

Constitution of Monroe Congregational Church, Incorporated

ARTICLE I. Name

The name of this church is MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, INCORPORATED (“MCC”). MCC is located in Monroe, Connecticut.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

The purpose of this church (“MCC” or “we”) is to worship God, preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, celebrate the sacraments, realize Christian fellowship and unity within MCC and the Church Universal, render loving service toward humanity, and strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

ARTICLE III. Polity

MCC is a member Congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC) under the provisions for local churches of the UCC’s Constitution and Bylaws adopted July 4, 1961, and as subsequently amended. The governing body of MCC is the active membership assembled in a congregational meeting which exercises the right of control in all of MCC’s secular affairs, subject to the laws of the State of Connecticut relating to nonprofit corporations. This Constitution and supporting Bylaws guide MCC’s operation and processes.

ARTICLE IV. Faith and Covenant

Section 1. Faith

MCC acknowledges as its sole head Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and as brothers and sisters in Christ all who share in this belief. We look to the Word of God in the Scriptures and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to make our creative and redemptive work in the world succeed. Our beliefs are rooted in the faith of the founders of this Congregation and reflect the tenets of the Christian doctrines of the Protestant Reformers. Following the teaching of our Lord, MCC recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

**One expression of this faith is our UCC Statement of Faith, the UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
STATEMENT OF FAITH in the Form of a Doxology**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify: 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 of 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
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Section 2. Covenant of Monroe Congregational Church

We declare our faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
In holy covenant, we bind ourselves to God and each other, becoming devoted disciples and active apostles.
We promise each other to be faithful in worship and in support of this church, whose Savior and Lord is Jesus Christ.
In Christian love, we will care for and support each other.
With the Bible as our guide, we willingly promise all that we are and all that we have to the fulfillment of God's Kingdom.
Freely we say these things, glorying in the joy of our salvation.

ARTICLE V. Membership

Section 1. Invitation

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, MCC welcomes you in Christ's name. Anyone seeking the word of God and the presence of Jesus Christ in their life is welcome to participate in our worship services and take part in the life of this church. Invitation to become a member of MCC may be given by the Board of Deacons to anyone who has demonstrated before the congregation a commitment of faith and willingness to faithfully embrace this church's statement of faith and covenant.

Section 2. Types of Membership

Active Membership in this church is open to all baptized Christians who embrace the covenant of MCC and accept the invitation to membership at a regular worship service or, in exceptional circumstances, at another occasion approved by the Board of Deacons. One becomes a member by either confirmation, confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, transfer of membership from another Christian church, or reaffirmation of faith if no transfer of membership is possible.

An individual who wishes to take part in the life of MCC while maintaining membership in another church may be received as an **Associate Member**, with all of the rights and duties of an Active Member **but** will not have the right to a letter of transfer from MCC to another church.

Section 3. Preparation for Membership

Candidates for membership are invited to prepare by attending an orientation session where they may learn about our beliefs, history, government, and programs. A Pastor, supported by the Board of Deacons, holds these sessions.

In the case of youth preparing for Confirmation, with the support of the Board of Deacons a Pastor will determine the length and curriculum of a confirmation class and will conduct the class.

Section 4. Responsibilities of Membership

Members are expected, to the best of their ability, to attend the regular services of worship, contribute financially to the support of the church and its mission, take part in the church's life and work, and live their daily lives in a Christian manner.

Section 5. Termination of Membership

Any member who wants to leave this church may do so by letter of resignation or by letter of transfer.

Any member who does not attend worship and pledge their personal talents and financial support for two consecutive years may be placed on the inactive list. Before being placed on the inactive list, the member will be notified, provided MCC has contact information. Persons placed on the inactive list lose all rights of membership and are not counted in the official roll of members. Their membership is terminated after being on the inactive list for one year.

An inactive or terminated member may be reinstated after renewing their active participation in the life of the church.

ARTICLE VI. Governing Body

Moved to Article III.

ARTICLE VII. Meetings

Section 1. Worship Services

The Board of Deacons and Pastor set the time for Sunday worship services. They may also elect to hold special services. The sacrament of Holy Communion is observed at regular intervals as agreed upon by the Board of Deacons and Pastor.

Section 2. Congregational Meetings

Annual Meetings are held at the call of the Clerk in January each year to: (1) elect officers, boards, committees, and delegates to the Association and Conference to which the church belongs; (2) adopt an annual budget; (3) hear annual reports; and (4) transact other business as may be set forth in the call. The OFFICIAL YEAR of this church begins on January 1st. The Clerk, or another officer of the church in the Clerk's absence, may call a **Special Congregational Meeting** at the request of a Pastor, the Church Council, or any board, or at the request of any ten members of the church.

