

First Congregational Church

Bristol, Rhode Island

(Gathered 1680)

Bylaws

Taken From: November 14, 2004

Printed: December 21, 2009

Revision 07: November 15, 2009

Table of Contents

<u>Location</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
	TABLE OF CONTENTS _____	2
	RECORD OF REVISION _____	3
Article I	NAME _____	4
Article II	OBJECT AND COVENANT _____	4
Article III	POLITY _____	4
Article IV	MEMBERSHIP _____	4
Section 1	Qualifications _____	4
Section 2	Admission _____	4
Section 3	Active Membership _____	5
Section 4	Inactive Members _____	5
Section 5	Associate Membership _____	5
Section 6	Master Listing of Membership Status _____	5
Section 7	Dismission _____	5
Article V	GOVERNING BODY _____	6
Section 1	Annual Meeting _____	6
Section 2	Special Meetings _____	6
Article VI	MINISTER(s) _____	6
Article VII	OFFICERS _____	6
Section 1	Election of Officers _____	6
Section 2	Church Council Chair and Vice Chair _____	7
Section 3	Moderator _____	7
Section 4	Clerk _____	7
Section 5	Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer _____	7
Section 6	Auditors _____	7
Article VIII	CHURCH COUNCIL _____	7
Article IX	ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES _____	8
Section 1	Board of Deacons _____	8
Section 2	Permanent Diaconate _____	9
Section 3	Ushering Committee _____	9
Section 4	Christian Education Committee _____	9
Section 5	Music Committee _____	9
Section 6	Facilities Committee _____	9
Section 7	Historical Properties Committee _____	10
Section 8	Nominating Committee _____	10
Section 9	Hospitality Committee _____	10
Section 10	Flower Committee _____	10
Article X	CONFERENCE DELEGATES _____	10
Article XI	AMENDMENTS _____	11
Article XII	RULES OF ORDER _____	11

Record of Revision

This page will be used to record all changes to the Bylaws authorized by a duly called congregational meeting. Bylaw changes not yet incorporated will be so noted under the Up-Date column. Once the change has been implemented, it will be so noted in the Up-Date column with the signature of the Clerk of the Church.

Date	Sections Impacted	Authorizing Meeting	Up-Date Approved By
<i>2/11/01</i>	<i>Change Hospitality Committee</i>	<i>Congregation 2/11/01</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>2/11/01</i>	<i>Add Cares and Concerns Committee</i>	<i>Congregation 2/11/01</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>10/14/01</i>	<i>Add Outreach Minister, Article VI S2</i>	<i>Congregation 10/14/01</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>10/14/01</i>	<i>Add Personnel Committee, Article XX</i>	<i>Congregation 10/14/01</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>6/16/02</i>	<i>Change Article I, II, III Par234, Article IV Sect.234567</i>	<i>Congregation 6/16/02</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>3/16/03</i>	<i>Change Nominating Committee, Article XX</i>	<i>Congregation 3/16/03</i>	<i>A.F.</i>
<i>11/14/04</i>	<i>Add Trial Reorganization – Attachment A</i>	<i>Congregation 11/14/04</i>	<i>CNC</i>
<i>04/27/08</i>	<i>Revised Article IV, Sections 2 and 3</i>	<i>Congregation 04/27/08</i>	<i>JLRJ</i>
<i>11/15/09</i>	<i>Bylaws revision to incorporate elements of Trial reorganization and align document with current practices</i>	<i>Congregation 11/15/09</i>	<i>JLRJ</i>

ARTICLE I – NAME

This Church is the First Congregational Church in Bristol, a not-for-Profit Corporation organized under the laws of the United States Government and State of Rhode Island. (Corporate ID Number DNP-27228)

ARTICLE II – OBJECT AND COVENANT

The object 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 men and women, individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“We covenant with the Lord and one with an other an 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 Church Covenant, 1629)

The First Congregational Church in Bristol sits as a historic witness in our community. That witness embodies our welcome to those who come in search of God's presence in their lives.

We are a faith community of diverse people whose common ministry is to rejoice in God's love, as well as to heal the brokenness with each other and with God. Responding to that call, we welcome all people, including but not limited to persons of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital standing, physical and mental ability, economic status and family structure into the life, membership, leadership and ministry of this church.

We affirm each person as a child of God, worthy of God's love and our love, and covenant to support one another in our joys, sorrows and spiritual growth. With this historic witness, we invite all people over the threshold of Christ's open door to engage with us in the work of this church in the world.

