

## **By-Laws of the Franklin Federated Church An American Baptist and United Church of Christ Congregation**

171 Main Street  
Franklin, Massachusetts  
02038

### **Article I Name**

The name of this church will be **The Franklin Federated Church**.

### **Article II Purpose/Mission/Vision**

"The Spirit of God is alive within the Christian family of the Franklin Federated Church, and we reflect God's light in our community and the world."

### **Article III Polity**

The members of the Franklin Federated Church will be members of the First Baptist Church of Franklin or the First Congregational Church of Franklin. The Franklin Federated Church will be a part of the American Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ as well as the state and local associations of the same. This church will not resign or withdraw from any of these bodies except by duly adopted amendment to this article. No such action will take place until consultation has been held by the major boards and officers of this church with the local association and the president or executive secretary of the state conference or convention.

### **Article IV Faith and Covenant**

1. **FAITH** - This church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of Humanity. It acknowledges as sisters and brothers in Christ all who share in this confession. It 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. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers and the faith of the United Church of Christ and American Baptist Convention. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own.
2. **COVENANT** - Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith having been baptized or confirmed in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and of this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into the covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of Christ's Church in knowledge, in holiness and in power; to promote its prosperity and its spirituality; to sustain its

worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines, and to give cheerfully and regularly to the support of its work at home and in all parts of the world. We also engage to maintain family and personal worship and devotion, to educate religiously our children, to seek the salvation of our kindred acquaintances, to walk as Christians in the world, to watch over one another in love, being slow to take offense and quick to seek reconciliation. Depending, as did those who came before us, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we will work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Beloved Community of God and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

## **Article V Membership**

Recognizing that there are many friends of the church who choose not to join, the following are the requirements for membership in the Franklin Federated Church.

1. Members of the church will be persons who, during a service of public worship, have affirmed these vows:

Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?

Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this local church as it serves this community and the world?

In cases of physical disability, persons may be received privately by the minister and representatives of the church council.

2. Members will be received by

- a) letter of transfer from other churches; or
- b) reaffirmation of faith; or
- c) confession of faith and baptism (if not previously baptized); or
- d) affirmation /confirmation.

3. Members of another church are welcome to join as Associate Members, when meeting the conditions stated in section 1 above. They may enjoy the privileges of full membership.

4. Members will pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the church; to vote for council and team representatives; to contribute to the support and benevolences of the church; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of fellow members and the community.

5. Any member, upon request, may be granted a letter of transfer. If wishing to join a body not in fellowship with this church he/she may be dismissed with a certificate of church membership.

If a member requests in writing to be released from his/her membership obligations, the church will patiently endeavor to secure his/her continuance in its fellowship, but failing such effort, the church will grant the request, and the Clerk will issue the appropriate letter of release.

A member whose address has long been unknown, or who for a period of two years, in spite of spiritual care and personal contact has not attended the church's worship service or contributed to its support or who has expressed a lack of interest, may, by vote of the deacons, after investigation, be removed from the membership roll and placed on an inactive list. An inactive member does not have voting rights. If, after the expiration of a year, the relationship remains unchanged, the name may be dropped from the membership roll by a further vote of the deacons.

## **Article VI Governing Body**

1. The governing body of this church will be the membership assembled in a church meeting. A vote of simple majority of the membership present and voting at the meeting will be the action of the church except for the calling or removal of a Pastor which requires a three-fourths majority. A quorum will consist of ten percent of the active members of the church.
2. This body alone will have the power to call or dismiss a Pastor, consider changes in these by-laws, to act upon any new or changing affiliations of the church, and, except as otherwise authorized by the church, to buy, sell, mortgage, or transfer any tangible church property.
3. The church council is the governing body elected by the congregation of the Franklin Federated Church to serve between meetings of the congregation.

## **Article VII Church Meetings**

### **Annual Meeting:**

The annual business meeting of the church will be held on the first Sunday in the month of February, at which time the annual reports of officers, ministries, and the church council will be given and other business transacted according to the call prepared by the clerk, or in case of incapacity, by the moderator, and such other business as may be brought before the church. The call for this meeting will be posted in the church and read from the pulpit at the regular worship service on two Sundays preceding the meeting. Special meetings of the church may be called as specified in the by-laws.

### **Special Meetings:**

Special meetings of the Federated Church may be called by the pastor and two members of the executive team, or shall be called by the clerk upon written request of ten adult members specifying the object thereof. Notice of a special meeting shall be read in two Sunday services preceding the day fixed for such a meeting.

## **Article VIII The Council**

### **Organization, Responsibilities and Ministries:**

The council has the responsibility to oversee all ministries, task forces, employees and volunteers. The council is made up of the Moderator, the Pastor, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Clerk, and at least seven (7) and no more than ten (10) members of the congregation. Four (4) of these members will come from the ministries of Deacons, Buildings & Grounds, Church School, and Missions. Excepting the Pastor, Treasurer, Clerk and Financial Secretary, council terms are for one year with a limit of three (3) terms. After a one year break, a member may serve on the council again.

