

# CONSTITUTION

Revised June 2011

## Preamble

We, the members of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Canton, Illinois, a congregationally governed body, in order to promote the work of the Church in the Spirit of Christ and thus advance His Kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution.

## ARTICLE I – NAME AND PURPOSE

### Section A. Name

The name of this organization shall be First Christian Church, Inc. of Canton, Illinois, affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

### Section B. Purpose

The purpose of the church is and shall be to bring people into a deepening relationship with God as known to us through the Bible and Jesus Christ, to foster Christian love, to reach out to others in word and deed that they may know and respond to God's love; to sustain and be sustained by the general and regional manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to work cooperatively with Christians in other communions; to seek the oneness of the body of Christ; and in all ways to make known the love of God.

As members of the Christian church, We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world. In Christ's name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people. We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in the covenant of love which binds us to God and one another. Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God. In the communion of the Holy Spirit; we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ. At the table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ. Within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture. In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end. Blessing, glory and honor be to God forever. Amen. [From the Preamble to the Design of the General Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ)]

## ARTICLE II – MEMBERSHIP

### Section A. Membership

The membership of this congregation shall consist of those who are now identified as members and those who unite with this congregation by Confession of Faith and Baptism or by transfer of membership. We understand that all who accept

Christ and are baptized are part of the Church Universal, and we claim them as Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Persons making their first confession of faith shall be baptized by immersion when physically possible.

Persons who have accepted Christ and have been baptized by choice in another congregation may join by transfer of membership into our congregation by affirming their confession of faith at a service of worship.

Persons who desire to be members are strongly encouraged to share in classes giving the background of our Church and its beliefs.

### **Section B. Classification of Membership**

Membership in the church is for life and one is removed from the roll by transfer to another congregation, withdrawal or death.

The policy of this congregation shall be to distinguish between participating members, non-participating members, and non-resident members in the following manner:

1. A participating member is a member who has been active in the church within the past year either by attendance, giving, serving or sharing in other activities in the life of the church. A participating member shall have a vote in all meetings of the congregation.
2. A non-participating member is a member who has not been active in the church within the past year neither by attendance, giving, serving or sharing in other activities in the life of the church.
3. A non-resident member is one who does not reside within the geographical range of the congregation.

## **ARTICLE III – OFFICERS**

### **Section A. Officers**

The officers shall be members of the church and elected at the annual meeting by the congregation and shall serve until a successor is elected and assumes office:

1. Chair/Moderator: For a term of one year.
2. Vice-Chair/Vice-Moderator: For a term of one year.
3. Secretary/Clerk: For a term of one year.
4. Treasurer: For a term of one year.
5. Eldership: Elders, composed of men or women, not to exceed twelve (12) in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years with a limit of two successive three year terms.
6. Diaconate: Deacons, composed of men or women, not to exceed twenty four in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years with a limit of two successive three year terms.
7. Junior Deacon Delegate: For a term of one year.

8. Church Historian: For a term of one year.
9. Honorary Officers: Those whose service and consecration to the local or broader church merits this honor may be retired from active responsibility and honored by appointment of the church as elder emeritus or deacon emeritus. These honorary officers may serve in a non-voting, advisory role.

### **Section B. Junior Diaconate**

1. The chair of the Diaconate and the Junior Deacon Delegate, with the approval of the General Board, shall appoint those young men and women of High School and College age, to the position of Junior Deacon for the term of one year.
2. The chair of the Diaconate, with the approval of the General Board, shall appoint a Junior Deacon to be a student representative on the General Board.

### **Section C. Duties of Officers**

1. The Chair/Moderator shall fulfill the usual duties of such an officer, call and preside at all regular or special business meetings of the congregation, sign church checks and serve as Chair/Moderator of the General Board. If an elder, they cannot count the offerings.
2. The Vice-Chair/Vice-Moderator shall fulfill the usual duties of such an officer, call and preside at all regular business meetings of the church in the absence of the Chair/Moderator, sign church checks and serve as Vice-Chair/Vice-Moderator of the General Board. If an elder, they cannot count the offerings.
3. The Secretary/Clerk shall keep minutes of all regular or special business meetings of the church, serve as Secretary/Clerk of the General Board, keep a record of all its regular or called meetings and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
4. The Treasurer shall be responsible for presenting the monthly financial report to the General Board, signing church checks, and performing such other duties as may be assigned. If an elder, they cannot count the offerings. The Bookkeeper shall record the weekly offering of the church and, together with the Treasurer, count all other contributions.
5. The Eldership, in cooperation with functional committees, shall promote the welfare of the church by encouraging regular attendance, participation in the Lord's Supper, and growth in the knowledge and love of God through prayer and study of the Bible. Elders will visit the sick, serve at the Lord's Table and

promote missions, evangelism, education and stewardship. They will give thoughtful review of church policies and perform other duties as needed such as counting of the weekly offering. The Eldership may recommend to the board a long serving elder or a retired pastor to become an “Elder Emeritus.” (See Article III, Section A, 8)

