

CONSTITUTION

St. Peter's United Church of Christ Washington, Missouri

Article I - Name

The name of this congregation shall be “St. Peter's United Church of Christ,” city of Washington, Franklin County, state of Missouri.

Article II – Mission Statement and Purpose

The mission statement of St. Peter’s U.C.C. is *Enter to worship, depart to serve.*

The purpose of this congregation shall be: to develop the Kingdom of God by all available means, working to advance the mission of Jesus Christ. To this end, we will support and nurture Christian community, engage in faithful Christian education, worship and stewardship, cultivate Christian fellowship and lives and, in all things, seek to embrace the world in the ways Christ did.

Article III - Affiliation

This congregation shall be a member congregation of the United Church of Christ or its successors. The government of the church is vested in its members, subject to the laws of the state of Missouri relating to non-profit corporations.

Article IV - Faith and Covenant

SECTION 1. (a) Faith: This church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of all. 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. This church affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own.

(b) Expression of this faith: This church finds expression of this faith reflected in the historic creeds, basic insights of the Protestant Reformers, and more specifically, in the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ.

SECTION 2. Covenant - We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God. We seek to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and being made known to us. We hold it to be the covenant of the Church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world while worshipping God and striving for truth, justice and peace. We pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God, we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life, and we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us.

Article V - Worship, Sacraments and Rites

SECTION 1. Weekly worship, the festivals and the seasons of the church year shall be observed with appropriate services by the congregation.

SECTION 2. This congregation recognizes the sacrament of baptism of infants and adults as the sign of a person's acceptance into the care and nurture of Christ's Church.

SECTION 3. This congregation observes the sacrament of Holy Communion regularly, inviting all who desire to know Christ to participate, regardless of denominational affiliation.

SECTION 4. The rites of this congregation are confirmation, marriage, ordination, commissioning and funeral/memorial services.

Article VI – Membership

The term, "members," will hereafter refer to all members and associate members.

SECTION 1. Members of this congregation are received by: (1) baptism and confirmation, (2) letter of transfer, (3) profession of faith.

SECTION 2. Associate membership. Persons may unite with St. Peter's U.C.C. by becoming an associate member. This is for members who (a) wish to participate in the full life of the church but do not want to relinquish membership in another congregation (often for historic or family reasons) or (b) wish to remain as members of St. Peter's after moving to a new community. Associate members are granted privileges and assume the same responsibilities of full members. Persons seeking associate membership shall submit a written request to the church council.

SECTION 3. All members are entitled to the rights and privileges of this church, including the right of voice and vote, and the right to services of the pastors as well as the Christian sympathy and support of all members.

SECTION 4. All members are invited to attend worship and contribute to the financial support of the church and to participate in the programs, classes and activities of the church wherever and whenever possible. On years that are multiples of five, the church council shall review the membership of the congregation of St. Peter's Church.

SECTION 5. Relinquishing of membership. Members may terminate their membership to the church by (a) Request – A member may sever the connection with this congregation by submitting written notice to the secretary of the church council. If he/she desires to transfer to another church, this written notice should include a request for a letter of transfer to a church of his/her choice. (b) Inactivity -- If after a period of five years, a member has not attended worship or church activities and has not contributed any amount financially, they shall be contacted by mail if they wish to remain a member of St. Peter's. If no response is received within 90 days of the letter being sent, their name shall be submitted to the church council for decision of official removal. (c) Death -- Deceased persons are automatically removed from the membership roles.

Article VII - Congregational Meetings

SECTION 1. The congregation shall meet twice a year, in March and October. The dates of the regular or special meetings shall be set by the church council and publicly announced two (2) Sundays preceding the meeting. Also, notice of the meeting, along with the agenda, shall be published no less than two (2) weeks before the meeting. Only such business as defined in the agenda can be enacted at the meetings. Any projects, purchases, policies, etc. presented in congregational meetings which are not on the agenda shall be referred to the church council for study and action, if within the council's authority. If not within the council's authority, then the matter shall be reported back to the congregation with the council's recommendation at the next regular or special congregational meeting. In order for any action to be taken at a regular or special meeting, a quorum must be present as defined in Section 4 of this article.

SECTION 2. Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the church council, providing proper notification has been made to the members at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the called meeting. Only such business as has been defined in the agenda shall be transacted at the special meeting of the congregation. In case an emergency arises which requires action sooner than fourteen (14) days, the church council is empowered to call a congregational meeting as soon as possible.