The call for **Annual or Special Congregational Meetings** are made in worship the two Sundays preceding that meeting and by using standard media correspondence to members two weeks before a meeting.

All active members have the right to vote at any meeting of the church.

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised ("Roberts Rules") govern our congregational meetings.

A quorum is 10 percent of the membership. The vote of the quorum present at the meeting will decide the action of the church as per this Constitution, *Robert's Rules*, and the Connecticut General Statutes governing Nonstock Corporations.

ARTICLE VIII. Officers, Pastor(s), Professional Staff

Section 1. Officers

The officers of the church are the Pastor(s), Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Receiver, Historian, and any other officers as the church may determine. All officers must be active members of the church and are elected by the congregation for terms specified in this Article. Each officer, unless otherwise specified, may be eligible for re-election to the same office after one year following the end of their last term.

Section 2. Pastor(s)

MCC has a settled, ordained (Senior) Pastor and may have an Assistant or Associate Pastor, if deemed necessary by vote of the active members of the congregation assembled in a congregational meeting. Each pastor must have full, regular ministerial standing in the Association to which this church belongs.

Pastors have charge of the worship services and perform a ministry of preaching, pastoral care, and spiritual leadership.

The (Senior) Pastor is responsible for and holds authority for the church staff and operations as delegated by the Church Council.

Each pastor will be a full member of the Church Council and ex-officio member of all boards and committees. They are entitled to be present at any meeting of any church-sanctioned group except meetings when pastoral tenure or salary is discussed.

The collegial relationship between the pastors will be defined in writing.

A call to be settled as a pastor is made following the nomination of a candidate at a meeting of the active church membership assembled for that purpose. The election of the nominee for pastor requires a vote of at least two-thirds of an assembled quorum.

The term of office for any of the pastors will be of indefinite duration, unless otherwise stipulated in the call, and at the will of the congregation.

Termination may be exercised, with a sixty-day written notice, and by at least a two-thirds vote of a quorum of the congregation. Termination may also be automatic and immediate upon a pastor's loss of ministerial standing in the Association, after which the church would be under no obligation to provide financial compensation following loss of such standing.

Section 3. Other Ordained Ministers/Professional Persons

Other ordained ministers and professional persons are "other staff" and subject to provisions of Section 4 below.

Section 4. Other Staff

Other staff will be hired by the responsible board, committee or pastor, provided that funding is available and approved by the Board of Trustees. Salary, tenure, and responsibilities will be established in writing before hiring.

Section 5. Moderator

The Moderator serves as President of the corporation. The Moderator must have been a member of the church for at least two years and have served actively within the church structure. The Moderator may be elected for two consecutive two-year terms.

The Moderator presides at all congregational and Church Council meetings. In the event the Moderator is absent, a Pastor or the Clerk calls the meeting to order and the Moderator Pro Tempore is elected for the meeting.

The Moderator seeks to ensure that the government of the church functions within the structure and intent laid down by this Constitution and its supporting Bylaws.

Section 6. Clerk

The Clerk may be elected for two consecutive, two-year terms. The Clerk serves as Secretary of the corporation, Secretary for all congregational and Church Council meetings, keeping legal records of the proceedings of both. The Clerk is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 7. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer may be elected for three consecutive, two-year terms. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer must be bonded by the church.

They have charge of all funds of the church and keep open and true accounts of all the fiscal transactions of the church.

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are ex-officio members of the Board of Trustees. Neither can be related in any way to the individual holding the office of Receiver. The Treasurer will oversee a regular financial audit.

Section 8. Receiver and Financial Secretary

The Receiver may be elected for three consecutive, two-year terms. The Receiver must be bonded by the church and will receive all offerings and other income. The Receiver is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

A **Financial Secretary** is appointed by the Board of Trustees and must be bonded by the church to deposit all monies to the church's bank accounts and maintain accurate reporting of deposits in the accounting records.

Neither the **Receiver** nor the **Financial Secretary** can be related in any way to each other or to the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer.

Section 9. Historian

The Historian may be elected for a term of two years. There are no term limits. The Historian maintains the historical records, published documents, and all other artifacts of the church and, from time to time, updates the written history of the church.

Section 10. Other Officers

The church may elect an auditor and/or such other officers as needed. The duties and privileges of such officers will be reported in the minutes of the meeting at which they are elected.

Section 11. Manager of Information Systems

The manager of information systems is subject to the provisions of Section 4, Other Staff.

ARTICLE IX. Church Council

Section 1. Composition

The Church Council consists of the Pastor(s), Moderator, Clerk, and board chairpersons, each with one vote. Other elected heads of church organizations which do not function under a board should attend Church Council meetings for purposes of program planning and coordination; they will not have a vote.