### **Quorum:**

A quorum is a simple majority, i.e., if the council consists of eleven (11) members, a quorum would be 6.

### **Meetings:**

All meetings are open to members of the congregation. Church members not on the council and attending a council meeting have a voice but cannot vote. The council will meet monthly during the church year. Summer meetings are optional. In an effort of transparency the council will keep minutes of all meetings including all votes, decisions and plan approvals. Meeting minutes will be kept up to date in the church office. A quarterly report will be published quarterly in the church news letter.

### **Finance and Budget:**

The church council will be responsible for developing the annual budget. The church financial reports will be reviewed by the council monthly.

### **Task Forces:**

In an effort to streamline operations and work with member's lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the council will use informal 'task forces' as required during the church year to take any actions that require a focused effort to complete. Members can create a task force and inform the church council who their liaison to the church council will be.

### **Executive Team:**

The Executive Team is made up of the Pastor, the Moderator, the chair of the Diaconate, and the chair of the Buildings and Grounds Team. The Executive Team will meet as necessary to address issues requiring immediate response between council meetings.

### **Nominating Team:**

A Nominating Team will be appointed by the moderator each fall. The Nominating Team will be approved by the council. The Nominating Team will

nominate candidates that are active members of the Franklin Federated Church. Members so nominated will be elected at the annual meeting by the congregation.

**Officers of the Church:**

Officers of the church will be the Moderator, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Clerk, and Auditor. Officers will serve one year terms with no limit on length of service.

The **MODERATOR** will conduct all business meetings of the Federated Church according to parliamentary procedure and chair the church council. In the Moderator's absence or disability, a moderator pro-tem will be elected by those in attendance to preside at the meeting. The moderator is authorized to sign checks in the Treasurer's absence, and to sign legal documents at the direction of the congregation. The moderator will have access to the pledge database in case of emergency.

The **CLERK** will keep a true and accurate record of the Federated Church constitution, by-laws, and all proceedings of the Federated Church. The clerk will perform the duties incidental to the office, including maintenance of a master list of members, showing the denominational relationships of each member. The clerk will keep true and accurate records of all baptisms, weddings, and deaths. The clerk will annually report membership by denomination as of December 31 each year to the annual meeting.

The **TREASURER** will have charge of and keep record of all receipts and disbursements of the funds of the Federated Church. The treasurer will be a voting member of the church council. The treasurer will have authority to make payments for supplies and services rendered, within the budget, without consulting with the church council, providing such individual disbursements do not exceed limits set by the church council for the current year. The treasurer will present complete, detailed financial reports at the annual meeting, and will present regular financial statements to the church council, and as they may request.

There will be a **FINANCIAL SECRETARY** whose duty is to keep confidential records of financial receipts from public services of worship and of such other contributions as may be made for current expenses, mission, benevolences and other purposes. The duties will also include providing of pledge envelopes to the congregation, and mailing quarterly statements of contributions to all who contribute through the use of envelopes.

The **AUDITOR:** The annual meeting will appoint an auditor or audit task force. The audit report will be presented to the first council in September. The audit report will be published in the next subsequent church news letter.

## MINISTRY TEAMS

All ministry team members will have terms of one (1) year, with a limit of three consecutive terms. After one (1) year off, a church member may re-join a team. All teams will provide a report of their activities for the Annual Report.

### **Buildings and Grounds Ministry:**

The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team will be in general charge of all church property, establishing a regular program of maintenance and improvement. In the event of major improvements or new building, they may request the church council to appoint a separate task force for this purpose. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team will require a written contract for any property renovation, repair or construction. Any contract which exceeds the budget must be approved by the church council.

The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team will oversee long-term rentals. They will, on an annual basis, review with the church council all rental rates and contracts and adjust if necessary.

The Buildings & Grounds Ministry Team will have at least three (3) members.

### **The Church School Ministry:**

The Church School Ministry Team will consist of a minimum of three (3) church members. This team will initiate and oversee the total religious education of children. They will prepare a budget of all expenses which will be incurred in the next year and present it to church council during the budget process.

### **Diaconate:**

The Diaconate (Board of Deacons) shall be composed of at least six (6) members of the Franklin Federated Church. It shall be their duty to assist the pastor(s) in the preparation and administration of the ordinances/sacraments and in ministering to the spiritual interests of the Franklin Federated Church – its members, its extended church family and the community at large.

