

First Church of Christ~Bradford

MEMBERSHIP *matters*

4.20.24



fccbradford.org

First Church of Christ ~ Bradford

10 Church St Bradford, MA 01835

(978) 374-1114

www.fccbradford.org

Membership Covenant Application

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of The First Church of Christ, Bradford. To begin with we want to express to you several things about us to help you understand where we are coming from in this subject of Membership.

First, ***membership covenant in a local congregation is God's idea***. And since it is God's idea, we can learn from His word, the Bible, what His covenant is with us through Jesus Christ, and what our covenant is to look like with one another. God is committed to us in the love of His Son no matter what! We are to know this love and reflect His love to one another. This is God's wonderful design for His people!

Second, ***we take membership joyfully serious***. In this day in age of shallow commercial jingles and healthy-relationship starvation, we desire to become friends who understand what it means to be in *common-unity* with our Lord Jesus Christ and each other, to lock arms together in a common cause, to commit ourselves to our God and one another in Christian love & mission. We want to learn to be great friends!

Third, ***we are aware that none of us is perfect***, but God alone. Human friendship is one broken person, in community with another broken person, living together in a broken world, but with a Faithful God! We are all in the process of learning and growing. We realize that there are always 3 sides to every relational problem: yours, mine & the truth. Therefore, we want to commit ourselves to our relationships and to learn in them and from them. We are convinced that God will help us, especially when things are tough!

We understand that we need our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ, and we need each other. He did not design the *Body of Christ* so that we can live in isolation from one another. Truly God has designed the body to demonstrate that our walk with God is a community project.

This application process is a two-way street of getting better acquainted. Included the following:

- Application
- FCC Articles of Faith / Membership Covenant
- Article: "Why You Should Join A Church"
- About FCC / By-Laws

Warmly,



Pastor Danny Ovalle & The FCC Family
First Church of Christ ~ Bradford

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www.fccbradford.org

Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **cell:** _____

e-mail: _____

GENERAL

Are you a Christian? _____

How long have you been a Christian? _____

In a few sentences, how did you become a Christian?

Have you ever been baptized? If YES, where / when? How was this done: sprinkling as an infant / full immersion? _____

If you are transferring your membership from a previous church, please provide a letter of transfer / contact information:

In your opinion, what is church membership?

Why do you desire to become a member of FCC?

THEOLOGY

In a few sentences, what is “the gospel”?

What do you consider as the essential & basic Christian teachings?

GIFTING

What are your areas of giftedness, strengths & interests?

VISION

Describe what you see God doing in/with/through this fellowship of Believers that attracts your interest to become a member?

OTHER

Do you have any questions for the leadership of FCC?

Do you have any prayer needs or anything you would like information about?

Please tell us something about you: interests/hobbies/degrees/field of employment/fun-facts...

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Comments / Questions from Pastor & Deacon(s):

ARTICLES OF FAITH

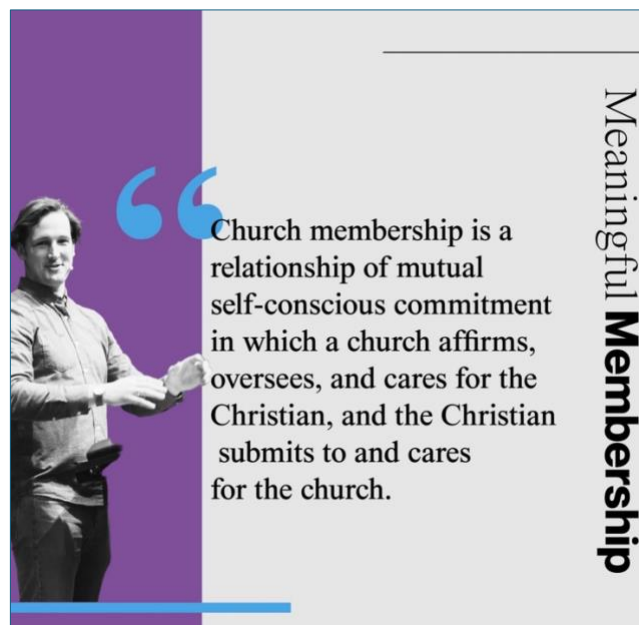
1. There is one only living and true God, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the Universe; a Being self-existent, independent and unchangeable; infinite in power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.
2. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were written by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and are an infallible rule of faith and practice.
3. God exists as revealed in the Scriptures, in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.
4. God made all things for himself, and governs them according to the counsel of His own will; the principles and administration of His government being perfectly holy, just and good.
5. The first human pair were made upright, and constituted the general representatives of the whole human family; but they sinned against God by eating of the forbidden fruit, and in consequence of their apostasy all their descendants are alienated from God and opposed to his law, till renewed by the Holy Spirit.
6. The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being God as well as man, has made atonement for sin, in view of which pardon is freely offered to all, and God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.
7. Repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is the immediate duty of every sinner; and they who are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, and accept of salvation, will be preserved to God's eternal kingdom of glory in heaven.
8. Under the christian dispensation, the ordinances of the church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Believers and households are proper subjects for baptisms; and all who are truly penitent and believing in Christ are proper candidates for the Lord's Supper.
9. There will be a general resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust, and a day of judgment in which the Lord Jesus Christ will award to every accountable creature according to his deeds. The wicked will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

In the presence of God, angels and men, you do now solemnly confess the Lord God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be your God, the object of your supreme love and your portion forever. You cordially acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ in all his mediatorial offices, as Prophet, Priest and King, to be your only Saviour; and the Holy Ghost to be your only sanctifier, comforter and guide. You humbly and cheerfully devote yourself to God in the everlasting covenant of his grace, consecrating all your powers and faculties, with all that you possess, to his service; promising through the assistance of his Spirit, that you will give diligent attendance on his word and ordinances, seek the honor and interest of his kingdom, and, henceforth, denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust, live soberly, righteously and godly in the world.

