

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
OF THE
WARREN UNITED CHURCH

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As Approved At The Annual Meeting - January 1993 and amended
 IN 1995,2000, and 2005.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
OF THE
WARREN UNITED CHURCH

ARTICLE I HISTORY AND PREAMBLE:

The history of the Warren United Church is not the history of a single church but of several different denominations and a building society.

On January 19, 1838, the Warren River Meeting House Society was organized, composed of Universalists, two groups of Methodists, Congregationalists, and Baptists. On March 6, 1838, land was deeded to the inhabitants of the town for the purpose of building a meeting house. Completed in 1839, the building was used by each denomination for worship, with use proportioned according to the amount of money each had raised for the building project.

On July 23, 1885, the Free Will Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists joined to form the United Church in Warren, to be affiliated with the Congregational Conference. The covenant which bound them together stands to this day.

The church was incorporated under the laws of Vermont on February 18, 1918.

As no copies of pre-existing by-laws could be located, by-laws were adopted on November 20, 1977. At that time, the name was changed to the Warren United Church.

The latest revision has been developed to bring the written by-laws into conformity with the size, abilities and commitments of the present congregation. These by-laws set forth the manner in which the Warren United Church, hereinafter referred to as "This Church", shall be governed.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE:

The present members of this Church share the objectives which the founding members set forth in the Articles of Agreement, adopted July 23, 1885.

"We, the subscribers, being as we believe, sincere disciples of Jesus Christ, and having made public profession of our faith in him, do hereby unite ourselves in one body as a Christian Church, to be known as the United Church of Warren.

The objects for which we thus unite ourselves are, the honor of God, the support of public worship, the observance of the Christian ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the growth of ourselves and all who shall hereafter unite with us in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the preaching of the gospel to the world.

We shall as soon as possible, ask the fellowship of the Christian churches of the Congregational order, and will conform in doctrine and practice as a church to their established order so far as shall be consistent with duty as made known to us."

ARTICLE III

FAITH AND COVENANT:

Section 1 - This Church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teaching 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 conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. From time to time, various statements such as those quoted below may be used by this church to express its faith but may not be used to judge the orthodoxy of individual persons.

- A. "We do truly repent of our sins; we heartily receive Jesus Christ as our crucified Savior and risen Lord; we consecrate ourselves and all that we have unto God, and our lives unto His service; we accept His Word as our Law and His Spirit as our Comforter and Guide; and, trusting in His grace to confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, we promise to do God's holy will, and to walk with this Church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ." - United Church in Warren Covenant, 1885
- B. "We covenant with the Lord and one with another and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his blessed word of truth." - Salem Covenant of 1629
- C. United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the Form of a Doxology.

Section 2 - The government of This Church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, cherishing the principle of local autonomy.

Section 3 - Although This Church is not subject to the authority of any ecclesiastical body, it accepts the obligations of mutual counsel, cooperation, and support involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ, and pledges itself to share in the common aims and work of that body as from time to time seems appropriate. Membership in the United Church of Christ shall be effected on the part of This Church by maintaining standing in the Washington Association of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ or its successor organization.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP:

Section 1 - At any Sunday morning worship service designated by the Deacons, This Church may receive into membership, candidates who have been recommended by the Pastor and the Deacons.

Section 2 - Candidates for membership shall be those persons who:

- A. Have been baptized;
- B. Freely and willingly accept as their own, the broad outlines of the faith of This Church;
- C. Have been presented for membership by the Deacons, submitting as support for their membership application evidence of their confession of faith, confirmation, or reaffirmation of faith, or a letter of dismissal and recommendation from another Christian

church.

- D. Have publicly entered into a Covenantal relationship with the members of This Church.

Section 3 - It shall be the continuing responsibility of all members to keep the Covenant by attending worship services, helping in the work of the Church and contributing to its support.

Section 4 - A person who wishes to participate in the life of This Church while maintaining membership in another church may be received as an associate member by the same process as regular active members are received. Associate members shall have all the rights and duties of regular members except the right to a letter of transfer to another church.

Section 5 - Members who, for a period of two years, have not attended or communicated with This Church or contributed to its support, may be considered to be inactive and may have their names moved from the active to the inactive membership list by the Clerk, after consultation with the Pastor, the Deacons, and the Clerk. Inactive members shall be ineligible to serve as officers of This Church, shall be denied the privilege of voting at the meetings of This Church and shall not be reported for statistical purposes. Inactive members who wish to be restored to active status may apply to the Deacons to be reinstated with their approval. A decision shall be made within one month.

