



Constitution and
Bylaws
of
St. John's
United Church of Christ

Nazareth, Pennsylvania

Presented to the Congregation
February 2021

The Constitution and Bylaws of St. John's United Church of Christ, Nazareth, Pa.
Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Building the Future

Article I. Name

101. The name of this Church shall be St. John's United Church of Christ, Nazareth, PA (hereinafter "St. John's" or "Congregation").

Article II. Mission

201. St. John's acknowledges Jesus the Christ as the Head of the Church, the Son of God and our Savior. The Congregation acknowledges as family in Christ all who share in this confession. The Congregation looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. The Congregation claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. St. John's affirms the responsibility of the Congregation in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing in the United Church of Christ, it recognizes two Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).
202. Our church is a multi-generational family of believers, spiritually united in Christ, rooted in a rich heritage and committed to engaging future generations on a journey of greater faith and hope, led by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel's reconciling love and grace.

Article III. Affiliations and Covenantal Relationships

301. As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, St. John's will relate to the various expressions of the church (including but not limited to local congregations, Associations and Conferences and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ) in a covenantal manner. St. John's will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission, sharing God's grace and love in relation to the Church. The decisions of the Congregation may be made in consultation and in collaboration with our covenantal partners. As a member of the Body of Christ, St. John's is called to honor and respect each expression of the United Church of Christ.

Article IV. Membership

401. Persons become **Members** of St. John's and the Universal Church of Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism
402. Persons become **Voting Members** of the Congregation through one of the following:
- a. Confirmation
 - b. Participation in a faith formation/educational program
 - c. Letter of Transfer from another church
 - d. Prevailing practice of the United Church of Christ
403. Responsibilities of **Members**
- a. Members shall labor faithfully to bring others to Christ

- b. Members shall take an active part in the life and ministry of the church; including, but not limited to:
 - 1. regular attendance at worship
 - 2. participation in the Sacraments
 - 3. generous financial and moral support of the ministries of the Congregation
 - 4. faithfully applying the teachings of Jesus to all aspects of one's life
 - 5. keeping the church office informed of current contact information
 - c. Members are encouraged to participate in lifelong Christian Education/Faith Formation.
404. Responsibilities of ***Voting Members***
In addition to the above, Voting Members shall:
 - a. regularly attend and participate in congregational meetings (Voting Members under the age of 18 may not legally vote on financial or contractual matters.)
 - b. assume such offices as the congregation may confer upon them.
405. Termination of Membership
 - a. The names of deceased members shall be removed from the roll.
 - b. Members can terminate their relationship with St. John's by requesting a Letter of Transfer or requesting the removal of their names from the roll.
 - c. Members' names shall be removed from the roll, if and when members fail to uphold an active relationship with St. John's for a period of two consecutive years.

Article V. Organization and Governance

501. St. John's is subject to the laws of Pennsylvania relating to corporations not for profit or ecclesiastical corporations and IRS rules and guidelines.
502. Structure
 - a. The governing body of this Congregation shall consist of all Voting Members.
 - b. All responsibility for the life, work, and mission of the Church shall ultimately rest in the hands of the Congregation.
 - c. Responsibilities for specific tasks and areas of ministry may be delegated by the Congregation to Spiritual Council, Consistory, Committees, Task Forces, or individuals as deemed necessary.
503. Spiritual Council
 - a. Spiritual Council shall consist of the Pastor and Elders of the Congregation.
 - 1. An Elder is a Voting Member of the church who is elected by the Congregation. Once elected, elders are ordained and installed into office.
 - 2. A person shall be nominated by Spiritual Council or the Congregation to become an Elder and elected by a majority vote at a congregational meeting.
 - 3. Once elected, a person remains an Elder until they resign or retire.
 - b. Spiritual Council shall normally meet monthly and a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

- c. The Pastor of St. John's shall be the chairperson. Should there be no Pastor, one of the Elders may be chosen as temporary chairperson.
- d. The Spiritual Council shall exercise the spiritual oversight of the entire congregation which includes but is not limited to:
 - 1. Ensuring the roll is accurate
 - 2. Christian Formation Program
 - 3. Confirmation Program
 - 4. Worship
 - 5. New Members
 - 6. Assisting the Pastor in serving Holy Communion to homebound members