You also cordially join yourself to this church, as a true church of Christ, engaging to submit to its government and discipline, to strive earnestly for its purity, peace and enlargement, and to walk with its members in all charity, faithfulness and circumspection.

We, then, the members of this Church, receive you affectionately to our communion, promising you our prayers, our Christian sympathy and our love; engaging on our part also to walk with you in all becoming watchfulness, kindness and fidelity; hoping that you and we shall become more and more conformed to the example of our divine Master, till we come at last to the perfection of holiness in the kingdom of his glory. AMEN.



Frequently asked Questions on the Subject of Church Membership:

<http://www.9marks.org/what-are-the-9marks/membership>

Introduction:

What is church membership?

According to the Bible, church membership is a commitment every Christian should make to attend, love, serve, and submit to a local church.

Where is it in the Bible?

Throughout Old Testament history, God made a clear distinction between his people and the world (see [Lev. 13:46](#), [Num. 5:3](#), [Deut. 7:3](#)).

Christ says that entering the kingdom of God means being bound to the church “on earth” ([Matt. 16:16-19](#); [18:17-19](#)). Where do we see the church on earth? The local church.

The New Testament explicitly refers to some people being *inside* the church and some people being *outside* ([1 Cor. 5:12-13](#)). This is much more than a casual association.

The church in Corinth consisted of a definite number of believers, such that Paul could speak of a punishment inflicted by the majority ([2 Cor. 2:6](#)).

Not only does the New Testament speak of the reality of church membership, but its dozens of “one anothers” are written to local churches, which fill out our understanding of what church membership should practically look like.

Why is it important?

Biblical church membership is important because the church presents God’s witness to himself in the world. It displays his glory. In the church’s membership, then, non-Christians should see in the lives of God’s changed people that God is holy and gracious and that his gospel is powerful for saving and transforming sinners.

Is church membership biblical?

The highest moral laws in the secular west today are toleration and non-judgmentalism. The very ideas of *inclusion* and *exclusion* in any context make people think of elitism, xenophobia, or racism.

Still, church membership is an idea with deep biblical roots:

The garden of Eden had an inside and an outside ([Gen. 2:8](#), [3:24](#)).

Noah's ark had an inside and an outside ([Gen. 7:16](#)).

The people of God in the wilderness had to be ceremonially clean to remain inside the camp and not to be cast outside ([Lev. 13:46](#), [Num. 5:3](#)).

The nation of Israel was to have an inside and an outside, as represented by food laws, festivals, political boundaries, places of worship, and even strong provisions against inter-marriage (Lev. 11, Lev. 23, Josh. 14-21, 1 Kings 8, [Deut. 7:3](#)).

In the New Testament, the ethnic and cultural boundary markers of the Old Testament are exploded. But a clear, bright line remains between those who are God's people and those who are not, as indicated by their profession of faith and the visible fruit of their lives, as well as by the practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper ([Rom. 6:3-4](#), [1 Cor. 11:17-34](#), [Gal. 3:27](#)). Baptism and the Lord's Supper are what give substance and shape to a church's membership. There is an *inside* (those who have been baptized and are welcomed to the Lord's table) and an *outside* (those who are not).

In [1 Corinthians 5:12-13](#) Paul challenges the Corinthian church to judge those who are *inside* the church and leave judging *outsiders* to God. How did the Corinthians know who was in and who was out? They knew whom Paul was talking about because some people had formally, publicly identified themselves with the church in Corinth while the rest of the city had not. Those who had were inside the church. They were the church's members. Those who hadn't were not.

Where do we see church membership in the New Testament?

[Matthew 18:15-17](#): "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault...if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you...If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." The ability to exclude someone from "the church" presupposes that it's known who belongs to "the church" as a member in the first place.

[Acts 5:12-13](#): "Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem." So, people faced the decision of whether or not they would *join* the church in Jerusalem. This joining is more public and definite than an informal association.

In [1 Timothy 5:9-12](#), Paul gives Timothy instructions for enrolling widows on the list of those receiving support from the church. He writes, "Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works..." While this isn't conclusive evidence for formal church membership, it's tough to

imagine that the church in Ephesus would have kept a list of *widows* but not have any formal means of identifying everyone who belonged to the church.

1 [Corinthians 5:12-13](#): “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.” Paul called upon the Corinthian church to judge those who were inside the church, not those who were outside. They were responsible for the testimony of those who belonged to the church, not those who didn’t. This passage makes no sense if the Corinthian church didn’t have some public, formal means by which people identified themselves with the church.

2 [Corinthians 2:6](#): Paul writes concerning a man the Corinthian church had excommunicated, “For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.” This man’s exclusion from the church was a punishment *by the majority*. You can’t have a majority unless you have a definite set of people from which a majority is constituted.

(Much of this material has been adapted from Michael McKinley’s article, [“Church Membership and the NCLHGA”](#))

According to Scripture, why should every Christian join a church?

Every Christian should join a church because Scripture requires it. Granted, there is no direct command in Scripture that says, “Every Christian must join a local church,” but two factors in Scripture indicate that every Christian should be a member of a local church.

Jesus established the church to be a public, earthly institution that would mark out, affirm, and oversee those who profess to believe in him ([Matt. 16:18-19](#), [18:15-20](#)). Jesus established the church to publicly declare those who belong to him in order to give the world a display of the good news about himself ([John 17:21](#), [23](#); see also [Eph. 3:10](#)). Jesus wants the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn’t. And how is the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn’t? They are to see which people publicly identify themselves with his people in the visible, public institution he established for this very purpose. They’re to look at the members of his church. And if some people claim to be part of the universal church even though they belong to no local church, they reject Jesus’ plan for them and his church. Jesus intends for his people to be marked out as a visible, public group, which means joining together in local churches.