ARTICLE III – POLITY

1. This Church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ, and it 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 adopted July 4, 1961 relating to local churches.
2. The government of this Church is vested in its members (One vote per member.), who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, as defined in the Bylaws, subject, however, to laws of the State of Rhode Island relating to ecclesiastical corporations.
3. Once a duly called Congregational meeting approves a Bylaws revision, it will be formally attached to a master copy in the church office and recorded on “RECORD OF REVISION” page until it can be incorporated into the master document.
4. Active members may exercise their singular vote in one of two ways. (1) They may vote in person at a duly called meeting of the membership of the church. (2) When they are unable to attend the meeting, they may submit a proxy ballot authorizing an active member attendee to cast their vote in accordance with their desires. All notices of a church meeting, where voting will occur, will include a proxy ballot form which can be submitted if the member is unable to attend the meeting. All proxy ballots must be either mailed or presented to the clerk by the designated member prior to voting.

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications

This Church shall welcome to her membership all those who desire to become members and who confess their faith in Jesus.

Section 2. Admission

Candidates may be admitted to membership on any of the following terms:

- (a) Public confession of their faith in Jesus Christ, and reception of the rite of Baptism.
- (b) Public confession of their faith, and personal confirmation of the Baptismal vows, if previously baptized.

- (c) Presentation of a satisfactory letter of dismissal and recommendation from another church.
- (d) Reaffirmation of their faith, if they, having once been received into membership of a Christian church, are unable for reasons satisfactory to the Deacons to secure letters of dismissal and recommendation.

Application for membership may be made to the Minister or to the Deacons. All candidates, except those who have actually presented letters from other churches, must appear in person at a meeting of the Deacons, and at the discretion of the Board may be examined as to their Christian faith and purpose.

Section 3. Active Membership

An active church member is a member who has chosen to actively participate in the day-to-day activity of the corporate life of the Congregation. Such member is able to vote at any duly called meeting of the Congregation, be nominated and elected an officer of the church, or member or officer of a board or committee, or church delegate.

Section 4. Inactive Members

- (a) Members of the Church who have (a) moved from the parish or (b) who for other reasons have been out of contact with the Church for a period of one year or longer shall be considered for inactive status. Prior to transfer of a member to Inactive Status, they must be visited or contacted, if possible, by either a member of the Board of Deacons or Minister(s) to discuss the possible change in their status. A written report will be submitted to the Deacons reporting any findings during the visitation or contact. The report must have been submitted prior to voting on changing the member's status. If, after the name of an inactive member has been placed on this list, their interest in the Church is reawakened, they may be voted into active membership by the Deacons.
- (b) The names of persons upon the Inactive List shall not be reported for the purpose of the per capita assessments or for any reason either to the denominational offices or to the Church for its reckoning.
- (c) Any person on the Inactive List for five or more years shall be visited or contacted, if possible if special circumstances do not exist, by either a member of the Deacons or a Minister to discuss their possible removal from membership. A written report will be submitted to the Deacons reporting any findings during the visitation or contact. The Deacons shall vote on any recommendation for removal from membership to be acted upon at duly called Congregational meeting.

Section 5. Associate Membership

A person who is a qualified member of another Christian Church who does not choose to terminate such membership may be designated an "Associate Member" with approval of the minister or the deacons. Such a person shall not be entitled to hold elective office, or be appointed a member of the Church Council, the Deacons or the Nominating Committee. An Associate member shall not be elected as Chair of any committee or as a Church Delegate. They will not be entitled to vote at Congregational meetings.

Section 6. Master Listing of Membership Status

It will be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to assure that a master listing of the status of all Active, Inactive, and Associate members is kept current. The church office will maintain the database in accordance with the directions of the Deacons. This database will be reviewed at least once a year in time for the annual stewardship drive to determine whether any individuals listed should have his/her membership status reviewed.

Section 7. Dismissal

A letter of dismissal shall, by vote of the Board of Deacons, be granted to any member of the Church requesting it. The Clerk of the Church shall issue and forward the letter to the Church to which the member is applying for membership.

The governing body of this Church shall be the membership assembled in Church meeting, and led by the Moderator. The vote of a majority of members present or represented by proxy at the meeting shall be the action of the Church. A quorum shall consist of 10% of the active members, present or by proxy.

Section 1. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting, at which a quorum must be present, shall be held on the 2nd Sunday of February at the close of morning worship. Written reports shall be presented by the Minister, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and other officers, councils, boards and committees.