The Diaconate shall have the following responsibilities:

**Worship** - Arrange for the regular conduct of public worship

- **Provide for the supply of the pulpit.**
  - In the event of the death, dismissal or resignation of a pastor, the Diaconate will select an Interim Pastor and call a church meeting for the purpose of establishing a Pulpit Search Committee (for a settled pastor) and recommending members thereto. The Pulpit Search Committee is to be comprised of at least seven (7) and no more than ten (10) people who represent a reasonably comparable

proportion of UCC and ABC members as does the congregation as a whole.

- Arrange for guest preachers when pastor(s) are away.
- **Worship Planning** (in collaboration with Pastor(s), Choir Director and Music Team)
  - Establish an annual worship calendar
  - Assist with design/development of regular worship services (including themes, format, music, lay involvement, etc.)
  - Participate on worship team for weekly evaluation/debrief of worship service
  - Work with the pastor(s) to arrange for **Special Worship Services** such as Advent Sundays, Christmas Eve, Lent/Holy Week/ Easter, ordinations, Confirmation/Affirmation, and others.
- **Actively participate in worship services including the following:**
  - Prepare and serve communion to the congregation in worship on a monthly basis
  - Serve as Deacon of the Day
  - Serve as Liturgist, prayer leaders, etc.
  - Participate/assist with baptisms/dedications

### **Church Membership**

- Conduct orientation classes (at least one per year) for prospective new members
- Offer a Confirmation/Affirmation class for the church's high school youth, generally on a bi-annual basis.

### **Member Care**

- Support Caring Ministry Team leaders who coordinate volunteers for meals, driving, grief support, communications, TLC and other needs as may be identified.
- Provide occasional communion to shut-in/home bound members of the church.
- Acclimate/shepherd new members into active participation in the life of the church.
- Nurture spiritual growth and development of church members; serve as spiritual coaches.

## Finances

- Have care of the **Living Memorial Fund**. This Fund provides church members with an opportunity to donate funds in memory of loved ones or in honor of individuals who may be associated with the church or its members. The funds are to be used for the purchase of specific tangible items and projects of permanent or long-term benefit to the church.
- Have care of the **Deacons' Fund** (generated by a monthly communion offering). The Deacons may disburse money from this fund for emergency use by persons in need including but not limited to Franklin Federated Church members, individuals who are part of the extended church family and members of the community at large.

## Pastoral support/relations

- Provide spiritual support and on-going feedback to pastor(s)
- Assist with conflict resolution
- Support/evaluate "in-care" student ministers
- Be available to serve as intermediaries between church member(s) and the pastor(s), when the need arises in order to nurture a healthy and loving Christian relationship within and among the entire congregation

## Administrative

- Serve on the church council
- Establish policies/procedures to carry out the above listed responsibilities
- Prepare annual report
- Participate in an annual Diaconate retreat

## The Deacons will also collaborate with other committees and participate on task forces for the following activities:

- Evaluation of the church's ministries including pastors
- Marketing/promotion/outreach/publicity efforts to cultivate membership growth
- Hospitality efforts to welcome prospective members
- Annual updating of church membership roles (with church clerks and office secretary)

## Investment Ministry:

The Investment Ministry Team will have a minimum of five (5) members. Duties of this committee are covered elsewhere in these by-laws, see article X, Investment Ministry Team.

**Missions Ministry:**

The Missions Ministry Team will have a minimum of three (3) members. The Missions Ministry Team will provide for missionary education in the church, encourage the support of benevolence programs, especially those in the American Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ, prepare an annual budget of the benevolence monies for the members of the church at least one week prior to the annual meeting, expend the benevolence and monies of the church as prescribed by the benevolence budget, and undertake special missionary programs and social actions.

**Music Ministry:**

The Music Ministry Team will have a minimum of three (3) members and will provide for the instrumental and vocal music of the church. The Music Ministry Team will be responsible for all instrument maintenance. The Music Ministry Team will prepare a budget each year as part of the budgeting process.

**Pledge Ministry:**

The Pledge Ministry Team will have a minimum of three (3) members. This team has a 6-month term beginning in August. Responsibilities are as follows: planning and execution of the annual pledge drive of the church in cooperation with the Pastor(s) and church council.

**Denominational Representatives:**

The council will appoint representatives to the United Church of Christ Conference(s) and to The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts.

**Interfaith Council Representatives:**

Two church members will be chosen by the church council for the Franklin Interfaith Council.

**Vacancies:**

Vacancies on ministries or the church council will be filled by church council vote.

**Supervision:**

The Pastor will supervise all church employees including the Associate Pastor, Secretary, Music Director, and Sexton.

**Annual Reviews:**

A task force appointed by the church council will conduct written annual reviews of all employees with input from the congregation, the pastor, and relevant ministries.

### **Hiring Employees:**

The church council will call a cross-section of members to form a search team for the Music Director, Secretary, Sexton, and any other employees deemed necessary by the congregation. The church council will supply the search team with the job description and financial package information. The search team will present the results to the church council for approval.