Scripture repeatedly commands Christians to submit to their leaders ([Heb. 13:17](#); [1 Thess. 5:12-13](#)). The only way to do that is by publicly committing to be members of their flock, and saying in effect, “I commit to listening to your teaching, following your direction, and to submitting to your leadership.” There’s no way to obey the scriptural commands to submit to your leaders if you never actually *submit* to them by joining a local church.

What are some other reasons to join a church?

In addition to the New Testament's teaching that every Christian should submit to a local church and its leaders (see [Matt. 18:15-20](#), [Heb. 13:17](#)), there are *many* other good reasons to join a church:

Assure yourself. Membership is the church's way of affirming the validity of someone's profession of faith ([Matt. 16:19](#), [18:18](#)). The church looks at a person's life, hears their explanation of the gospel and how they came to believe it, and says, "You look like a Christian to us. So join us. Watch over our lives and we'll watch over yours." So, while membership in a church doesn't guarantee that someone is a Christian, it should assure believers of the genuineness of their faith.

Evangelize the world. We can preach the gospel to our community and the world much better together than we can apart. Not only that, but as we covenant with other Christians to love, encourage and admonish one another, we display a living, breathing image of the gospel to the world.

Expose false gospels. As the members of a church support and submit to its teaching, they collectively say, "This is the truth! World, pay attention!" and their unity in doing so works to expose corruptions and imitations of the true gospel.

Edify the church. When we join a local church we let the pastors and other members of that church know that we intend to attend regularly, give faithfully, pray for the church, and serve the church as we have opportunity. We allow fellow believers to have greater expectations of us in these areas, and we hold them responsible in these ways as well. So join a church in order to build it up ([Eph. 4:11-16](#)). You can do far more to build up the church as a committed member than as a detached, autonomous attender. And it will do good to your own soul as well.

Glorify God. Jesus told his disciples, "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" ([John 13:34-35, NIV](#)). We testify to the world about what God is like by how we love one another—and a committed, persevering, accountable love is a far greater picture of God's love than a picky-and-choosy, I'll-only-be-involved-with-the-people-I-want kind of "love." By committing to one another as members of the same church we display the glory of God's love—a committed, persevering, transforming love—as we image it in our lives together, and so bring him glory.

(Some of this material has been adapted from *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, pages 151-159)

What should be required of someone in order to join a church?

In order to join a local church someone should be:

A Christian. Only someone who credibly professes faith in Christ should be a member of a Christian church.

Baptized. Only those who have publicly identified with Christ and his church by baptism should be allowed to publicly identify with his church by membership.

A regular attender. A church cannot oversee and affirm a person's profession of faith if they do not regularly attend. Without attendance, membership is meaningless.

Someone who confesses the same faith as the church and is willing to live as a Christian together with the church. A Christian should be able to affirm a church's statement of faith and church covenant, if it has such documents. Only someone who agrees with the church's stated beliefs and who intends to live a life marked by love for the members of that church should be allowed to join.

Willing to submit to the leadership of the church. If a person isn't willing to follow the church's leaders he will inevitably stir up division and strife. It's best for him to join a church whose leaders he *can* obey.

The idea in all this not to be exclusive or to turn people away. The point in requiring all these things of prospective members is that the church is supposed to reflect God's character to the world. When a church's members are genuine, growing Christians, God's glory is put on display and the gospel is commended to the world. It's actually loving to require that church members be genuine Christians: it's good for their own souls, it's good for non-Christians, and it brings glory to God.

What should a church expect from its members?

A church should expect that its members will:

Attend services regularly. [Hebrews 10:25](#) commands Christians not to forsake assembling together. Attending services regularly is one of the basic commitments of membership and one of the basic ways that a church member can grow in the faith, get to know other Christians, and allow the church leaders to shepherd and watch over his life.

Attend communion particularly. Members should strive to be present when Christ's death is commemorated and the church's unity is displayed in communion.

Attend members' meetings consistently (if the church is congregational). This is when the church makes decisions as a church that affect the whole church.

Pray regularly. If your church has a membership directory, consider encouraging members to use it as a prayer list.

Give regularly. The apostle Paul writes, “One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches” ([Gal. 6:6](#)).

Build relationships with other members. Being a member in a local church is like being a hand or an eye ([1 Cor. 12:21](#)). You can’t function without all the other parts of the body. Just as a body functions when each part does its job and works together with all the other members, a local church is built up into maturity in Christ as the members minister in an intimately interrelated way ([Eph. 4:15-16](#), [1 Cor. 12:12-26](#)). So a church should expect that its members will build relationships with other members.

Submit to the church’s leaders. The Scripture says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” ([Heb. 13:17](#)).

Serve as God gives opportunity. God has given spiritual gifts to every member of the body of Christ so that everyone would use his or her gifts to build up the entire body ([1 Cor. 12:7](#)). A church should expect that all of its members will serve the whole church as God enables.

(Some of this material has been adapted from *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, pages 161-163)

What are the benefits of church membership to the Christian?

It commits you, the Christian. It’s good to commit yourself to love and serve others. You will grow as a Christian as you commit to encourage, build up, strengthen, serve, rebuke, and pray for other Christians.

Others are committed to you. Becoming a member of a church means joining with an entire group of Christians who have now covenanted to watch over *you* spiritually. If you’re a member of a church you have an entire church full of people who are publicly committed to loving *you* and serving you and watching over you.

Elder protection. If you’re a member of a church, that church’s elders and pastors should care for you, pray for you, and personally counsel and teach you. As a member of their church, they are accountable to God for how they lead you ([Heb. 13:17](#)).

Safety net. In his book *Stop Dating the Church*, Josh Harris points out that it’s comforting to know his church would kick him out rather than tolerate his unrepentant sin. Being a church member means that a whole church full of people are committed to helping you live a life that’s pleasing to God, even to the point of excluding you from the church if you stop repenting of sin. While this sounds harsh to some, to those of us who know the deceitfulness of sin, this is an immensely comforting and encouraging reality ([Heb. 3:12](#)).