The Treasurer shall present the annual church financial report. The Council shall present the proposed annual budget for the calendar year. Officers shall be elected as the schedule requires in Article VII. An installation of all newly elected officers shall be held during worship on the 3rd Sunday in February. Such other business shall be taken up as may properly come before the annual meeting. Notification of the meeting shall be made from the pulpit and by inclusion in the Church newsletter and Sunday bulletins at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Auditors shall audit the financial accounts of the Church and accounts of the organizations specified by the Council as church organizations requiring annual audit before the annual meeting, and shall certify their correctness and affix their certification and signatures to such accounts and to the annual church financial report. Minutes will be distributed to the Congregation within one month after the adjournment of the Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings, at which a quorum must be present, may be called by the Council at any time with notification of one week from the pulpit and an announcement in the weekly bulletin. Special meetings for extraordinary business, at which a quorum must be present, may be called by the Council upon petition of congregation members with notification of two weeks from the pulpit and advertising in the weekly bulletin.

ARTICLE VI – Minister(s)

The Minister(s) shall become a member(s) of the Church and shall be chosen and perform duties in accordance with Congregational usage. The Senior Minister, under the guidance of the Deacons, shall be accountable for the spiritual ministries of the church. The Senior Minister, working under the guidance of the Church Council and the Congregation, will be responsible for all supervision and evaluation of the other Minister(s) and Church Secretary. The Senior Minister will submit written evaluations for the other Minister(s) and the Church Secretary to the Church Council annually by July 15th. The Minister(s) shall present a written report of the work of the year at the annual meeting of the church. The Minister(s) shall be a non-voting member(s) ex-officio of all church bodies defined in Article VIII and IX.

Minister(s) shall not resign from office without notifying the Church Council and giving at least a two months notice of intent unless an earlier departure is acceptable to the Church. The Church may dismiss the Minister(s) only by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a meeting called for this purpose. A dismissal shall not become effective until two months after it has been voted unless a shorter period is preferred by the Minister.

ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS

Section 1. Election of Officers

The officers of this Church shall be the Church Council Chair, the Church Council Vice-Chair, the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and two Auditors. The officers shall be elected annually, and shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualified. All officers will be elected for a period of one year. The election of all officers shall be by ballot except that by unanimous consent of the members present they may be chosen by nomination and hand vote.

Section 2. Church Council Chair and Vice Chair

The Church Council Chair shall preside at all business meetings of the Church with authority to sign as such when required to do so by the laws of the State or in execution of such documents as require a signature. The Church

Council Chair and Vice Chair shall be eligible to hold office for no more than three consecutive terms without an interval of at least one year before reelection.

- (a) The Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Church Council Chair in the absence of the Church Council Chair, and such other duties as may from time to time be delegated by the Church Council Chair.
- (b) The Church Council Chair shall be non-voting, ex-officio member of all other boards and committees of the Church.

Section 3. Moderator

The Moderator shall preside and facilitate all congregational meetings in accordance with Robert's Rules.

Section 4. Clerk

The Clerk shall serve as Secretary at annual meetings of the Church and record the proceedings. The Clerk shall serve as Recording Secretary of the Council, as a non-voting member, and record all business transactions. The Clerk shall maintain record of increases and decreases in Church membership, marriages, baptisms, and funerals; and shall submit a report to the annual meeting. The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining the official copy of the Bylaws of the First Congregational Church in Bristol current with the latest approved changes within two weeks of congregational approval.

Section 5. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be a member, ex-officio, of the Church Council with right to vote. Under direction of the Council, the Treasurer shall receive, hold, and disburse all monies. Certain funds managed by the deacons and designated for benevolence shall be disbursed by the treasurer at the direction of the Deacons. The Treasurer shall keep record of all monies received and disbursed, shall furnish a budget status report to regular meetings of the Council and shall furnish a complete financial report to church members at the annual meetings and such other reports as required.

The Assistant Treasurer shall function and have full authority in the absence of the Treasurer, and shall perform any duties as delegated by the Treasurer.

Section 6. Auditors

The Auditors shall audit and certify the financial accounts of the Church and the Annual Church Financial report before the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VIII – CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council, directly responsible to the Congregation, has full responsibility for determining and overseeing the policies of the church as well as full charge, management and control of all properties and financial affairs of the Church.

The Church Council shall consist of the Treasurer, one Deacon, one Christian Education committee member, one Facilities committee member and seven (7) At Large members. The Moderator shall be a non-voting ex-officio member of the Church Council. Church Council Chair and Vice Chair will be elected annually from the seven (7) At Large members of the Council. The At Large members of the Council will be elected for a period of three years, staggered to allow entrance of 2, 2 and 3 members to provide continuity of experience. The Council shall submit a list of recommended names to the Nominating Committee as terms expire for consideration for election at the annual meeting. The Church Council At Large member shall be eligible to serve for no more than three consecutive terms without an interval of at least one year before reelection.