Section 6 - A member may be released from his or her covenant with This Church by:

- A. Written request of the member;
- B. Written request of the member for a letter of dismissal and recommendation to another church; or
- C. Remaining on the inactive membership list for five consecutive years; all subject to the approval of the Deacons, who shall notify the member involved prior to the action, and the Clerk of the Church.

ARTICLE V OFFICERS AND DUTIES:

PASTOR

- A. The Pastor is charged to lead and guide the congregation, with the assistance of the Board of Deacons, in all matters relating to its spiritual welfare and growth, and shall enter into the life of the wider community as a Christian witness. Particulars of the Pastor's duties, responsibilities and compensation shall be spelled out in the Letter of Call.
- B. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all church boards and committees.
- D. When the office of the Pastor becomes vacant, a Pastoral Search Committee shall be appointed from among the membership by the Church Council. The committee shall recommend the terms of call for a possible candidate for the office of Pastor, to be voted

upon at a meeting called and moderated, as set forth in Article VII.

- D. The committee shall then recommend a candidate for the office of Pastor to the congregation. If a candidate receives a two-thirds vote of those members present at a meeting called for the purpose of selecting a Pastor, such a candidate shall receive a call to become Pastor.
- E. A recognition or installation service for a new Pastor shall be held in accordance with the guidelines established by the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.
- F. The Pastoral relationship may be agreeably dissolved on two months notice by either:
 - 1. The Pastor's accepted resignation
 - 2. Mutual agreement
- G. In the event of conflict or dissatisfaction on the part of either the Pastor or the church:
 - 1. Termination of the terms of call may be considered only after consultation with an executive staff member of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.
 - 2. Termination of the terms of call may occur on two months notice by either:
 - a. The Pastor's resignation
 - b. A two-thirds majority vote of those members present at a duly called special meeting in accordance with Article VII.

MODERATOR

- A. The Moderator shall be a lay-leader of the congregation, elected because of his/her commitment to the Christian faith, wisdom, leadership and sense of justice. The Moderator shall be elected from the active church membership at the annual meeting for a term of one year and may succeed him/herself one time.
- B. The Moderator, as chief lay officer, is elected to serve as a facilitator and coordinator of the church's life and mission.
- C. The Moderator shall serve as chairperson of the Church Council.
- C. The Moderator shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees of the church.
- D. The Moderator shall moderate the meetings of the church as defined in Article VII.

VICE MODERATOR

- A. The Vice Moderator shall assist the Moderator as necessary and fill the role of Moderator in the Moderator's absence.
- B. The Vice Moderator shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year and may succeed him/herself one time.

CLERK

- A. The Clerk is charged to faithfully keep records of the

proceedings of the church, a register of the members with dates and methods of admission and removal, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals, shall issue letters of transfer of membership upon request and issue any other official church correspondence as needed.

- B. The Clerk shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year with no restrictions on succession.

TREASURER

- A. The Treasurer is charged to faithfully keep an accurate record of the financial and investment affairs of the church.
- B. The Treasurer shall receive, record and deposit all monies received by the church and pay church bills.
- C. The Treasurer shall present a financial statement at the annual meeting.
- D. The Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year with no restrictions on succession.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

- A. The Financial Secretary shall assist the Treasurer as necessary.
- B. The Financial Secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year with no restrictions on succession.

AUDITOR

- A. The Auditor is charged to faithfully audit the accounts of the Church and submit a report to the annual meeting.
- B. The Auditor shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year with no restrictions on succession.

HEAD GREETERS

- A. The Head Greeters are charged to provide the greeting needs of The Church according to Guidelines.
- B. One or more Head Greeters shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year and may succeed him/herself one time.

LIBRARIAN / HISTORIAN

- A. The heritage of this church fellowship is of vital importance to itself and this community, as such it deserves to be properly recorded. The library contains valuable resources that are useful to the congregation. A Church Librarian / Historian shall be elected and charged with the responsibility of collecting, organizing and recording historical data and artifacts relevant to this endeavor and with cataloguing and maintaining the library.
- B. The Church Librarian / Historian shall see that all books, reference materials, historical data and artifacts which are church property be properly cataloged and maintained on church

grounds and that they be made available to the congregation.

- C. One or more Church Librarian(s) / Historian(s) shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year with no restrictions on succession.

