

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Church is The First Church of West Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

ARTICLE II. COVENANT

The Church shall exist under the following covenant:

“We, the Members of The First Church of West Bridgewater, united by the love of one another and guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, hold it to be our purpose to maintain a welcoming house for the worship of God; to teach and study the lessons of our Faith; to develop programs for those in need; and to sponsor fellowship opportunities. All this we support in order to build a mutually sustaining and caring Community of Faith.”

ARTICLE III. DENOMINATION AFFILIATION

This Church shall maintain membership in the Unitarian-Universalist Association, Ballou-Channing District; and in the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ, Pilgrim Association; by contribution to and participation in the activities of these associations.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

- A. The Board of Deacons shall have the responsibility for all phases of membership.
- B. Prospective Members may apply for membership through one of the following avenues:
 - 1. Transferal of membership from another church and the Confession of Faith by acceptance of the Covenant as set forth in Article II.
 - 2. Being fourteen years of age or older and the Confession of Faith by acceptance of the Covenant as set forth in Article II.
- C. Once a person’s desire for membership is known, the Board of Deacons shall vote to accept this person into membership at its next scheduled meeting. This vote by the Board of Deacons is the act by which membership is conferred.
- D. Responsibilities of Membership. All Members are encouraged to attend regularly the services of the Church, shall give for its support and benevolences; and shall participate in the activities and work of the Church.
- E. Associate Members
 - 1. An Associate Member is a Member who requests to be placed on an Associate Members List.
 - 2. A Member whose address has been unknown for three years, or who for a period of three years, in spite of spiritual care, has not attended the Church’s worship, or contributed to its support, may, by vote of the Board of Deacons, be transferred to the Associate Member’s List.

3. An Associate Member is ineligible to vote; nor may serve in any elected or appointed position.
4. The Board of Deacons may transfer from the Associate Members list and re-instate into membership any Associate Member who applies to the Minister or to the Board of Deacons requesting reinstatement.

F. Resignation of Membership

1. Any Member, on the Member's own written request, or the written request of another church, may be granted a letter of transfer, which shall be sent to the new church by the Clerk.
2. If a Member requests in writing to be released from membership obligations, the request shall be granted. Such a request shall be made to the Board of Deacons, or through the Minister to the Board of Deacons; and the Clerk instructed to issue the appropriate letter, and to remove this Member's name from the rolls of the Church.
3. The provisions of Article IV, Section E, Paragraph 2, shall not apply to any Member who, because of ill health or infirmity, is not able to fulfill the responsibility of being a Member.

ARTICLE V. ADMINISTRATION

A. Governing Body

1. The governing body of the Church shall be the Members. The vote of a simple majority of the Members present and voting at an Annual or Special Meeting shall be the action of the Church.
2. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting, eighteen years of age or older, is required in matters relating to the purchase, sale, mortgage, lease, or transfer of real property of the Church; the calling or dismissal of the Minister, and By-Law changes.

B. Church Officers

1. The officers shall be elected from among the Members of the Church at the Annual Meeting for terms of one year. The officers shall be the President, Vice President, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, Assistant Treasurer/Collector, Auditor, and Historian.
2. The Treasurer, Collector and Auditor shall be members of separate and unrelated households.

C. Church Council

The Church Council shall consist of the President acting as chairman, the Minister, one member from each elected committee elected from among their number, the treasurer, and one delegate from each affiliated association.

D. Boards of Administration

There shall be three Boards of Administration: the Parish Committee, the Board of Deacons, and the Christian Education Committee, each consisting of six members.

1. Election

The Parish Committee and the Board of Deacons shall be elected from among the Members of the Church for terms of three years arranged in such manner that at least one-third shall be elected each year. The Christian Education Committee shall be elected from among the Members of the Church for terms of two years arranged in such a manner that one-half shall be elected each year. No member may serve more than two consecutive terms on any one of the Boards of Administration.

2. Organization

The President shall call organizational meetings of the Boards of Administration within two weeks after the Annual Meeting. The Boards of Administration shall elect from among their number a Chairman, Secretary, and whatever other officers they shall deem necessary.

E. Special Committees and Delegates

1. The following shall be elected from the Members of the Church at the Annual Meeting:

- a. The Trustees of Invested Funds, consisting of three members, one to be elected each year to a term of three years, shall be unrelated to each other, the Treasurer, the Collector, and the Auditor.
- b. The Nominating Committee, consisting of six members, two to be elected each year for a term of three years. No member may be elected to serve more than two consecutive terms.
- c. Association Delegates, one delegate and one alternate delegate from each denomination listed in Article III shall be elected annually to a term of one year.
- d. The Missions & Outreach Committee, consisting of six members, two to be elected each year for a term of three years. No member may be elected to serve for more than two consecutive terms.
- e. The Memorial Gifts Committee, consisting of three members, one to be elected each year to a term of three years.
- f. The Stewardship Committee, consisting of six members, two to be elected each year for a term of three years.
- g. The Fellowship Committee, consisting of six members, two to be elected each year to a term of three years.