The full financial responsibility of the Church shall rest with the Council. The Council shall have the care and management of all properties of the Church, unless otherwise provided, and shall have charge of employment and supervision of secretary and sexton, and the raising of monies for the support of public worship and the manner thereof, and have charge of all financial affairs of the Church excepting charitable and benevolent funds. The Council will be responsible for the preparation and submission of a budget to the Congregation based on recommendations of the committees.

The Council shall have the power, by majority vote, with subsequent approval of the members of the Congregation, for and on behalf of the Congregation, to borrow money; to purchase real estate; to sell, lease away or otherwise dispose of, any real estate, or interests therein, of this Congregation wheresoever situated, excepting only the Church building and the land on which it stands, at such time, for such price, and upon such terms and conditions as said Council may deem advisable. The Council shall have power and authority for such purposes to employ agents and brokers. All deeds of conveyance and other instruments necessary or proper to accomplish the foregoing purposes shall be signed and executed by the Church Council Chair and the corporate seal of the Corporation shall be affixed and attested by the Clerk. The Council shall approve or reject committee reports, and hire or discharge staff, with input from the appropriate committee. The dismissal of a minister is covered in Article VI.

The Church Council shall call a special meeting to fill a vacant office within one month of the vacancy. Resignation of any officer shall be made by letter to the Church Council and shall become effective from the date of acceptance. The Council shall appoint a temporary clerk in the absence of the clerk. The temporary clerk shall perform the duties of the Clerk in the absence of the Clerk, and such other duties as may be delegated by the Clerk.

ARTICLE IX – ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The following elected standing boards and committees will be established and elected at the Annual Meeting: Board of Deacons, Christian Education, Nominating Committee, Facilities Committee, Ushering Committee, Music Committee, Historical Properties Committee, Hospitality Committee, and the Flower Committee. The Church Council shall appoint any other necessary committee and officer, the terms of office and operational responsibilities of which will be determined by the Church Council, such as the Investment Committee. Boards and Committees will be responsible for following a written description of responsibilities.

All boards and standing committees hereinafter defined shall meet within one month of the annual meeting to elect Chairs and to arrange for regular meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chair of each committee and must be called upon written request of at least one-third of the members of a board or committee. A majority of the voting members of each board and committee shall constitute a quorum and action shall be determined by a majority vote of those present and voting.

The boards and committees shall report any vacancies to the Nominating Committee and the Church Council Chair. The vacancy on any board or committee, except the Nominating Committee, shall be filled at a special meeting of the Congregation called by the Moderator.

Section 1 – Board of Deacons

There shall be a Board of Deacons consisting of twelve (12) members including the Chairperson and Vice Chair. They shall be elected for a three (3) year term, four (4) members to be elected each year. Each member shall be eligible to hold office for no more than two consecutive full terms without an interval of at least one year before reelection. The Board of Deacons shall submit a list of four (4) recommended names to the Nominating Committee for consideration for election at the annual meeting.

The Deacons shall make the preparation and assist in the administration of Holy Communion and together with the Minister shall fix the times of such administration. They shall have charge of Communion linen and silver, visit the sick and needy, call upon new members, and introduce new families into the life of the church. The Deacons shall assist the Minister at such other times as requested by the Minister. They shall be responsible for the pulpit supply during the vacation or other authorized absence of the Minister. The Deacons shall have charge of the Communion offerings and shall authorize the disbursement of funds, which are now or in the future will be, under their control.

The Deacons shall be responsible for the admission of new members according to Article IV section 2. They shall keep the membership rolls current. They shall have power to issue letters of dismission. They shall have general care and oversight of the spiritual affairs of the Church, and shall perform other duties in accord with Congregational usage. The Deacons and the Minister(s) shall be mutually accountable for the performance of their ministries. The Deacons shall annually evaluate the work of the Senior Minister and make recommendations to him/her concerning his/her performance by July 15th of each year and submit the written evaluation to the Church Council. The Deacons shall conduct a study of church needs annually and shall receive comments and input from

the Congregation regarding conduct and performance of officers and employees of the Church and shall report the findings of the study to the Church Council.

Section 2 – Permanent Diaconate

The Permanent Diaconate shall consist of current members of the Church who have served as Deacons and Deaconesses. At the invitation of the Minister or the Board of Deacons, they may be called upon to assist the Deacons in their duties.

Section 3 – Ushering Committee

This Committee shall consist of the Chairperson and Vice Chair, nominated by the Nominating Committee, and elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. The Chairperson shall lead Ushering Committee volunteers in the oversight of the Ushering Program. They shall be responsible for the ushering at all services, and cooperate with the Minister in ensuring that the sanctuary is in order for worship. The Ushering Committee will submit an attendance summary for the annual report.