Assurance. Membership is the church's affirmation of the validity of someone's profession of faith ([Matt. 16:19](#), [18:18](#)). The church looks at a person's life, hears their explanation of the gospel and how they came to believe it, and says, "You look like a Christian to us. So join us. Watch over our lives and we'll watch over yours." So while membership in a church doesn't guarantee that someone is a Christian, it should assure believers of the genuineness of their faith.

How does a well-defined membership commend and clarify the gospel?

A well-defined membership commends and clarifies the gospel by

Showing the world who is a Christian and who is not. The clearer the line between Christian and non-Christian, the clearer the gospel will be.

Demonstrating that the gospel is a life-transforming message. When a church is full of people who have been set free from slavery to sin and now are slaves of righteousness ([Rom. 6:15-23](#)), it will show the world that the gospel really is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ([Rom. 1:16](#)), and that this salvation necessarily involves living a radically new life of holiness and obedience to God.

Displaying the power of the gospel to unite people. When a church is composed of Christians who are united in faith and love, that church demonstrates that the gospel has power to unite people who would otherwise be divided. It also shows that the gospel is not limited to any ethnic or social group, but is rather a universally relevant message that calls *all* people to repent and offers eternal life to *everyonewho* believes in Christ.

Isn't the idea of membership just a modern American idea?

Hardly.

The ancient Romans understood each citizen to be a member of their society in the same way that our hands, eyes, feet, and so on are all members of our body.

The New Testament asserts that Christians are members of one another because we are all members of the body of Christ ([Rom. 12:5](#)).

The New Testament church was composed of people who had publicly joined themselves to the church such that Paul can assume that the Corinthian church will know who is "inside" and who is "outside" ([1 Cor. 5:12-13](#)).

The church in Corinth excluded an unrepentant sinner "by the will of the majority" ([2 Cor. 2:6](#)), which presupposes a defined group of people, all of whom together had the right to act as a church.

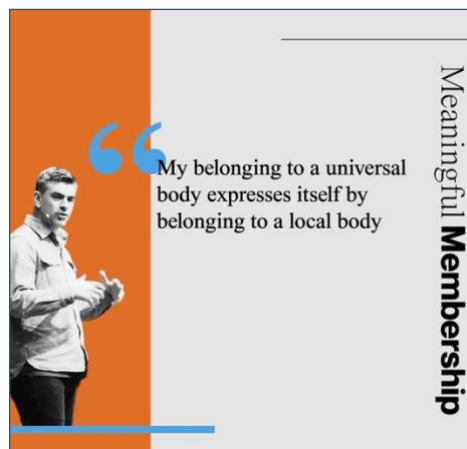
Even the idea of excluding someone from the church because of unrepentant sin (see [Matt. 18:15-20](#), [1 Cor. 5:1-13](#), and [2 Cor. 2:6](#)) presupposes that there is some defined body to which a person belongs. If there were no formal membership in the New Testament, then Jesus and Paul's teaching about church discipline would be meaningless. If someone doesn't formally belong, how can they be kicked out?

Is church membership wrongly exclusive?

Tolerance and inclusivity are the quintessential postmodern virtues. It seems that the only way to be genuinely wrong in contemporary western society is to ever exclude anyone. Contemporary westerners are born cherishing particular conceptions of diversity, inclusion, and tolerance. The problem is that *all* people are born sinners and therefore are excluded from the favor and fellowship of God. All people are born children of God's wrath ([Eph. 2:3](#)). So before we start arguing about whether or not church membership is wrongly exclusive, it needs to be said that the Bible portrays God as excluding *all of us* from fellowship with himself because of our sin. And the Bible teaches that all those who do not turn from their sin and trust in Christ will experience not only God's exclusion after they die, but his active punishment for their sins. So is church membership exclusive? In one sense, yes, of course it is. Church membership is intended to draw a clear, bright line between the church and the world.

But is it *wrongly* exclusive? Not inherently (though right principles can be wrongly applied). Church membership is meant to *include* only Christians in order that the church would corporately draw a picture of the gospel it preaches. A clear distinction between the church and the world actually serves non-Christians by clarifying and commending the gospel. In fact a wrongly *inclusive* approach to church membership is just what non-Christians *don't* need, because it confuses the gospel, blurs the line between Christian and non-Christian, and can even help deceive non-Christians into thinking they're Christians when their lives demonstrate no fruit of having turned from their sin and trusted in Christ.

This FAQ is taken from 9Marks Ministries: <http://www.9marks.org/what-are-the9marks/membership> <http://www.9marks.org/answers-for-church-members/membership>



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About FCC

“Connecting God’s inexhaustible grace to an exhausted world through the finished work of Jesus Christ!”

Rooted in the Bible...

First Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, and holds as truth the doctrine of the Trinity: God as Father and Creator, Jesus as the Son and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as Guide and Comforter. It further acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share this confession. It adheres to the Word of God in Scriptures and in the direction of the Holy Spirit to prosper its redemptive mission in the world.

Connected to the Past...

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.

Relevant in the Present...

It accepts the responsibility to make this faith its own in the reality of worship and in the expression of its mission and ministry locally and into the world. In accordance with the teachings of Jesus, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Its very existence is to serve God by providing all people an opportunity for Christian worship, education, fellowship, pastoral care and mission within the spirit of Christian love.

Hopeful for the Future...

By the grace of God, we are not what we used to be, not what we will be, but are being transformed into the image and likeness of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ, day by day, and from one degree of glory to another, until the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

~ FCC Statement of Faith (By-Laws: Article 4, Section 1.A).

BY-LAWS
The First Church of Christ, Bradford
Bradford, Massachusetts
Reviewed and Accepted
February 13, 2022

Article 1

Section 1 - Name:

- A. This Church shall be called THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, BRADFORD. The name has come down from the day in 1682 when residents met “under hopeful probability of settling a Church of Christ in Bradford”. It is a religious society, incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on December 31, 1915.