ARTICLE VI BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

CHURCH COUNCIL

- A. The Church Council shall be the policy making and planning body of The Church. Between congregational meetings it shall be responsible for the ordinary business of The Church and for coordinating the various policies and activities of The Church. The Church Council shall be responsible for church program, staff, finances and any other matters not expressly delegated to any other group or individual or otherwise provided for by the vote of The Church, including the creation and dissolution of committees as needed.
- B. Regular meetings of the Church Council shall be held monthly or when deemed necessary by the Moderator or the Pastor. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the Church Council.
- C. The Church Council shall consist of the following Church officers and committee chairpersons: the Pastor, the Moderator, the Vice Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Deacon Chairperson, the Trustee Chairperson, the Music Director, the Christian Education Chairperson, and the Stewardship and Mission Chairperson. If they are unable to attend a Church Council meeting, the Deacon Chairperson, the Trustee Chairperson, the Christian Education Chairperson, and/or the Stewardship and Mission Chairperson may appoint an alternate member of their committee to attend and vote at any such meeting.

BOARD OF DEACONS

- A. The Board of Deacons shall consist of at least four and up to six members of the Church, evenly divided between men and women to the extent possible. Two or three Deacons shall be elected each year for a two year term and may succeed him/herself for one term.
- B. The Board of Deacons shall serve as a membership committee for the Church. They shall encourage a spirit of invitational evangelism in the Church and community.
- C. The Board of Deacons shall assist in the preparation and administration of the sacraments and shall confer with the Pastor concerning plans for worship services.
- D. The Board of Deacons shall work with the Pastor to enrich the spiritual life of the church.
- E. One member shall be designated to serve as the chairperson of the Board of Deacons and shall serve on the Church Council.
- F. The Board of Deacons shall hold a monthly meeting with special meetings as required.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- A. The Board of Trustees shall consist of three members to be elected for three year terms with one being elected each year. Each may succeed him/herself for one term.
- B. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for maintaining the church's properties and grounds.
- C. The Trustees shall determine the use of the church facilities by groups outside the church's programs.
- D. The Trustees shall provide adequate insurance coverage for all church property.
- E. While the above are the responsibilities of the Trustees, they shall not limit their duties.
- F. One member shall be designated to serve as the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and shall serve on the Church Council.
- G. The Board of Trustees shall meet quarterly with additional special meetings as required.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- A. The Finance Committee is to prepare the budget for the church to be presented to the Church Council for approval before being voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Treasurer shall present the budget to the Congregation at the annual meeting or shall designate a member of the Finance Committee to make the presentation.
- B. Membership of the committee consists of five members, to be elected by the church, consisting of the Treasurer, who is chairperson, the Financial Secretary and three members at large. The term of office for committee members is three years and each may succeed him/herself for one term.
- C. The Treasurer shall represent the Finance Committee on the Church Council, or may designate another member of the Committee to present the monthly report.
- C. Meetings shall be scheduled as required.

STEWARDSHIP AND MISSION COMMITTEE

- A. The Stewardship and Mission Committee's responsibilities include:
 - 1. Conducting the annual stewardship campaign.
 - 2. Providing information on opportunities for supporting special United Church of Christ and ecumenical mission projects.
 - 3. Raising and/or allocating funds for local missions and deciding how the funds will be distributed. The intent is to utilize available funds to provide loans, grants, or assistance, primarily but not exclusively for the spiritual and material needs of residents of the Mad River Valley and members of the Warren United Church.
 - 4. Encouraging responsible use of money, possessions, time and talent according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

5. Fostering opportunities for service and outreach to others.

B. The Stewardship and Mission Committee shall consist of a minimum of five and up to nine members. Members shall be elected for two year terms and may succeed themselves. No more than half of the member's terms shall be scheduled to expire in any given year. A Chairperson shall be elected each year by the committee and shall serve on the Church Council.

C. The Stewardship and Mission Committee shall meet monthly.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A. The Christian Education Committee shall have general responsibility for the educational programs of the church, securing leadership and selecting curriculum. The Committee shall prepare annual budget requests and give direction to the Treasurer in disbursing approved funds budgeted or specifically set aside for Christian education.

B. The Committee shall ideally consist of six members elected by the church, two of whom shall represent youth education interests, two of whom shall represent children's education interests, and two of whom shall represent adult education interests. Members shall be elected for two year terms and may succeed themselves. No more than half of the member's terms shall be scheduled to expire in any given year.