504. Consistory

a. Structure of Consistory

- 1. Consistory shall consist of 12 members, at least three of whom shall be Elders. In addition, up to two Youth under the age of 18 may be Consistory Members with voice but no vote. The Pastor shall be a member with voice, but no vote.
- 2. At the first meeting following election, Consistory shall appoint a Nominating Committee and up to two Youth Members by majority vote.
- 3. Consistory shall normally meet ten times per year for the transaction of such business as may arise. These meetings may be conducted in person, virtually, or through email conversations. A majority of members at any meeting shall constitute a quorum. Special meetings may be called by the President or requested by at least one-third of Consistory members. Proper notice shall be given to all Consistory members including the Pastor.
- 4. Consistory members who do not attend at least 80% of regular meetings per year may be asked to resign or may be removed from office by a 2/3 majority vote of Consistory Members.
- 5. Any Voting Member of St. John's is welcome to attend regular Consistory meetings. When Consistory is in Executive Session, only Consistory members and invited persons may attend.

b. Election of Members

- 1. A Consistory Member is a Voting Member over the age of 18 elected by the Congregation.
- 2. A Youth Consistory Member is a Voting Member under the age of 18 appointed by Consistory for a term of one year and installed into office. Youth Consistory Members shall participate in the responsibilities of Consistory except where legally restricted because of their age. Youth Consistory Members are eligible to be elected as Consistory Members when they turn 18 years of age.
- 3. Consistory Members shall be elected by a majority vote cast at a Congregational Meeting. Members shall be elected for a term of two years OR until their successors are elected/appointed. Terms begin immediately following the election.

4. One-half of Consistory Members shall be elected each year.
5. Nominations for Consistory Members shall be made by the Nominating Committee. Additional nominations for each office may be made from the floor at the time of the election.
6. Consistory Members shall be eligible to serve three successive terms (total of six years), but thereafter, shall be ineligible for re-election until the lapse of one year.
7. Vacancies occurring by death, resignation, or otherwise shall be filled by the Consistory. Appointees shall serve for the unexpired term and thereafter shall be eligible for election by the congregation as a Consistory Member.

c. Role of Consistory

1. In managing the general affairs of the Church, Consistory, acting as the trustees of the corporation, shall transact the business of the church; make provisions for the determining and raising of the operating and benevolent budgets of the Church; disburse all funds as stipulated; ensure an internal review of financial accounts is performed annually; maintain complete and accurate records of its proceedings and of all monies received and expended.
2. For all unbudgeted expenditures, Consistory shall approve all bills before payment and shall instruct the proper officers to make payment of said bills. However, any single, unbudgeted expense exceeding \$20,000 must receive approval of the congregation.
3. Consistory shall appoint such committees, task forces, and teams as it may deem necessary for the accomplishment of its work.
4. Consistory has the authority to determine and manage the staffing needed for the church.

505. Nominating Committee

- a. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members; two of whom shall be Consistory Members whose terms are not ending, two of whom shall be Voting Members of St. John's, and the Pastor. The committee shall be chaired by a Consistory Member. The term of office for the Nominating Committee is one year.
- b. The Nominating Committee shall annually present to the Congregation a list of nominees for those Consistory positions to be filled.
- c. The Nominating Committee shall annually present to the Congregation at least one nominee for each of the Officer positions.
- d. Nominations which are to be considered by the Congregation shall be published and made available to the congregation at least one week prior to the election.

Article VI. Officers

601. The four officers of the Congregation (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) are also the Officers of Consistory. Officers who do not fulfill their rolls, may be removed from office by a 2/3 majority vote of Consistory.
602. The President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer are elected by the

Congregation at its Congregational Meeting in the first quarter of the calendar year. Each is elected for a term of one year by a majority vote. The terms shall commence immediately following the election. The President and Vice President shall be members of Consistory. The Secretary and Treasurer do not need to be members of Consistory. Officers are accountable to and shall perform the functions defined for their office by Consistory.

- 603. The President and Vice President may serve up to six consecutive terms. The Secretary and Treasurer may serve an unlimited number of consecutive terms.
- 604. Members may not hold more than one office at a given time.