Article 2

Section 1 - Purpose:

- A. It is the purpose of this Church of Christ to provide for and maintain public worship of the One and Eternal God; to bring all peoples into communion with God the Father, revealed in Jesus Christ and nurtured by the continued working of the Holy Spirit; to provide for the development of Christian character, the furtherance of the religious, moral and social interests of the community, and in fellowship with other Christian churches and agencies to engage in such other charitable and missionary work that will advance the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

Section 2 - Statement of Inclusiveness:

- A. All individuals are welcome in full participation into our Christian family community, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origins, economic status or disability. We hold paramount the safety of the Church community so that it might be a sanctuary of peace for all who enter. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, New International Version).

Article 3

Section 1 - Polity:

- A. The government of this Church is vested in its members, who exercise under God the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Laws regulating such incorporated religious societies in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

- B. This church will extend to other Christian churches that fellowship and cooperation that should unite all true followers of Jesus Christ.

Article 4

Section 1 - Faith:

- A. This Church acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, and holds as truth the doctrine of the Trinity: God as Father and Creator, Jesus as the Son and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as Guide and Comforter. It further acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share this confession. It adheres to the Word of God in Scriptures and in the direction of the Holy Spirit to prosper its redemptive mission 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. It accepts the responsibility to make this faith its own in the reality of worship and in the expression of its mission and ministry locally and into the world. In accordance with the teachings of Jesus, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Its very existence is to serve God by providing all people an opportunity for Christian worship, education, fellowship, pastoral care and mission within the spirit of Christian love.

Section 2 - Covenant:

- A. We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and will of God. Our purpose is to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church to declare the Gospel of Christ, while worshipping God, and striving for truth, justice and peace. As did our ancestors, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God. We look forward toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.

Article 5

Section 1 - Membership:

- A. **Admission:** Membership in this Church shall be open to any baptized person who shares its purpose and enters into its covenant. Members may be received by Confession of Faith, Reaffirmation of Faith or Letter of Transfer.
- B. New members shall be received during a regular service of worship.

Section 2 - Duties:

- A. Members shall pledge themselves to regularly attend worship and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the Church; to contribute to its support and benevolence; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

Section 3 - Rights:

- A. All members who fulfill their duties shall be considered as active members. An active member shall be eligible for election to any one office, or to any one or more Committees. All active members shall have the right to vote at Annual or Special meetings of the Church.

Section 4 - Termination:

- A. A member on his or her own request, will be granted a letter of transfer. If wishing to join a body not in fellowship with this Church, he or she may be dismissed with a certificate of Church membership. The Clerk will report this action at the next Annual Meeting.
- B. A member wishing to resign from the membership of this Church may do so by notifying the Pastor or Clerk or Senior Deacon in writing. The Pastor and a member of the Diaconate will request an opportunity to discuss the reasons for the resignation with the member, and will share the outcome of that meeting with the entire Diaconate. The resignation will be accepted, if still requested, and the Clerk will write a letter of dismissal and will report it at the next Annual Meeting.
- C. The Diaconate shall review the membership rolls annually. A member whose address has been unknown, or who for a period of two years has not attended worship, received the Lord's Supper or contributed to its support either by time, talent and/or treasure shall be asked by letter and/or personal contact by a member of the Diaconate to clarify their relationship to the Church with regard to their lack of participation. If they have not responded or indicated any effort to correct the situation within three months, they may be placed on the inactive list by a vote of the Diaconate. If such action occurs, the Clerk will report it at the next Annual Meeting. After another two years the names of such inactive members may, unless previously restored to the active list, be removed from the membership rolls by a vote of the Diaconate. If such action occurs, the Clerk will report it at the next Annual Meeting. Exceptions may be made for those members who are homebound, physically/mentally disabled or military personnel.
- D. Inactive members, upon request from the Diaconate, shall be restored to active membership by majority vote of the Diaconate.

Article 6

Section 1 – Meetings:

- A. The official and financial year of the Church shall be January 1 through December 31.
- B. The Annual Meeting of this Church will be held between the third Sunday in January and the third Sunday in February. The Standing Committee shall announce the specific date at least one month in advance of said Annual Meeting. In case the meeting cannot be held, it will meet the following Sunday, without having to wait for any additional announcement.
- C. At the Annual and/or Special meetings, a quorum shall consist of at least fifteen percent of the active membership. The Clerk shall determine the exact figure and post it in the warrant calling for the meeting. At a Special meeting for the said purpose of dismissing the Pastor, the quorum shall be at least fifty-one percent of the active membership. The Clerk shall determine the exact figure and post it in the warrant calling for the meeting. At all meetings, a majority vote shall prevail except as otherwise provided for in these By-Laws.
- D. All Officers, Committees and organizations shall report at the Annual Meeting and at such times as may be requested by the Church.
- E. Following each Annual Meeting all Officers, Committees and organizations shall assume their duties immediately and continue in office until their successors are elected. Each Committee and organization shall meet within twenty-one days to organize itself for the new year.
- F. Special meetings shall be called by the Clerk upon written request of the Pastor or the Standing Committee or ten active members of the Church.
- G. All Annual and/or Special meetings shall be called by a warrant issued by the Clerk, stating the purpose of said meeting. The Clerk shall post the warrant in a conspicuous place in the Church as least ten days prior to said Annual and/or Special meeting. The warrant shall be read from the pulpit during worship on the preceding Sunday and the Sunday of said Annual and/or Special meeting and shall be publicized through the regular communication channels of the Church.
- H. The order of proceedings at all meetings not otherwise prescribed by these By-Laws, shall be determined by the rules of practice contained in Robert's Rules of Order.

- I. The active membership at a duly called meeting shall be the only authority with the power to sell, buy, mortgage, transfer or in any other way encumber the real property of the Church.