SECTION 3. Upon written request of fifty (50) voting members of the congregation, the church council shall call a special meeting. The purpose of the meeting must be clearly articulated in the petition. The meeting shall be limited to the petitioned purpose. The church council, or a designated parliamentarian, shall inform the petitioners and the congregation of the merits and legality of the petition. This meeting must be held within twenty-one (21) days of the receipt of the request except in the case of a desire to terminate a pastor, as outlined in Article VIII, Section 7.

SECTION 4. There must be 10% of the total membership (as reported in the most current, annual report) present to constitute a quorum.

SECTION 5. All meetings shall be opened and closed with a prayer.

SECTION 6. The legislative and administrative power of the congregation is vested in the congregation itself. The congregation alone has, and reserves, the right to call its pastors. This right can never be delegated to individuals or to the church council. The congregation shall decide on such questions as to the buying and selling of property, all building projects, and on matters of policy of a long term nature, all amendments to the constitution and approval of the church budget. For the transaction of all other business the administration of the church is entrusted to the church council. The Senior Pastor shall be the chief administrator of the church and is required to carry out decisions of the church council and the congregation. The congregation shall assemble to consider the buying, selling, mortgaging or otherwise encumbering church property; the bringing of suit in the corporate name; approval of building and repair costs which are in excess of the amount given in the current budget or greater than the amount entrusted to the authority of the church council in the constitution; the calling and dismissing of a pastor and all other recommendations of the church council.

SECTION 7. The congregation shall regularly contribute to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and support agencies of the United Church of Christ in their benevolent endeavors.

SECTION 8. The congregation shall, at its March meeting, approve delegates and alternates up to the number authorized by the Missouri Mid-South Conference, to the annual or special meetings of the Conference. At least one (1) of the delegates shall be a member of the church council. Expenses for delegates shall be paid by the church.

SECTION 9. The congregation shall, at its March meeting, approve up to the required number of delegates to the Eastern Association meeting in the Spring and Fall. Expenses for delegates shall be paid by the church.

SECTION 10. In case of a division in the membership of the congregation, both parties shall submit the question of the right of property to the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ, and its decision shall be binding on all members of the congregation. In case of a dissolution of the congregation, the title of the property shall be vested in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ.

Article VIII - Pastors

SECTION 1. The pastors of the congregation shall be ordained ministers of the United Church of Christ with ministerial standing in the Eastern Association, Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ, or approved for ordination and standing by the same body.

SECTION 2. When a minister accepts a call to this church, the minister and the congregation shall join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation. The terms of the call agreement between the pastor and the congregation shall be signed by the proper officers of the church and forwarded to the Eastern Association and Missouri Mid-South Conference for appropriate signatures and referral to the officers of the United Church of Christ with responsibility for ecclesiastical standing and endorsement.

SECTION 3. It shall be the work of the pastors to preach the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, to participate in the work of Christian education, and to perform such duties as belong to the pastor's office in the United Church of Christ. A pastor shall record all official services in the church book of records and make an annual report to the congregation. The pastors will perform duties as described in the current job descriptions of the pastors. The pastors are ex-officio members of the church council, all boards, committees, and organizations within the congregation. No other person has the right to perform any religious ceremony in the church without the consent of the pastors and such ceremonies must take place within the guidelines established by the church council.

SECTION 4. Any pastor of St. Peter's U.C.C. shall be obligated to inform all members of the church council if he/she finds that he/she is subject of a fitness review for ministerial misconduct by the Committee on Ministry of the Eastern Association or any other investigative source. Furthermore, any pastor must inform the church council of any civil or criminal legal actions to which he or she is part of prior to being called as a pastor or as soon as he or she knows of such legal action while serving as a pastor.

SECTION 5. The pastors' salaries shall be sufficient to relieve the pastors of the temporal cares and to preserve the dignity of the calling, subject however, to the provisions of the contract by the pastors and the congregation. Moving expenses will be negotiated. The pastors shall be granted a vacation in each year, the length of which is to be decided by the church council. If a married pastor dies during a pastorate, the congregation shall pay the spouse and children full salary for a period of three (3) months and also allow them three (3) months provision of existing housing arrangements from the day of death. If a pastor is disabled, the congregation will pay up to three (3) months salary to the pastor or until the United Church of Christ Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefit Plan, or similar plan's coverage begins.