C. The Committee shall elect one of its members as chairperson who shall serve on the Church Council.

D. The Committee shall meet bi-annually, with extra meetings when necessary to prepare for special events.

E. The Christian Education Committee shall oversee the following groups:

1. Nursery - To provide for the care of babies and children under the age of four, during weekly church services. The nursery caregivers shall be drawn from a rotating pool of Church volunteers. The effort should be made to introduce early concepts of Christian education to the older children attending the nursery.

2. Children's Church School - To provide the ministry of our Church to children ages four to fifteen. Our Christian education is based on love and faithfulness. It carefully instructs the faith of our church, is deeply rooted in the Holy Bible and the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith. Bible stories are the core of our teaching. Our goal is that the children may come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, may grow in knowledge and trust in Him, and may come to find Him a source of strength and faith throughout their lives. It is the responsibility of the Christian Education Committee to provide confirmation classes to young people who wish to be confirmed in our church.

3. Youth Group and Adult Education - The Committee, in conjunction with the Pastor and the Deacons, shall be responsible for providing Christian education opportunities,

beyond the Church School, through fellowship, study groups, seminars and other means, by supplying leadership, programs and materials.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

A. The Music Director shall be responsible for the music ministry of the Church including but not limited to the following:

1. To engage an organist or pianist to work with the pastor in developing and implementing the music ministry of the Church.
2. To coordinate all the music programs and secure substitutes for the organist as necessary.
3. To appoint a choir director or any other assistance as may be deemed necessary.
4. To purchase all necessary music supplies and to see that all supplies are properly cared for.
5. To serve on the Church Council.

B. The Music Director is elected by the members of the Church at the annual meeting for a one year term. There is no limit as to how many terms the Music Director may serve.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

A. The Nominating Committee is appointed by the Church Council annually.

B. There shall be no fewer than three members appointed.

C. The committee shall present a recommended slate of officers, board members and committee members at the annual meeting.

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

A. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be responsible for providing an open communications link between the congregation and the Pastor.

B. This committee will consist of three members, the Church Moderator, one selected by the Pastor and one selected by the Church Council.

C. Membership on the committee shall be reviewed annually.

D. Meetings shall be scheduled bi-monthly and more frequently as needed.

EMMA FORD MEMORIAL FUND COMMITTEE

A. The Emma Ford Memorial Fund was created by a gift from the Estate of Emma Ford.

- B. Under the terms of the gift, the Deacons and Trustees are charged with the responsibility for managing and disbursing the funds.
- C. The principles for managing the funds are established in separate written by-laws.

ARTICLE VII CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS:

A. The Annual Meeting

- 1. The Annual Meeting shall be held on or before the last Sunday of January.
- 2. The Annual Meeting shall be warned to the membership in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed date of said meeting.
- 3. Reports of officers and committees shall be given for the previous year, the fiscal year being from January 1 through December 31.
- 4. Officers and standing committee members shall be elected. A slate shall be presented by the Nominating Committee. In addition, nominations for any vacant office shall be accepted from the floor. Any vacancies in officer positions or committee members that occur between annual meetings shall be filled by vote of the Church Council.
- 5. The Annual Meeting shall approve a budget for the ensuing year.

B. SPECIAL MEETINGS

- 1. Special meetings may be called at the request of either the Moderator, the Pastor, the Trustees, or five members of the church who have signed a written application for the same and shall be warned to the membership in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed date of said meeting.
- 2. At the close of any regular worship service the Church may, without any special notice, elect delegates to bodies other than the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Washington Association.
- 3. In order to convene a congregational meeting for the termination of the terms of call of the Pastor, the congregation must vote to convene such a meeting by simple majority vote at a duly called and warned special meeting.

C. PRESIDING OFFICER

Each Congregational Meeting shall be moderated by the church Moderator. If the Vice Moderator is unable to moderate the meeting in the absence of the Moderator, a moderator shall be elected from among the church members in attendance.

D. QUORUM

At all Congregational Meetings a quorum shall be twenty percent of the church membership, except to amend these by-laws, as provided in Article IX.

E. DOCUMENTS

Any document that the congregation is to vote on shall be made available to all members at least two weeks prior to the proposed date of said meeting.

F. OTHER

All Congregational Meetings are to be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VIII DISSOLUTION:

Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interest of which it shall then be possessed including any device, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution shall be transferred to the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS:

This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by submitting the substance of the proposed changes from one or more church members to the membership in writing at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting or duly warned special meeting. Amendments require a two thirds majority vote of forty percent of the members, whether present and voting or by absentee ballot, in order to pass.