6. The Diaconate, in cooperation with functional committees and the Eldership shall promote the growth and welfare of the church by participating on a committee; assist in greeting and ushering of the worshippers, distribute the Lord’s Supper and receive the offerings; take responsibility for the preparation and care of the communion service; minister to families in times of sickness or bereavement; assist in financial canvasses, visitation projects and preparation of candidates for baptism, give counsel and service in the business affairs and program activities of the church; cooperate in ministering to the needy; and perform such other duties as may be assigned. The Diaconate will appoint a Chair or Co-Chair to take care of the serving schedules and represent the Diaconate as a voting member on the General Board. The Diaconate may recommend to the Board that a long serving member become “Deacon Emeritus”.(See Article III, Section A, 8.)
7. The Junior Diaconate shall assist the Diaconate in such duties as may be assigned by the Diaconate.
8. The Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer shall act as the legal agents of the church in all business matters, under the direction of the General Board and subject to the approval of the church; hold legal title to all church property and handle all business transactions related thereto; and perform such duties as are required by the laws of the State of Illinois. The Finance Committee shall have supervision over all endowment and trust funds. The Property Committee will work with the church’s insurance agent(s) to assure proper coverage on all church properties.
9. The Church Historian shall gather and preserve data pertaining to the history, life and work of the church, making available for publication any historical materials authorized by the church and presenting to the General Board the annual historical statements.

#### **Section D. Election of Officers**

1. On or before the March General Board Meeting each year a Leadership Selection Committee composed of an elder, and two members of the

Diaconate whose terms do not expire at the end of the current year, and two members of the congregation at large, and the pastor(s) shall be appointed by the Chair/Moderator, approved by the General Board. They shall nominate candidates for officers of the church.

2. All suggestions from the congregation for nominees shall be in the hands of the Leadership Selection Committee. The committee shall then consider qualifications, secure consent from nominees and prepare a slate.
3. The Leadership Selection Committee shall report its nominations to the General Board for approval. The nominations will be reported to the congregation at least one week prior to the annual business meeting.
4. The annual election shall be part of the annual meeting.
5. All nominees who receive a majority of the votes cast by secret ballot of those present and voting, shall be declared elected.
6. Vacancies in any office of the church shall be filled for the unexpired term by nomination of the Leadership Selection Committee and election by the General Board.

### **Section E. The General Board**

1. The General Board shall consist of:
  - A. The elected Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.
  - B. The elected elders.
  - C. Chairs of the functional committees.
  - D. Chair of the Diaconate.
  - E. Chair of the Personnel Committee.
  - F. One Junior Deacon Delegate.
2. It shall be the duty of the General Board:
  - A. To act as a policy making body of the church.
  - B. To transact business.
  - C. To set policy for functional committees.
  - D. To employ staff members other than minister(s).
3. The congregation retains the right to review all board actions, and may confirm or reverse board action at a duly called congregational meeting.

## **ARTICLE IV – THE MINISTER(S) AND STAFF**

### **Section A. Duties of Minister(s)**

1. The minister(s) shall serve as spiritual leader of the congregation, give pastoral oversight to persons related to the church, and administer church programs while maintaining ties to the community, the larger Disciples of Christ Church, and our ecumenical partners. The minister(s) shall be an ex-officio

member of all boards and committees. The specific duties shall be outlined in the letter of call as determined by the needs of the church and ministerial gifts.

**Section B. Selection** The minister(s) shall be chosen by the church as hereinafter provided.

1. A representative committee of five, composed of three members of the General Board and two members of the congregation who are not members of the Board, nominated by the Chair/Moderator and elected by the General Board, shall serve as the pulpit committee and be responsible for recommending prospective ministers to the General Board. Ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be given first consideration. It shall be the policy of the church to negotiate with one prospective minister at one time.
2. The General Board shall consider the recommendation of the pulpit committee and, if approved, recommend the prospective minister(s) to the congregation.
3. The recommendation of the General Board must be accepted by at least a two-thirds majority of the congregation present and voting in a special business meeting of the church before a call may be extended.
4. The term of each minister shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated by either party and other conditions of the call shall be made in duplicate, one copy for the minister(s) and one for the church. Such agreements will be reviewed annually by the Personnel Committee.

### **Section C. Staff**

Staff members shall be employed as needed to carry out the work of the Church. The Personnel Committee shall develop job descriptions for staff members; recommend staff assignments and persons to the Board. Written job descriptions outlining duties, terms and conditions of employment shall be approved by the Board and the employee.

## **ARTICLE V – MEETINGS**

### **Section A. Meetings to be held**

1. The church shall hold an annual business meeting and election in June prior to the end of the church year.
2. Special meetings shall be called by the General Board or by written petition of at least twenty-five members of the church.

### **Section B. Notices**

Notice of all regular or special business meetings of the congregation shall be given at a regular Sunday service of the church at least one week in advance of the meeting.

### **Section C. Rules of Order**

All business meetings of the church and the General Board shall be governed by “Robert’s Rules of Order, Latest Revised Edition.”

### **ARTICLE VI – AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended at any business meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting on the amendment, provided that a written notice of the proposed amendment has been made available to read at a regular Sunday service at least two weeks before the vote is taken.