Section 2. Powers and Responsibilities

The Church Council holds powers as may be delegated to it by the church in congregational meeting and has responsibilities for:

1. Filling of vacancies on boards and committees or other church organizations.
2. Assigning responsibilities that fall outside the scope of this Constitution to boards or organizations for their implementation.
3. Conforming the Constitution and Bylaws to reflect any amendments or revisions approved by the congregation at congregational meetings and for reporting those changes in the Council minutes.
4. Coordinating all program activities of the church.
5. Carrying out those functions assigned to it by other sections of this Constitution.

6. Appointing members to ad hoc committees whose tasks are other than the work of any one board.
7. Holding a minimum of ten open monthly meetings annually.

ARTICLE X. Boards and Committees

Section 1. General Requirements of Boards

Only **active members** of the church are eligible to serve on the Boards of Deacons, Trustees, Christian Education, Christian Outreach, and Christian Fellowship; and on the Safe Conduct Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Pastoral Relations Committee(s). This does not apply to board committees; at the discretion of the Board Chair, others may take part in board committees.

All standing board and free-standing committee members are eligible to be elected by the congregation to serve a two-year **term**, to serve a second term of one year, and may be eligible for re-election to the same position after one year following the end of their last term, *unless otherwise specified in this Article*.

No member may simultaneously serve on more than one board or be an officer of the church.

If it is deemed necessary for the good of the church, the Church Council **may extend once the term** of office of any Board or Committee member for an additional one-year term. Following an affirmative two-thirds vote of the Council quorum, the Church Moderator will instruct the nominating committee to include the affected board or committee member on the list of recommended candidates for election at the annual meeting, or subsequently scheduled special general meeting of the congregation.

An affirmative two-thirds vote by the quorum of the assembled congregation will be required to elect the affected board or committee member or members. Such action does not establish a precedent but is justified on its own individual merits.

Ex-officio members serve on a board due to the office or position they hold. They hold all board member privileges. The exception is if an ex-officio member holds full or ex-officio membership on another board, he or she cannot hold voting privileges on more than one board. They can vote only on the board on which they hold full membership.

Members who are ex-officio on multiple boards must select the one board where they will vote as soon as they become involved with more than one board. A member on multiple boards must communicate their decision regarding which one board they will vote on in writing to the boards on which they serve and to the Council; that decision cannot be modified during their term of office.

A pastor is ex-officio on all boards and does not vote on boards but is a full voting member of the Council.

A **Friend of the Board** of any of the standing boards is a non-elected church member or non-member, at the board chair's discretion, who actively participates in the life of the church and willingly accepts tasks assigned by the board. Attendance at board meetings is not mandatory. A Friend of the Board may take part in board discussions, but without voting privilege. There is no term restriction, and a Friend of the Board may be dismissed at the discretion of the Board. A board may appoint as many Friends of the Board as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of that board.

Section 2. Board of Deacons

The concern of the Board of Deacons is the spiritual welfare of the congregation and community. This board consists of twelve members (Deacons). A Deacon must have been a member of MCC for at least one year before election. They must have experienced the transformative power of God's love and/or strive to embrace and exemplify the spirit of the Biblical standards for the office. (Reference: Matthew 20:26-28 and 22:37-40, and I Tim. 3:8-10).

Section 3. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the property and finances of the church. This board consists of a minimum of seven and a maximum of twelve elected members.

The board also includes a Property Manager elected by the church as part of the seven to twelve members for a term of two years and no limit shall be placed on the number of successive terms which the Property Manager may serve. The Property Manager will have full voting rights as an ex-officio member of the board.

Section 4. Board of Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education (CE) is responsible for the delivery of a well-rounded program of Christian education including the Nursery, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Adult Education, and the Church Library. CE functions in a cooperative relationship with the ordained staff person who relates to the board.

CE consists of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine elected members.

Ex-officio members include the CE Coordinator & Youth Leader, and a Junior and a Senior Pilgrim Fellowship (PF) Advisor or Representative. Neither PF Advisor can also be a member of the Safe Conduct Committee.

Section 5. Board of Christian Outreach

The Board of Christian Outreach is responsible for the planning and administration of the mission program of the church. This board consists of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine elected members. There is no limit to the number of terms a Christian Outreach board member may serve.

Section 6. Board of Christian Fellowship

The Board of Christian Fellowship (Fellowship) coordinates fellowship activities of the church. The focus of the board is to ensure that a balanced program of fellowship opportunities is being offered throughout the year that will interest members---established, new, and prospective---as well as visitors to the church.

Fellowship consists of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine elected members.