### **Article IX Conflict Transformation**

When misunderstandings or conflicts arise between parties in the church, such conflicts will be handled with a process suggested by Matthew 18, 15-17:

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

The process by which this passage will be interpreted will be as follows:

- A. Parties are encouraged to resolve their conflicts among themselves.

Any party in this church who feels seriously aggrieved by another is in duty bound to seek an amiable settlement of the grievance, following Matthew, unless the party strongly feels that to do so would endanger him/her or cause other harm or mental anguish. In such cases, the party should bring the matter to the Pastor for advice and/or mediation.

- B. Disputes which cannot be resolved by the parties.

If either party to a conflict, after reflection, and where appropriate, consultation with the Pastor, feels that the dispute has not been satisfactorily resolved by the parties, he/she may petition the council, either directly or through the Pastor or the Moderator. The council will then appoint a trained mediator or an ad hoc Issues and Concerns task force which will be charged with investigating the conflict and proposing a solution to the parties to it, unless the task force feels that the matter is so serious that it should be referred to the council for resolution. Both parties to the conflict will have a right to be heard by the mediator or the Issues and Concerns task force and are strongly encouraged to give serious and fair consideration to the task force recommendation. However, if either party feels dissatisfied, he/she may appeal the matter to the council.

- C. Disputes which cannot be resolved by the council.

If the mediator or the Issues and Concerns task force, or either party appeals to the council, the council will give careful consideration to the matter. The mediator or the Issues and Concerns task force will file a report with the council summarizing the presentations of both parties and its proposed solution and the rationale for that solution. The council may, but is not required to, hear testimony from the parties. The council will propose a solution to the dispute, and the council's recommendation will be final, unless the recommendation includes a sanction against one of the parties, such as removal from church offices, committees, privileges or membership. If the recommendation includes such a sanction, the sanctioned party will have a right to appeal the decision directly to the membership of the church. The council will determine the procedure by which said appeal to the membership will take place.

## **Article X Investment Ministry**

1. The Investment Ministry Team will consist of five (5) members of the church, four (4) of whom will be appointed by the council and the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) will be the Treasurer. The appointed members will be appointed for terms of one (1) to three (3) years commencing on the date of the annual meeting of the church in the calendar year of their appointment. Appointed members may be reappointed. Vacancies in membership will be filled by the council for the balance of the unexpired term. The team will elect from its members a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a Secretary.
2. The Investment Ministry Team will have general oversight of the investments of the endowment funds and such other properties of the church as will be placed in its charge by the council or vote of the church. The team will have custody of all securities and other instruments constituting such investments and may appoint a financial institution as custodian of such securities and instruments. The team will have the sole authority to invest and reinvest the funds of the church under its charge in lawful investment in the name of the church; to sell, exchange, and transfer any stocks, bonds, or other securities constituting such investments; and to open and maintain bank accounts and money market funds for such funds. Purchases and sales of securities and other investment transactions will be executed by the Treasurer and in the absence of the Treasurer by such other member of the team as will be designated by the team.
3. The Investment Ministry Team will establish investment policies and procedures with respect to the investment and handling of the funds, securities and other property in its charge which policies and procedures and any changes therein will be submitted to the council for approval.

4.     The Investment Ministry Team will submit reports of its activities to the council at least quarterly, and an annual report to the church at the annual meeting.
5.     An independent audit of the activities of the investment ministry may be requested at any time by the church council.

### **Article XI Pastor**

1.     The Pastor will have in his/her charge the welfare of the church and the furtherance of its purposes, life and work, with the assistance of the council. The Pastor will administer the sacraments/ordinances, have responsibility for all services of public worship, all weddings, formal receptions of members, and funerals, and administer the activities of the church in cooperation with the council. The Pastor will be an advisor and coach to all church ministries, teams, and gatherings.
2.     The standing of the Pastor as the ordained minister of the church will be in the Central Massachusetts Association of the United Church of Christ. A Baptist pastor must be a member of The American Baptist Church of Massachusetts.
3.     The Pastor will be called (elected) by the church in a meeting of the congregation by a three-fourths affirmative vote of the members present. The Pastor will be called and installed with the help and cooperation of officers of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, and the officers of The American Baptist Church of Massachusetts.
4.     The Pastor will be elected by the church for an indefinite period. Termination of the relationship will include consultation with officers of the United Church of Christ Central Massachusetts Association or The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts. Either party may require three month's notice.

### **Article XII Safe Church**

The church will maintain a written 'Safe Church' policy on file in the church office. This policy will be in accordance with Massachusetts law and will be reviewed annually by the church council or a task force appointed by the church council and updated as necessary.

### **Article XIII Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year will be January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Article XIV Amendments**

Amendments to these by-laws may be made at any duly called meeting of the church, provided a notice giving the amendment is posted in the church and mailed to the membership at least one month prior to the date of the meeting. A vote of three-fourths of the members present will be required.