Article VII. Congregational Meetings

- 701. There shall be a minimum of two Congregational meetings per year. It is preferred that these meetings are held in person. Should events occur which would prohibit in-person meetings, virtual meetings are allowed as valid meetings provided there is a quorum present on-line and that all of the voting membership is given adequate notice of the meeting and options are explored to allow the participation of those who are unable to participate in an on-line meeting. Additionally, business may be conducted by written ballot. In order for a motion or business item to be adopted, the total number of ballots received must be equal to or greater than a quorum.
- 702. The Congregational Meeting held during the first quarter of the calendar year will be for the purpose of receiving the Annual Reports of the Congregation including financial reports from the previous year, reports from the Pastor and the teams, committees and task forces of the congregation. The Officers of the Congregation, Members of both Consistory and Spiritual Council, and delegates to the Penn Northeast Conference or its successors will be elected at this meeting. Guidelines for how many delegates shall be determined by the Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ Guidelines. Other reports may be presented, business transacted, or issues considered as may be brought before the meeting according to the guidelines for so doing.
- 703. There shall normally be a Congregational Meeting held in November for the presentation and consideration of a budget for the upcoming year. A budget must be adopted by December 31 before any funds can be disbursed for the following year.
- 704. Special Congregational Meetings may be called by Consistory, by the Spiritual Council or by a petition to either body signed by no less than 10% of the total number of Voting members. Such meetings shall be called within two weeks of receipt of same and adequate notice of such meetings shall be given to the membership. Only such business as stated in the call may be transacted at special meetings.
- 705. A quorum shall consist of 75 Voting Members. If the subject before the Congregation is financial or legal in nature, a quorum shall consist of 75 Voting Members over the age of 18.

Article VIII. Ministry

- 801. As soon as a pastoral vacancy occurs,
 - a. it shall be reported to the Conference and the Pastoral Search Committee shall

seek the counsel of the Conference Placement Committee and
b. a request shall be made to the Conference to secure relevant information
about any Authorized Minister whom it wishes to consider for the
vacancy.

802. The Spiritual Council and the Consistory will have the responsibility to nominate members to serve on a Pastoral Search Committee for election by the Congregation, to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of Pastor.
803. The Pastoral Search Committee shall present to a joint meeting of the Consistory and the Spiritual Council the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. Upon approval of this group, the name is presented to the Congregation, and at a congregational meeting a favorable vote of the members present constitutes a call.
804. In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the agreement of the church to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Ministers' Health Insurance Program, and other terms agreed upon by the candidate and Church and Ministry. The pastor, St. John's United Church of Christ, Nazareth, Pa., the Association, and the Conference shall each receive a copy of the call.
805. When a minister accepts a call to St. John's United Church of Christ, Nazareth, Pa., the Church and the Minister shall join in the requesting the Conference to arrange for a Service of Installation. A report of this service shall be signed by the proper office of the Conference and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ and other appropriate bodies.
806. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, three months' notice (90 days) in writing shall be given by either party, Pastor or Congregation, unless by mutual agreement the period is shortened. The procedure shall be in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.
807. The relationship may be terminated by the Congregation at a duly called special congregational meeting or by resignation of the pastor. If the termination is by resignation, action by a joint meeting of the Spiritual Council and the Consistory shall finalize the termination and notice of such termination shall be sent to the Conference for appropriate action.
808. Discipline of the pastor shall be in conformity with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.
809. The Church may, at its discretion, choose such Associate and Assistant Pastor(s) as it deems appropriate.

Article IX. Property

901. St. John's may, in its corporate name sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift devise, bequest, or otherwise own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property both real and personal for such work as the Congregation may undertake, and may purchase, own receive, hold, manage, care for, and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage, or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer, and convey such property for the general purposes of the Congregation. It may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objects and

- purposes of the Church.
902. Upon dissolution of St. John's, its assets and all property and interests 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 Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ or its successors.

Article X. Parliamentary Authority

1001. The most recent edition of "Robert's Rules of Order" shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and Bylaws.

XI. Amendments

1101. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws may be made at any duly called Congregational Meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the quorum present, with Congregational notice of the proposed amendment(s) having been made two weeks prior to the meeting.