SECTION 6. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the President of the church council shall so advise the Missouri Mid-South Conference office and the Eastern Association office and request help in securing an Interim Minister. The council may interview any or all Interim Minister candidates suggested by the conference office. The final candidate choice, along with the candidate's position description and terms of call (if not previously approved by the congregation), shall be presented to the congregation with approval to be by a majority vote of a quorum of the congregation. The church council shall appoint a search committee of seven (7) members of the congregation. This committee shall reflect the interests of the congregation. The search committee shall nominate one (1) candidate, eligible for standing within the Eastern Association to be voted upon by the congregation after a sermon by the candidate. At this time, the terms of the call will be stated. The congregation shall consider only one candidate at a time and vote by ballot for or against the election. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of a quorum (Article VII, Section 4) shall be required. Upon election, a written call shall be extended by the church council to the pastor-elect. In this call the terms of the relationship as agreed by the church council and the pastor-elect, shall be stated, including all benefits of employment. The minister-elect, the congregation, and the Missouri Mid-South Conference office shall each receive a copy of the call.

SECTION 7. In order to terminate this relationship between the pastor and the congregation, three (3) months notice shall be given by letter by either party or earlier if mutually agreed upon. Should members of the congregation wish to terminate the relationship, a grievance, signed by 50 voting members of the congregation, shall be presented to the church council. The council may seek the help of the office of Conference Minister and a Pastoral Relations Committee in order to investigate the grievance and to give the pastor an opportunity to respond. The council will make a report to the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. Termination shall be by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the quorum present at the meeting called for this purpose.

SECTION 8. Should a member of the congregation wish to express a grievance against a pastor, he or she shall present the matter to the council president for review and private hearing. The member has the right to ask for a full presentation to the church council. The pastor or the council may seek the help of the Conference or Association Minister or any designated committee in order to investigate the grievance and to give the pastor an opportunity to respond. Should formal investigation be warranted and approved by the council, all church and Eastern Association Committee on Ministry investigations should be completed and reported to the council before further action takes place. The council will deliberate and decide first, then make a recommendation to the congregation. Should further action be necessary, the council will make a report to the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. Termination shall be by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the quorum present at the meeting called for this purpose.

Article IX - Church Council

SECTION 1. The church council shall be composed of twelve (12) members. At least three (3) of its members shall be women, at least three (3) men, and at least one (1) member under the age of forty (40) at time of election. The remaining members shall be elected from any combination of these groups. Members of the council shall be elected by a majority vote cast at the October meeting of the congregation. Four (4) members shall be elected each year for a term of three (3) years, thus providing that eight (8) council members shall be retained each year. No church council member shall be eligible for re-election until after the lapse of one (1) year.

SECTION 2. The obligations of the council shall be to aid the pastors in administration, to assist in providing guidance for Christian discipleship, to give thorough study and secure necessary information before recommending projects for congregational approval, to be co-workers in the care of the spiritual health and welfare of the congregation and to uphold the mission and purpose of the congregation at all times.

SECTION 3. The members of the council shall seek to embody the life style of Jesus Christ in work and deed; eagerly seek a fuller understanding of the Gospel; participate on a regular basis in worship and work; join in sharing the Lord's Supper; engage in an exemplary life in both public and private avenues of expression; seek to participate in Cluster, Association, Conference and Synod meetings; seek to participate in conferences and workshops designed for the upbuilding of the Church; and shall seek to be honest and open to all persons.

SECTION 4. In order to be eligible for election to the council, a person must be a communicant member of the congregation for at least one (1) year. The Nominating Committee (which shall include at least four members from the congregation at large who are not presently serving on the church council) shall report its slate of nominees to the council at the September meeting. The nominees shall have been contacted and shall have agreed to serve on the council. The council shall see that nominees' names be published fourteen (14) days before the October congregational meeting.

SECTION 5. All newly elected council members are requested to attend the December council meeting for orientation, organization and assignments. Following the regular council meeting the four (4) members elected and the eight (8) incumbent members shall elect a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer for one (1) year terms.

SECTION 6. The newly elected council members shall be installed at a Sunday worship service in December. Those not present are installed in absentia. Terms of office will begin January 1.

SECTION 7. It is recommended that the council meet at least once every month for the transaction of such business as may come regularly before the council. A quorum for council meetings shall be composed of a majority of its membership. Special meetings are subject to the call of the president, pastors, or two (2) council members.

SECTION 8. The council shall transact the business of the congregation. The council shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all congregational records, and report to the congregation at its regular and special meetings. The council shall be responsible for the investment of perpetual care funds and all financial matters of the St. Peter's Cemetery. The council shall submit any or all records to the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ, when necessary.