Section 7. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee consists of three members. Candidates to serve the next term are identified by current Nominating Committee members, agreed upon by Council, and elected at the Annual Meeting. They must be members of the church and serve one non-renewable two-year term.

No person serving on the Council or a board shall be eligible to serve as a member of the Nominating Committee, with the exception of the highest-ranking pastor who will be an ex-officio member.

The Nominating Committee elects a chairperson from its membership.

Section 8. Pastoral Relations Committee(s) (PRC)

The purpose of the Pastoral Relations Committee(s) is to provide specific avenues of communication between each Pastor and the congregation. There will be a PRC for each of the ordained members of the pastoral staff.

Each PRC consists of a pastor and five members of the congregation, with no member serving on more than one PRC at a time. No lay member of the Church Council or any other elected or appointed officer may serve on a PRC. When a change in membership for a PRC is required, both the respective pastor and Council will submit names of potential members from the congregation at large as soon as possible. That pastor or the Council as a group may veto any name that has been presented. The finalized list of committee members must be approved by the respective pastor and the Council prior to being announced at the Annual Meeting. (It is desirable that a majority of the committee remain intact for continuity.)

A committee member is elected for a two-year term, with the possibility of renewal for an indeterminate number of additional terms. In order to ensure continuity, it is desirable that no more than two members be replaced at one time.

Section 9. Denominational Delegates

Two lay delegates and two alternates to the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ (SNECUCC) and two lay delegates and two alternates to the Fairfield East Association of the SNECUCC will be elected at the Annual Meeting. Each delegate serves a two-year term, renewable for one additional two-year term.

A denominational delegate may hold a second elected position. A delegate may serve as a delegate to more than one of the above organizations simultaneously.

ARTICLE XI. Auxiliary Organizations

Section 1. Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship was dissolved at a congregational meeting October 26, 2010 and incorporated into the Board of Christian Fellowship.

Section 2. Other Organizations

The church may sponsor such organizations as may be useful to its Purpose (Article II). For example, Morning Circle is an independent committee that supports multiple charitable efforts throughout the year.

Section 3. Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe Committee

The Mustard Seed Committee shall oversee the Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe with respect to its daily operations, financial accounting and reporting process, and the disbursement of funds.

The shoppe operates as a separate organization unrelated to the governorship of MCC for the purpose of raising money to contribute towards any funding requested of MCC or any philanthropic organization that upholds the purpose of MCC as described in Article II.

The committee consists of at least five MCC members who are self-appointed, with no term limits. The committee will vote to fill the officer positions of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

Committee meetings will be held at least quarterly. The committee Treasurer shall provide the Church Treasurer a fiscal year-end financial report.

The committee has adopted bylaws to govern itself. The committee bylaws may in no way conflict with MCC's Constitution or Bylaws.

Section 4. Safe Conduct Committee

The purpose of the Safe Conduct Committee is to encourage a safe, nourishing environment for all who participate in the activities of MCC. The Safe Conduct Committee will consist of three members appointed by the Council for up to two consecutive terms of two years each. The members cannot (1) be related to each other, (2) be one of the pastors or a member of a pastor's PRC, (3) be a member of Council or one of the major boards, (4) or all be of the same gender. The Safe Conduct Committee works within the guidelines and protocols provided by the Council-approved Safe Conduct Policy. They (1) conduct training and orientation of all persons who are in direct contact with youth; (2) conduct background checks as required; and (3) process complaints or reports of incidents of sexual exploitation or harassment.

ARTICLE XII. Termination

The church and its property will be forever devoted to religious purposes.

No officer, member, or employee thereof will receive any financial profit from the church except reasonable compensation for services in effecting one or more of its purposes.

In the event of the dissolution of the church, its property will become vested in and its functions as trustee, if any, administered by the Missionary Society of Connecticut or its successor. Or, if this is impossible, by such church or other organization which is organized and operated exclusively for religious or charitable purposes. The membership of the church must designate such church or organization at a meeting called before the dissolution. In the absence of such designation, the Superior Court for the Judicial District of Fairfield at Bridgeport, State of Connecticut, will make a designation or determination.

ARTICLE XIII. Amendments or Revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws of MCC

This Constitution and its subordinate, augmenting Bylaws may be amended or revised by a two-thirds vote at any Annual or Special Congregational Meeting and that the substance of the change is communicated two weeks before the meeting.

Changes that are made to an existing Article or Section of this Constitution will be made by regular editing.

In between major revisions of this Constitution, changes that add or remove an Article or Section will be made by Amendment. Amendments will be added onto the Constitution within 30 days after the congregation has voted to adopt the change and will be incorporated into the body of the Constitution at the next major revision.