Article 7

Section 1 – Property:

- A. The Church 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 Church may undertake and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, and convey such property for the general purposes of the Church: 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.
- B. Upon dissolution of the Church, its assets and all property and interest of which it shall then be possessed, including any devise, 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 Trustees of the Funds for the Support of a Congregational Minister in the First Parish of Bradford, established by law on February 10, 1804.
- C. Upon dissolution of the Church, the historical records shall be given to the Congregational Library, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts for their use.
- D. Upon dissolution of the Church, all the communion ware and baptismal ware shall be given to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts for their use and safekeeping.

Article 8

Section 1 - Pastor:

- A. The Pastor shall have a central place of leadership in all of the affairs of the Church. It shall be the Pastor's duty to preach the Word, to administer the Sacraments, to care for the stated services of worship, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the Church. The Pastor shall seek to inspire, to guide and to support the members of this Church in their ministry to each other and in their cooperate ministry to the people of this community. It is expected that priority is given to the preaching, to the teaching, to the pastoral functions of the Church, and to those concerns which bear most directly on the fulfillment of these functions. The Pastor will be devoted to such disciplines of prayer and of study as shall be required; and will seek to extend personal ministry to

this Church through involvement in the social and religious concerns of the larger community. The Pastor shall be a member of this Church and shall be ex-officio and advisory member of the boards and Committees of the Church. The Pastor shall attend meetings of the Executive Committee, the Standing Committee, Diaconate and Pastor-Parish Committee and may attend meetings of other Committees at his/her own discretion or at the request of the Committee. The Pastor shall hold staff meetings as required to maintain the coordination of support activities. The Pastor shall keep the appropriate boards and or Committees aware of performance issues. The Pastor shall submit to the Annual Meeting a written report of the spiritual health of the Church.

- B. The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite time by a three-quarters vote of a quorum of the active members present and voting at a meeting called for that purpose following the procedures for all meetings of the Church.
- C. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, a meeting of the Church shall be called for the purpose of electing a Pastoral Search Committee. The Standing Committee shall nominate five members for the Committee. In addition, two other members shall be elected by the Church, with the understanding that the Committee will represent both sexes and various age and fellowship groups of the Church. The Pastoral Search Committee will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as it begins its work. The initial compensation package of the Pastor shall be determined by the Search Committee, Diaconate and the Finance Committee, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee.
- D. The existing Pastor's compensation package shall be determined by a majority vote of a quorum of the active members present and voting at the Annual Meeting. Compensation package recommendations will be made by the Finance Committee following consultation with the Diaconate.
- E. While the term of the Pastor shall be indefinite, the Church may at any time, by a three-quarters vote of a quorum of the active members present and voting at a meeting called for such purpose, request the resignation of the Pastor with the expectation that it will be presented within thirty days. The Pastor shall give sixty days notice if he/she wishes to leave of his/her own choice.
- F. The Pastor, together with the Moderator and the Chair of Communications Team, shall be responsible for interviewing, hiring and evaluating the Administrative Assistant. They shall report their action(s) to the Executive Committee.

Article 9

Section 1 - Standing Committee:

- A. The Standing Committee shall consist of the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Senior Deacon, and the Chairperson or designated representative of the following Committees: Property, Finance, Christian Outreach & Music. A quorum shall consist of five persons. Each person shall have only one vote, though they may represent different Committees and share information about that Committee. Other people are encouraged to attend the meetings, but shall be considered as guests.
- B. The Standing Committee shall meet at least four times throughout the year at times chosen by the members of this Committee. Additional meetings may be proposed by the Pastor, or the Moderator or three members of the Standing Committee. They shall announce their meetings in advance so that as many people as possible will be aware of the meeting.
- C. The Standing Committee shall appoint Committee(s) for a specific purpose and limited time length to carry out a specific project on their behalf. This Committee shall report to the Standing Committee with their recommendations and suggestions before any action is taken. The Moderator shall appoint the chair of the Committee.
- D. The Standing Committee shall plan and coordinate programs for the ministry of the Church with the Pastor to meet immediate and long range plans.
- E. The Standing Committee shall present a proposed budget and slate of officers and members of the Committees to the Annual Meeting. The Standing Committee shall appoint a Nominating Committee, consisting of no more than five people to secure and suggest names to fill the necessary positions. This Committee will report to the Standing Committee at the December meeting.
- F. The Standing Committee shall exercise general authority over Church property and financial affairs. Any expenditure of non-budgeted items in excess of \$500.00 shall require a majority vote of the Standing Committee.
- G. The Standing Committee shall carry out the programs and directions of the Church as voted upon at the Annual and or special meetings.
- H. The Standing Committee from time to time may institute policies and procedures to address and resolve day-to-day administrative issues that may arise. Such policies and procedures will be made available to the general membership upon request and may be revoked and changed from time to time upon majority vote of the Standing Committee.

Article 10

Section 1 - Executive Committee:

- A. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Pastor, Senior Deacon, Moderator, Clerk, Chairperson of Finance Committee and Chairperson of Property Committee.
- B. When and if necessary, the Executive Committee shall have authority and shall act for and in behalf of the Church and the Standing Committee in carrying out various programs and directions of the Church and the Standing Committee that have been made.
- C. The Executive Committee shall meet on an as needed basis. The meetings may be called by the Pastor or Moderator or two members of the Executive Committee for the purpose of hearing reports of each member and discussing any necessary action needed about these reports.

ARTICLE 11

Section 1 - Committees:

- A. Members may serve on the same Committee for two three-year consecutive terms only. At the end of the second term, one year must elapse before that member is eligible for reelection to that Committee. Each Committee will organize itself within twenty-one days of its election at the Annual Meeting. The Chairperson shall be a member of the Church. The retiring Chairperson shall convene and chair the first meeting. If a Committee member misses three consecutive regular meetings without good reason, it shall be assumed by the Committee that he/she has tendered their resignation and the Committee shall fill the vacancy at their discretion.
- B. In the situation of any Chairperson not able to fulfill their duties, he/she shall appoint a temporary Chairperson in order that the work of the Committee shall continue.
- C. Each Committee shall submit a budget proposal to the Finance Committee by the end of October so that a budget may be prepared for approval by the Standing Committee at its December meeting.
- D. Each Committee shall submit a written report of its activities to the Annual Meeting.