SECTION 9. The council shall direct the pastors to keep complete records of membership, baptisms, confirmations, reception of new members, transfers, removal of names, marriages, and deaths. These are reported at the March congregational meeting. All records shall be the property of the congregation. Upon dissolution of the congregation, its records shall become the property of the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ.

SECTION 10. The council may recruit members of boards as called for in this constitution and other committees deemed necessary to accomplish the work of the church, in accordance with the church's mission and purpose.

SECTION 11. Except for expenditures authorized in the current year's budget, the council shall not incur an expense exceeding five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) without the approval of the congregation. The council shall cause a review to be made of all financial records of the congregation at least once each calendar year. All unbudgeted expenses shall be approved by the council before purchase.

SECTION 12. Whenever a vacancy occurs on the council, the council shall appoint by majority of council membership, an individual to fulfill the unexpired term. The appointee shall be presented to the congregation for approval by majority at the next regularly scheduled congregational meeting. If a vacancy on the council is an officer, the council shall elect a replacement.

SECTION 13. The use of church property by individuals or organizations outside the church must be approved by the council and/or a pastor. A fee schedule for the use of church property by outside groups shall be provided by the council.

SECTION 14. The council together with the Senior Pastor shall have the responsibility for approving job descriptions for the Associate Pastor and all other staff positions established by the congregation and/or council. The Senior Pastor has the authority to relieve from duty any staff member, with formal determination of employment status pending council review.

SECTION 15. The council, shall have the authority dismiss incumbents of the positions in Article IX, Section 14, with the exception of the Associate Pastor.

SECTION 16. The church council shall have the authority to fill vacancies and dismiss incumbents of the positions in Article IX, Section One by eight votes of the council's membership.

SECTION 17. Meetings of the church council shall be open to members of the congregation. An agenda can be obtained in the church office prior to the meeting. For purposes of discussing or acting upon matters related to (a) litigation or legal matters, (b) hiring, firing, promoting, or disciplining personnel, or (c) buying, selling, or leasing of real estate, the council may close that portion of the council meeting to the relevant matter. Pursuant to this section, the council shall clearly state the reason for closing the meeting.

Church records are presumed to be open for inspection by members of the congregation, except for those records pertaining to (a), (b) and (c) in this section. Any record containing personally identifiable information (e.g. Social Security number, credit card transactions, etc.) shall have such information removed prior to being made available for inspection, however, all contracts (including employment contracts) are open records once agreed to in writing by all parties to the contract.

Article X - Officers

SECTION 1. President: It is the duty of the President to preside at all meetings of the congregation and council, to conduct the same according to the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order; to see that the constitution is enforced and that the instructions of the church council and the congregation are carried out. The President is empowered, with the Secretary of the church council, to sign all official documents, contracts, loans, vouchers, and deeds, and to be an ex-officio member of all committees and boards.

SECTION 2. Vice-President: The Vice-President shall preside at all meetings where the President is not present and also when business pertaining to the President's administration is before the congregation. The Vice-President shall use the power of the office to help the President and make the administration easier. It is recommended that the Vice President be encouraged to assume the office of President for the next term.

SECTION 3. Secretary: The Secretary shall keep a record of all transactions at the meetings of the congregation and of the council and attend to all correspondence. Minutes are to be made with a copy to be filed in the church office and disseminated to the council. The Secretary shall, with the President, sign all official documents, contracts, loans, vouchers, and deeds. The Secretary shall preside at meetings where the President and Vice-President are absent.

SECTION 4. Treasurer: The Treasurer shall have charge of monies for congregational and benevolent purposes. The Treasurer shall make all payments. The Treasurer shall, together with the Bookkeeper, render a monthly report to the church council, an annual report to the congregation at the October congregational meeting, and will present books, records, and receipts to the Internal Review Board upon their request. The Treasurer shall serve as a member of the Budget Committee and ex-officio member of the Stewardship Board. The Treasurer shall preside at meetings where the President, Vice-President and Secretary are absent.

Article XI - Boards

The boards listed hereafter shall be elected to provide administrative support to the church council in the areas of responsibilities as defined. All boards and committees under such boards shall adequately represent the mission and purpose of the congregation. Committees and subcommittees, both long-term and short-term, may be appointed by the council as deemed necessary to accomplish this mission and purpose. Pastors are ex-officio members of all boards. One (1) member of the church council shall be appointed each year by the church council president to serve as an ex-officio member of that board. All board terms shall be for three (3) years. One third (1/3) of each board shall be elected each year. A board member who has filled an unexpired term may be elected for one (1) three (3) year term. No board member shall be eligible for re-election to that board until after the lapse of at least one (1) year. Each board will submit an annual written report by the due date for the annual report.