2. The following committees shall be created or appointed as specified from the Members of the Church annually, within one month following the Annual Meeting:

- a. The Pastoral Relations Committee, consisting of two members from the Board of Deacons, one member from the Parish Committee, one member from the Christian Education Committee, and one member appointed by the Minister from the Church membership not currently serving on any Board of Administration, to a term one year. Each Board of Administration shall elect its representative(s) from their number.

ARTICLE VI. DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

- A. All Officers and Committees, unless otherwise specified, shall maintain a record of standard operating procedures and practices. The Clerk shall keep this record in a location accessible to the Members of the Church.
- B. The President shall serve as Moderator of all business meetings of the Church, and as an ex-officio (non voting) member of all Boards of Administration. The President shall accept the written resignation of elected offices, and notify the Nominating Committee of the vacancy. Unless otherwise specified herein, the President may not serve as chairman of any committee.
- C. The Vice President shall act in place of the President when the President is not available. If for any reason the President leaves office, the Vice President shall serve as President until the next Annual Meeting.
- D. The Clerk shall keep a record of the Annual Meeting, Special Meeting, and Church Council meetings, and a list of all Church affiliated organizations, and of all Members and vital statistics. The Clerk shall notify all officers, committee members, and delegates of their appointment or election. The Clerk shall issue letter(s) of transfer or dismissal as provided in Article IV. The Clerk shall post the Warrant for the Annual Meeting and any Special Meetings as provided herein. The Clerk shall receive articles for the warrant from any elected Church committee or by petition from any ten Church Members, and post the same.
- E. The Assistant Clerk shall act in place of the Clerk when the Clerk is not available. If for any reason the Clerk leaves office, the Assistant Clerk shall serve as Clerk until the next Annual Meeting.
- F. The Treasurer shall hold in deposit all funds of the Church designated for general operating expenses or real property maintenance and improvement unless otherwise specified herein, pay all bills which are approved by the Parish Committee, keep an account of all receipts and expenditures, and provide a written financial statement to appear in the Annual Report, and at such times as the Parish Committee shall request. The Treasurer may not serve as chairman of the Parish Committee.
- G. The Collector shall, unless otherwise provided herein, collect all sums received by the Church through regularly scheduled collections during Church services or mailed to the Church for the same purpose, pay the same to the Treasurer promptly each week, keep a record of those transactions, and provide a written financial statement to appear in the Annual Report.
- H. The Assistant Treasurer / Collector shall act in the place of the Treasurer or Collector when they are not available, and perform any of their duties as directed by the Treasurer or Collector. If for any reason the Treasurer or Collector leave office, the Assistant Treasurer / Collector shall serve in that office until the next Annual Meeting.

- I. The Auditor: An independent auditor shall be engaged annually by the Parish Committee to perform those financial audits of the Collector, Treasurer, and others deemed to be necessary within the Church. The auditor's examination results, including recommendations for improvement, shall be submitted to the Parish Committee for inclusion in the Annual Report.
- J. The Church Historian shall keep the non-current records of the Church, which document events and facts of lasting value and interest and shall collect published material pertaining thereto. The Historian shall also conduct the correspondence of the Church relating to the history of the congregation and its Members.
- K. The Trustees of Invested Funds shall have custody and supervision of all Trusts, Encumbered Memorial Gifts, and Annuities, as directed by the Church body. This committee will invest such funds in a manner it feels to be in the best interest of the Church, in any combination of insured, non-speculative, investments. Control of these funds shall never rest with a single person. The Committee shall provide a written financial statement to appear in the Annual Report.
- L. The Parish Committee shall have charge of all business affairs subject to the direction of the Church body. They alone are empowered to contract on behalf of the Church, to make agreements, and at the direction of the Church body to incur long-term debt. They shall contract with the Minister as to salary and working conditions. They shall hire, or dismiss a Parish Secretary, Parish Sexton, and any other employee deemed necessary, and oversee their services. The Parish Committee is responsible for the setting of rents or fees, and for determining the use of the facilities. Unless other specified herein, the Parish Committee is ultimately responsible for the proper management of all money, and is responsible to see that all financial obligations are met. The Parish Committee may appoint coordinators or committees to perform its duties as it deems necessary to facilitate the smooth operation of the Church.

The Parish Committee shall be responsible for all real property of the Church, maintenance of the building, and its contents. No part or contents may be altered, loaned, or disposed of, without the approval of the Parish Committee or the Church at large in a legally called meeting.

The Parish Committee shall, in cooperation with the Treasurer, submit an annual financial accounting to the parish to be published in the Annual Report. In addition, they shall submit at the Annual Meeting a proposed budget for the following year, detailing projected income and expenses.

- M. The Board of Deacons shall provide communion service at regular intervals and aid with its administration. They shall supply the pulpit when there is a vacancy, and shall have the authority to lead a spiritual meeting in the absence of the Minister. They shall have charge of the Deacons Benevolent Fund, and provide a report at the Annual Meeting. They shall be responsible for all religious services, membership, flowers, music, missions and ministerial search. They shall aid and advise the Minister regarding the Minister's relations with the congregation. The Deacons shall plan the religious calendar. The Board of Deacons may appoint coordinators or committees to perform its duties as it deems necessary.