Section 2 - Diaconate:

- A. The Diaconate shall consist of nine members. Three shall be elected annually to serve for a term of three years. A member of the Diaconate shall have the option at the end of his/her initial three year term to stay on as a member for an additional three year term. However, no member shall serve for more than two consecutive three year terms. After a lapse of one year, that former Diaconate member will then become eligible to again serve on the Diaconate. This shall not apply to Diaconate members serving out the term of a member who has resigned, died, or is otherwise unable to complete his/her term (referred to as the "interim term"). In that instance, the term limits set forth above shall commence after the interim term has expired. An individual serving out an interim term shall not require a vote by the congregation at large. A Senior Deacon and Secretary shall be elected by the Diaconate from among its members. The Senior Deacon shall also serve on the Executive Committee and Standing Committee as a voting member.
- B. The Diaconate shall assist in the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; to aid the Pastor in the spiritual guidance in the Church and in the community, to express care for all members of the Church, the ill, shut-ins and stranger; to bring cases in need within the Church to the knowledge of the Pastor; to call upon new families and to invite them into the life of the Church.
- C. The Diaconate will oversee aspects of the Church services including ushering, greeting, acolytes, lay readers, fellowship times after worship and other times, administration and delivering of flowers after worship and other seasonal remembrances and all other such functions that will enhance the worship and service of the Church. The Diaconate will attempt to involve as many people as possible in these many ministries, realizing that all members may serve in one way or another.
- D. The Diaconate will make an annual survey of the membership rolls of the Church in order to carry out the requirements of Article V of these By-Laws.
- E. The Diaconate shall evaluate the Pastor and suggest any salary adjustments to the Finance Committee when it is preparing the budget.
- F. The Diaconate shall be responsible in securing an Interim Pastor and arranging for a contract. The Diaconate shall be responsible for securing pastoral supply when a vacancy occurs.
- G. The Diaconate will present plans and suggestions to the Standing Committee regarding future programs objectives and share in implementing those adopted by the Church.

- H. A member of the Diaconate, along with the Pastor and Moderator shall serve as the Trustees of the Haseltine Fund.

(Responsibilities of the former Pastor-Parish & Flower Committees were revised and adopted. These responsibilities are now under the oversight of the Diaconate)

Section 3 - Property Committee:

- A. The Property Committee shall consist of four members. Two shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. A Chairperson and Secretary shall be elected by the Property Committee from among its members. The Chairperson shall also serve on the Executive Committee and Standing Committee as a voting member.
- B. The Property Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance and improvement of all Church property.
- C. The Property Committee shall review annually the insurance coverage on Church property and to take the appropriate steps to provide adequate protection and adequate bonding.
- D. The Property Committee shall coordinate and assist groups in the use of the building and review annually and suggest a fee schedule and building usage guidelines to the Standing Committee for its approval and publication.

Section 4 - Finance Committee:

- A. The Finance Committee shall consist of four persons, with two being elected to a three year term. The Chairperson shall be an indefinite position, due to the nature of the work. He/she shall be a voting member of the Executive Committee and Standing Committee. The Committee shall elect its own Secretary. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be ex-officio members of this Committee.
- B. The Finance Committee shall prepare, in cooperation with the other Committees and organizations in this Church, the annual budget and submit it to the Standing Committee for its review. The budget will be submitted by the Standing Committee to the Church for a vote.
- C. The Finance Committee shall be responsible for properly accounting for all monies collected from fund raising activities of the Church. The Finance Committee, in conjunction with such Stewardship Committee as may be formed, shall plan the Church's stewardship campaign. All proposals shall be presented to the Standing Committee for advice, discussion and approval.

The Finance Committee shall create a program that educates the Church as to the financial needs of the Church. The Finance Committee's emphasis on such financial needs shall be educational and ongoing, rather than spasmodic.

- D. The Finance Committee shall review on a regular basis any and all holdings of the Church.

Section 5 - Christian Outreach Committee:

- A. The Christian Outreach Team shall consist of six persons, with two being elected annually to a three year term. The team shall elect its own Chairperson and Secretary. The Chairperson shall be a voting member of Standing Committee. When the Chairperson is unable to attend Standing Committee meetings, another member of the team will be the designated representative.
- B. The Christian Outreach Team shall be responsible for the supervision of the development, education, preparation and execution of projects and activities of this Church's mission, both local and worldwide, through the cooperation of groups within our Church and/or with outside agencies and through independent means.
- C. The Christian Outreach Team shall have in its charge the supervision and correlation of plans for the following:
 - Special benevolences and oversee all matters pertaining to them;
 - Service programs and oversee all matters pertaining to them;
 - Special interest offerings as determined by the Christian Outreach Team and oversee all matters pertaining to them; and
 - Shall submit to the Standing Committee such special plans for approval.

Section 6 - Music Committee:

- A. The Music Committee shall consist of three persons, with one person being elected every year to serve a three year term. The Organist and Choir Director(s) may serve as ex-officio members of this Committee. The Committee shall elect its own Chairperson and Secretary. The Organist and Choir Director(s) may not serve in these positions. The Chairperson shall be a voting member of the Standing Committee.
- B. The Music Committee will recommend to the Standing Committee person(s) to perform the services of Organist and Choir Director(s) for the Church. These individuals shall report to the Chairperson of the Music Committee.

- C. The Music Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance and procurement of all musical instruments and any other music, equipment and/or wardrobe that is part of the music program.
- D. The Music Committee shall approve and coordinate all special musical events and arrange for substitute organists or guest musicians as required.
- E. The Music Committee shall review the contracts of the Organist and Choir Director(s) Music Leader annually and make recommendations to the Finance Committee during the budget preparation process.

