the congregation at the annual meeting or duly called special meetings of the congregation.

The Church Council shall act for the church in matters not dealt with by other boards or committees, always assuming that unless such action is taken with practical unanimity, it must have the confirmation of the church.

SECTION 2. RULES

See Bylaws, Article V, Section 1 for rules governing boards and committees.

ARTICLE X. FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

SECTION 1. OFFERINGS

The First Congregational United Church of Christ – River Falls, WI Inc. relies upon the free will offerings of its members and others to support the day to day operations of the church and its ministries within and outside of the community. The philosophy of the church is to encourage all members to tithe.

SECTION 2. SPECIAL GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

Periodically members, friends, family of members and others will make special gifts and bequests to the church. The philosophy of the church is to encourage the Christian stewardship of accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. When received, all special gifts and bequests will be received and managed in accordance with the Investment Policy Guidelines.

SECTION 3. FINANCIAL PROCESSES

It is the responsibility of the Church Council along with guidance and recommendations from the Board of Trustees to establish the operating budget for the church. The Board of Trustees shall include in the budget of expenses of the church all normal and routine expenses required to carry on the day to day operations of the church, all assessments and required contributions in support of the General Synod and the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ and full support of the Annuity Fund for the Minister(s) pension(s).

No part of the net earnings of this church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributed to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II hereof. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Constitution the church shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on:

- a. By a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law)
- b. By a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (3) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law)

SECTION 4. ENDOWMENT FUND

- a) A fund created by the congregation, for the purpose of receiving donations, gifts, subscriptions and bequests, the principal of which, excepting as hereinafter provided, shall be held in trust in perpetuity and invested by the Investment Committee in accordance with the mission and purpose of the committee and the church.
- b) All income and principal of the fund, which is expended, shall be used solely in support and maintenance of worship, religious activities, and community services of the First Congregational United Church of Christ - River Falls, WI Inc. Neither the principal nor the income of such endowment may be used for carrying on of political propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The endowment principal or income shall not be used to participate in, or intervene in, (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.
- c) The endowment fund shall not be used to carry on activities not permitted to be carried on by a religious organization exempt from federal income tax under any present (or future) provision of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code and the State of Wisconsin tax law, or by any religious society, contributions to which are deductible, in whole or in part, under any present (or future) provision of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code and State of Wisconsin tax law.
- d) In the event of dissolution of this endowment fund at any time, all assets of the endowment shall belong to the First Congregational United Church of Christ – River Falls, WI Inc. of 110 North Third Street, River Falls, Wisconsin 54022.

- e) In the event, at any time, that distributions from this endowment fund or on its behalf would disqualify the First Congregational United Church of Christ - River Falls, WI Inc., from being a tax-exempt religious organization, then distributions shall be withheld until such time as such disqualification would not occur or until an alternative distribution to fulfill the religious purposes has been found. When no federal or state law any longer provides such benefits, then the Church Council shall so direct the affairs and distributions of the endowment as to achieve the most benefits for the First Congregational United Church of Christ - River Falls, WI Inc., as are available, in their discretion. The provisions are intended to comply with all requirements of any U.S. tax law or any State of Wisconsin tax law necessary to make this a tax-exempt religious endowment fund.
- f) Management and investment of the Endowment Fund is the responsibility of the Investment Committee.
- g) Resolve further that these resolutions shall be and hereby are made a covenant and agreement on the part of the congregation, with every person who shall make a donation, gift, subscription, bequest or promise to make a gift, donation, or bequest to the Endowment Fund.
- h) It is resolved that a minimum value of \$800,000 be maintained in the Endowment Fund. This minimum value cannot be reduced except by approval of two thirds of the congregation attending a called congregational meeting.
- i) Expenditures from the Endowment Fund will be made in the following way. The Fund in its totality will be valued as of December 31 of each year. A minimum of four percent (4%) of that valuation will then be dispersed to the Endowment Grant Committee. This percentage cannot be reduced without a recommendation of the Investment Committee and the action of a called congregational meeting. A recommendation to increase this percentage in any year can be made by the Investment Committee and submitted to the Church Council with justification for approval. It shall be incumbent on the Investment Committee to transfer said funds to the Endowment Grant Committee when the results of the investments have been realized.
- j) An Endowment Grant Committee consisting of six (6) members, each serving a three-year term, shall be appointed by the church council with recommendation from the Nominating Committee. Its members are to serve independent of the Investment Committee and for staggered terms; i.e. one new committee member every year.
- k) The Endowment Grant Committee shall entertain proposals from various committees and/or church officers periodically to approve or disapprove the grant applications.
- l) The Endowment Grant Committee shall report periodically to the Church Council and annually to the congregation as to the amounts and the purposes of all grants awarded.

SECTION 5. OTHER FUNDS

The Church Council with recommendation of the Investment Committee is responsible for the creation and dissolution of funds for designated purposes. The management and investment of such funds will be the responsibility of the Investment Committee. A designated fund, when approved, will be created with a specific purpose and mission clearly defined and written into the operating principles of the fund.

ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of this church, the Council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of this church, dispose of all of the assets of the church exclusively for the purposes of the church in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law) as the Council shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of the County in which the principal office of the church is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution, excepting Articles I through V, may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote of those voting at any regular or special meeting, provided that a notice specifying the time of the meeting and the proposed amendment shall have been given from the pulpit, printed in the Sunday bulletin and sent by electronic and/or written notice on the two Sundays immediately preceding said meeting. Articles I through V may be amended only by a two-thirds majority vote of those voting at the annual meeting. The proposed amendment shall have been laid before the church in writing not less than one month previously, having been read before the church on three consecutive Sundays preceding such annual meeting. Copies shall have been made available to members of the church.

ARTICLE XIII. NULLIFICATION OF PRIOR CONSTITUTION

This Constitution shall supersede and take the place of heretofore existing articles of the corporation, Constitution, and amendments thereto.