Section 4 – Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education Committee shall consist of ten (10) members including the Chairperson and Vice Chair. They shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and shall be elected for a two (2) year term, five (5) members to be elected each year at the annual meeting of the church. This committee shall guide the total educational objective of the church, study educational needs, make long-range plans, and employ and supervise the Director of Christian Education, who shall be a non-voting ex-officio member of the committee. They shall annually evaluate the Director and submit the written evaluation to the Church Council by July 15th. The committee shall annually submit a budget to the Council. They shall examine and adopt the educational curriculum, make recommendations for the upkeep and use of the educational buildings and equipment. All Church sponsored youth activities shall be responsible to the Christian Education Committee.

Section 5 – Music Committee

The Music Committee shall consist of six (6) members. They shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting. Two (2) shall be chosen annually for the term of three (3) years. The Music Committee shall have a Chairperson and a Vice Chair. The Chairperson shall lead Music Committee volunteers in the oversight of the Music Program. The Music Committee shall have direction of Church music, including employment of the Director of Music and any paid musicians. They shall annually evaluate the Director of Music and submit the written evaluation to the Church Council by July 15th. The Committee shall have charge and control of all musical instruments, hymnals, choir robes and music belonging to the Church. They shall submit to the Church Council a budget and may make contracts/letters of intent within the limits of the approved budget pertaining to music, of not more than one year's duration. The Director of Music shall be an advisor or consultant, non-voting member of the Music Committee.

Section 6 – Facilities Committee

The Facilities Committee shall consist of four (4) members including the Chairperson and Vice Chair. They shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee. They shall be elected for a two (2) year term, two (2) members to be elected each year at the annual meeting of the church. This committee shall guide the total infrastructural requirements of the church, make long-range plans, keep maintenance records and submit a budget to the Council annually. Additional monies required to make unforeseen repairs shall be approved by the Council. The Facilities committee shall oversee the care and maintenance of the buildings and grounds of the church, including the hiring of necessary resources. They shall annually evaluate the Sexton and submit the written evaluation to the Church Council by July 15th. They shall be responsible for creating a Fire Evacuation Plan and a Fire Drill to be executed annually.

Section 7 – Historical Properties Committee

The Historical Properties Committee shall consist of six (6) members. They shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting. Two shall be chosen annually for a term of three years. The Historical Properties Committee shall have a Chairperson and a Vice Chair. The Chairperson shall lead Historical Properties Committee volunteers in the oversight of the Historical Properties. The charge of this

Committee shall be the custody and documentation of church historical property, the primary value of which is its historical nature, and responsibility for approval and arrangement for the display of historical Church material for the benefit of Church members and the public. The safe in the Historical Properties Room shall be the repository of the historical records and shall be the responsibility of this Committee.

Section 8 – Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of six (6) members, including the Chairperson and Vice Chair, who shall serve for two years, three members being replaced each year. This Committee shall be appointed by the Church Council and approved by the Congregation at the annual meeting and shall place in nomination all officers of the Church at the appropriate annual meeting. Nominations may be submitted from the floor during an annual or special meeting. Should an office become vacant between annual meetings, the Church Council Chair shall ask for nominations from this Committee.

Section 9 – Hospitality Committee

The Hospitality Committee shall consist of six (6) or more members, nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year. This Committee shall have a Chairperson and a Vice Chair. The Chairperson shall lead Hospitality Committee volunteers in the oversight of the Hospitality Program. The Committee shall coordinate refreshments at coffee hours after regular Church services.

Section 10 – Flower Committee

The Flower Committee shall consist of six (6) members. They shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting. Two (2) shall be chosen annually for a term of three (3) years. The Flower Committee shall have a Chairperson and a Vice Chair. The Chairperson shall lead Flower Committee volunteers in the oversight of the Flower Committee. The Committee shall have charge of the floral decoration of the Church and the distribution of flowers to the sick.

ARTICLE X – CONFERENCE DELEGATES

Delegates to the Rhode Island Conference shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year. The number of delegates shall be based on the guidelines set by the Conference, with at least one (1) alternate.

ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENTS

The Bylaws may be amended, added to, or repealed, at a Church annual meeting or at any duly called special meeting of the Church by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, provided that the proposed changes to the Bylaws are given to the membership at least two (2) weeks prior to such meeting. Bylaws shall be updated within a month of approval by the Congregation.

ARTICLE XII – RULES OF ORDER

The annual meeting shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. Special Church meetings and committee meetings may be conducted informally, except when the chair of a committee declares that Robert's Rules of Order shall prevail.