- N. The Christian Education Committee shall have charge of all religious education. They shall appoint a Superintendent of Sunday Schools. They shall specify and furnish the curriculum for the Sunday School. They shall plan all programs involving the children of the Sunday School. They shall have charge of all Sunday School funds, helping to make the Sunday School self-supporting, keeping and distributing monies and providing a financial report and budget to appear in the Annual Report. They shall provide a written annual report. The Christian Education Committee may appoint coordinators of committees to perform its duties as it deems necessary. All of the above shall be accomplished in concert with the Board of Deacons, the Minister, and Church body.
- O. The Association Delegates shall serve as members of the Church Council and as the Church's representatives at Association Conference, Meetings, etc.
- P. The Missions & Outreach Committee shall have charge of all Missions Funds and mission projects. They shall have charge of keeping and distributing the Missions Fund, and shall provide a financial report and budget to appear in the Annual Report.
- Q. The Memorial Gifts Committee shall be responsible for accepting, cataloging, preserving, and acknowledging gifts and artifacts donated in memoriam to the Church.
- R. The Nominating Committee shall secure one or more candidates for each office to be filled by election at the Annual Meeting, and, unless otherwise provided for herein, shall fill by temporary appointment any vacancy which may occur during the year.
- S. The Church Council shall have the responsibility to oversee, institute, and coordinate the Life of the Church as directed by the Church body. They shall meet when called by the Minister or the President.
- T. The Pastoral Relations Committee will meet with the Minister twice a year, and at any other time that the Minister or members of the committee deem appropriate.
- U. The Stewardship Committee shall be responsible for conducting the Annual Stewardship Drive to secure pledges and gifts for Church and Mission appointment. It shall also guide and educate the Church in the growing practice of Christian stewardship. The Stewardship Committee shall have one member at a time, not related to the Collector, assist the Collector in counting the offering after the services with all deliberate speed.
- V. The Fellowship Committee is responsible for developing, planning, organizing and implementing fellowship activities for specific age groups and for the total membership.

ARTICLE VII. MINISTER

A. Securing and Dismissing a Minister

When it becomes necessary to secure a Minister, a Ministerial Search Committee of nine members will be appointed by the Board of Deacons to recommend and present a suitable candidate. Such recommendation shall be submitted to ballot at a regular meeting or special meeting to be called for that purpose. A vote of two thirds of those Members present and voting shall be necessary for election or dismissal of a Minister.

B. Duties of the Minister

The Minister shall:

1. Care for the spiritual welfare of the Church with the assistance of all Church officers and committees.
2. Provide leadership for services of worship and programs of religious education, administer the Holy Sacraments, celebrate the rite of marriage, conduct services of burial, visit the sick, comfort the distressed, and perform all such duties as usually belonging to the Minister's office.
3. Endeavor to promote moral thought and practice among the people of the parish and in the community through active participation in community life
4. Serve as advisor and resource person in an ex officio (non-voting) capacity on all committees and boards.
5. Keep a record of ministerial activities throughout the year and make a report at the Annual Meeting and to the Board of Deacons upon request.
6. Supervise the recording of vital statistics.

C. Resignation or Termination of the Minister

When the Minister resigns from this post, the Minister shall give written notice of resignation at least one month in advance to the Board of Deacons. Likewise when a Minister is dismissed by two-thirds vote of the Congregation, the Board of Deacons shall provide the Minister with written notice at least one month before the dismissal shall be effective.

The Minister shall be due salary and other compensation for this period, and a pro rata amount for vacation and holidays not taken. In case of a conflict between this section and any legal contract in force between the Minister and the Church, that contract shall govern the actions of the parties involved.

ARTICLE VIII. WORSHIP AND MEETINGS

A. Worship

1. Services of worship shall be held at regular hours each Sunday at such times as the Minister and Board of Deacons may choose.
2. No person other than the Minister shall perform a religious ceremony in the Church without prior consent of the Deacons and the Minister, if available.

B. Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday in January to hear the reports of all officers, committees, and organizations affiliated with the Church, to elect officers of the Church, and to transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.
2. Special Meetings may be called by the Parish Committee, or by the Church Council, or upon written application to the Clerk by ten or more Members of the Church.
3. The Warrant stating the business to be transacted at the Annual Meeting shall be posted by the Clerk at the place of worship on the first Sunday in January. Warrant for Special Meeting shall be posted 14 days prior to the date of the meeting in like manner. The date of the meetings shall be announced from the pulpit on each Sunday prior to the meeting.

4. The fiscal year will run from January 1 to December 31.
5. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of the meeting.

ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS

- A. Amendments to these By-Laws shall be made only at the Annual Meeting of the Church body. A two-thirds vote of the Members present and voting shall be necessary for the adoption of such amendments. These By-Laws may be rescinded in like manner.
- B. In addition to the provision of Paragraph A, no change shall be made to Article II until the proposed change has been made in writing to the Members, and posted in the Church for at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting and read from the pulpit on the Sunday preceding the meeting.