Article 12

Section 1 - Officers:

- A. The officers of this Church shall be a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer, a Financial Secretary, an Assistant Financial Secretary, and Auditor.
- B. If, in the opinion of the Standing Committee, an officer fails to adequately perform the duty of that position in a timely manner, he or she shall be notified that the Standing Committee will act upon this failure at a time and place designated. The officer shall be removed from his or her position unless there are mitigating and just reasons for said failure. The officer shall have the right to attend and be heard at a meeting of the Standing Committee in which the matter of the failure shall be acted upon.

Section 2 - Moderator:

- A. The Moderator shall be eligible for five consecutive one year terms, but after the fifth term, shall not be eligible for re-election until after the lapse of one year.
- B. The Moderator shall preside at the Annual Meeting and all special meetings of the Church, the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee meetings and shall insure that all decisions are carried out. The Moderator shall interpret the By-Laws as necessary and cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie.
- C. The Moderator, together with the Pastor and Senior Deacon, shall be responsible for interviewing, hiring and evaluating the Administrative Assistant. They shall report their action(s) to the Executive Committee.

Section 3 - Clerk:

- A. The Clerk shall be elected annually with no limit on the number of terms and shall be a voting member of the Standing Committee and Executive Committee.
- B. The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of the minutes of the Annual Meeting and all special meetings of the Church, Standing Committee and Executive Committees; shall keep a register of all baptisms, weddings and funerals; shall record the names of all members, with the date of their admission and removal; shall keep on file all important communications and documents and shall issue Letters of Transfer and Dismissal as necessary. The Clerk shall report all such actions at the Annual Meeting.
- C. The Clerk shall give notice of all meetings when notice is necessary, and perform such other duties as are incidental to the office. The Clerk shall be the custodian of the seal of the Church and of the bonds of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary of the Church.

Section 4 - Treasurer:

- A. The Treasurer shall be elected annually with no limit on the number of terms and shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.
- B. The Treasurer shall receive all Church receipts, shall pay all bills contracted within the budget allotment, and shall have the care and custody of all accounts, notes, deeds, contract and other valuable papers belonging to the Church, except as otherwise provided in these By-Laws. The Treasurer shall not pay bills over \$500.00 contracted by any officer, Committee or organization of non budget items unless authorized to do so by a vote of the Standing Committee, excepting and including from the provisions of this section, insurance premiums, taxes upon the property of the Church, public utility bills and fixed salaries, which said Treasurer may attend to and pay without the aforesaid approval.
- C. The Treasurer shall furnish a written report of the financial condition of the Church at the Annual Meeting and the Standing Committee as requested; be bonded each year, securing the bond form an accredited company and shall report such action to the Standing Committee; submit all books and records for the annual audit at the close of the financial year and supervise the work of the Assistant Treasurer as necessary.

Section 5 - Assistant Treasurer:

- A. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected annually with no limit of terms and shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.
- B. The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer as necessary.

- C. In the event the Treasurer is unable to fulfill the duties, the Assistant Treasurer shall assume those duties and responsibilities until the next annual meeting.

Section 6 - Financial Secretary:

- A. The Financial Secretary shall be elected annually with no limit of terms and shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.
- B. The Financial Secretary shall collect all monies gathered during regular and special collections in the Church and shall deposit these funds and report them to the Treasurer on a mutually agreed schedule.
- C. The Financial Secretary shall maintain a record of payment of all gifts to the Church and shall issue statements to those who have pledged to the Church, as requested. The Financial Secretary shall submit a written summary of all gifts to the Church at the Annual Meeting.

Section 7 - Assistant Financial Secretary:

- A. The Assistant Financial Secretary shall be elected annually with no limit of terms and shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.
- B. The Assistant Financial Secretary shall assist the Financial Secretary as necessary.
- C. In the event the Financial Secretary is unable to fulfill the duties, the Assistant Financial Secretary shall assume those duties and responsibilities until the next Annual Meeting.

Section 8 - Auditor:

- A. The Auditor shall be appointed by the Executive Committee on an annual basis. This person shall choose two other persons to form a Committee, with the approval of the Executive Committee, to examine all the records and bank statements of the Treasurer and shall report the same to the Annual Meeting.

Article 13

Section 1 - Personnel:

- A. It shall be understood that all members in good standing are eligible to serve as an officer of the Church or a member of the Committee. Each Committee is urged to have other people, though not elected to the Committee, to assist in the work of the Committee and the ministry of the Church. Every position is gender free, allowing either a male or a female to hold that position.

- B. All persons who are employed by the Church do not have to be a member at the time of their hiring, nor do they have to become a member in order to retain their position. This does not apply to the Pastor who must become a member at the earliest convenience.

(Responsibilities of the former Communications Committee were revised and adopted. These responsibilities are now under the oversight of the Office Team.)


Article 14

Section 1 - By-Laws:


- A. These By-Laws shall be reviewed for relevancy and current purpose by a Committee appointed by the Standing Committee as is deemed necessary and advisable, but in no event shall more than five (5) years lapse without these By-Laws being reviewed. A report will be submitted to the Standing Committee stating any necessary and/or recommended changes for their approval. Upon approval by the Standing Committee all such proposed changes shall be made available to the active membership of this Church in accordance with Article 14, Section 1B.
- B. All recommended By-Law amendments and/or changes shall be made available, in writing, to all members on the active membership list of the Church, at least one month prior to a meeting duly called for such purpose. The full text of both present and changed paragraphs shall be included.
- C. A two-thirds vote of a quorum of the active members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Church shall be required for passage of any proposed changes to these By-Laws.

These By-Laws were reviewed and approved, with no changes, by the members of The First Church of Christ, Bradford gathered at a duly-called Congregational meeting on February 13, 2022.

Attested to and affirmed by Mark Soucy (Moderator) and Susan Bergeron (Clerk) this 13th day of February, 2022.



Mark Soucy, Moderator



Susan Bergeron, Clerk