SECTION 1. Cemetery Board: The Cemetery Board shall consist of six (6) members, to be elected from nominees presented by a Nominating Committee, two (2) each year. This board shall see that the St. Peter's Cemetery is properly maintained and cared for; enforce all regulations governing the cemetery; arrange for the sale of lots and burials subject to the fee schedule as approved by the congregation. This board shall make at least an annual written report concerning its activities and budget status to the church council and the congregation. All income, received from investments, the sale of lots and burials, and disbursements will be provided to the church council each month and made part of the church council's monthly treasurer's report. This board shall meet monthly or as needed.

The Cemetery Board may annually set aside funds in a restricted account to be used for equipment purchase. The annual allocation shall be a part of the annual budget for the Cemetery Board, said budget to be approved annually by the congregation. For the sole purpose of equipment purchase, the Cemetery Board is authorized to spend up to the amount accumulated in the restricted account, including the annual allocation for the year during which the purchase is made. The Cemetery Board shall seek bids to ensure that the lowest and best price for the equipment is secured.

SECTION 2. Board of Christian Education: It shall be the object of this board to supervise and direct the programs of Christian Education of St. Peter's United Church of Christ. This board shall be composed of nine (9) members of the congregation with three (3) elected each year from nominees presented by a Nominating Committee. This board shall meet monthly or as needed.

SECTION 3. Stewardship Board: The Stewardship Board shall be composed of six (6) members of the congregation with the treasurer as an ex-officio member. Two (2) members will be elected each year from nominees presented by a Nominating Committee. This board shall elect its own chairperson and meet monthly or as needed. The chairperson of this board shall serve as chairperson of the annual stewardship campaign. The duties of this board will include an over-all stewardship education program as recommended by the Stewardship Council of the United Church of Christ, including the promotion of all special offerings of the U.C.C., unless the council votes for an exception. Individual and family reports of contributions shall be sent to members no later than January 31st of each year.

SECTION 4. Internal Review Board: The Internal Review Board shall be composed of three (3) members, one (1) elected each year from nominees presented by a Nominating Committee. This board will meet during the year as needed. The duties of this board shall be to review the books of the Treasurer of the church council, the Cemetery Board and all of the church organizations which request such service. Functions shall include, but not be limited to, reviewing selected bank reconciliations, sampling canceled checks for the supporting documentation and verifying investment activity for the year.

SECTION 5. Building and Grounds Board: The Building and Grounds Board shall be composed of six (6) members, two (2) elected each year from nominees presented by a Nominating Committee. This board shall hold meetings every month or as needed. The duties of this board are to oversee and supervise the care of the church properties, including oversight of all property maintenance and liability insurance policies. Specific tasks include, but are not limited to the following: recommending to the church council that which will keep the buildings and the grounds in good repair as a result of checking with the custodian and pastors as to problem areas, and recommending improvements and beautification of the property as needed. The board shall report monthly to the church council and secure approval for recommended projects and record date, type of improvement, cost and any warranties or guaranties on a continuing basis in a book prepared for that purpose, for the use of succeeding Building and Grounds Boards and the church council.

Article XII – Committees

The committees of the church shall be appointed by the church council to provide support to the church. The committees' functions and purposes shall reflect the mission and purpose of the congregation. They shall be reviewed by the council annually. Committees may be added, eliminated, consolidated or altered based on prayerful review on how to best address the mission and purpose of the congregation. The council shall entertain and seek new ways for committee type governance (e.g. ministry team governance) and be permitted to leverage recommendations after thorough study and prayerful review.

Pastors are ex-officio members of all committees. Each year, the council president shall appoint one member of the council as an ex-officio member of each committee.

Article XIII

The most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern in the conducting of all meetings of the congregation and all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this constitution. "A Manual of the Ministry in the UCC" (current edition) shall be referred to as a guide in dealing with matters of ministerial ethics and the relationship of congregation to pastor.

Article XIV - Amendments

Additions and alterations to this constitution may be proposed at any time by the church council or in writing by any church member. The council shall consider the proposed changes and, if deemed valid and in accordance with the mission and purpose of the congregation, handle in accordance with Article VII. The council may consult with a constitution committee regarding suggestions for proposed changes. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those present and eligible to vote is necessary to amend the constitution.
