

The By-Laws of Hope United Church of Christ

Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin
As amended July 16, 2023
UPDATED 12/27/23

ARTICLE I. Name

The name of our Church shall be The Hope United Church of Christ of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

ARTICLE II. Purpose Statement

People come together at Hope Church for the following purposes:

- To worship God.
- To promote personal and spiritual growth.
- To develop a religious community which encourages tolerance and openness of thought and accepts diversity of thought and action.
- To search for meaning in life and for understanding of ourselves through the teachings of Christ and other great teachers.
- To understand the way in which all things are related to each other, and to learn how we may best serve our local community and our world community.
- To celebrate with joy the richness of ourselves and our religious community.

ARTICLE III. Polity

The government of our Church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control over all its affairs, subject to the Articles of Incorporation granted to it by the State of Wisconsin. While our Church is self-governing, it accepts the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation involved in the fellowship of the United Church of Christ and pledges itself to share in its common aims and work.

ARTICLE IV. Doctrine

This church is in essential accord with the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ, but it does not restrict the freedom of the individual to work out one's own theology. No one is restricted in the interpretation of Scriptures; we do not require formal statements of belief. Our primary insistence is upon a sincere effort to live in the spirit of Christ, and we affirm this way of living to be the single and sufficient evidence of Christian faith.

ARTICLE V. Membership

A. Membership shall be available to persons who respect the freedom of the individual in the evolvement of religious beliefs, who understand the responsibilities of membership, and who are willing to participate in a search for religious enlightenment within the organizational procedures of this Church.

B. New members shall be received at a regular service of the Church. Any who are unable to attend due to illness or other valid reason may be received at such a service *in absentia*.

C. Members of our Church commit themselves to its support according to their abilities, attend its services and meetings, accept responsibilities, and are dedicated to its welfare.

D. Membership shall be subject to the principles of the Church and especially to the following;

1. Any church member who desires a Letter Transfer is entitled, upon application to the Church Council, to receive it.
2. Members who, for a period of two years, have not been involved with the church shall be contacted by the Deacons. If their addresses are unknown or they are unwilling to renew their active support, their names may be dropped from the roll by the determination of the Council.

ARTICLE VI. Services and Meetings

A. Worship

1. Services of worship shall be held at such times as may be determined by the Board of Deacons.
2. Sacraments
 - a. Communion shall be celebrated at such times as the Board of Deacons may determine.
 - b. Baptism shall be administered at such times as the Pastor or the Board of Deacons may appoint.

B. Meetings

1. The annual meeting of the church shall be held in the month after the end of the fiscal year. Officers shall be elected and a budget for the coming year adopted at this meeting.
2. Yearly reports from the Board, Committees, and organizations are to be presented in writing to the church at the annual meeting and are to be made available at the church to all members.
3. In case of need, business may be conducted at the regular services of worship, except actions requiring notice.
4. Special meetings for business may be called by the Pastor, the Moderator, or any five members of the Church. The nature of the business shall be given to the membership by in an electronic mailing or mail at least ten days prior to the meeting.
5. Rules and Regulations:
 - a. For congregational meetings, a quorum shall consist of ten percent (10%) of the membership and only members are entitled to vote. Voting shall be by voice vote unless requested otherwise by a majority of the members in attendance or by the Chair. A majority vote is decisive except where otherwise required.
 - b. A proxy vote or absentee ballot may be used at the discretion of the Church Council. A proxy vote shall be written permission given to another person to vote in your absence. Forms for proxy votes shall be obtained from the church. Absentee ballots shall be printed with items to be voted on, requested from the church and returned to the church prior to the meeting. Both absentee ballots and proxy votes are for members only.
 - c. A quorum for Council, Boards and Committees will be a simple majority of voting members. A majority vote is decisive except where otherwise required. No proxy will be allowed.
 - d. The official year shall be July 1 to June 30.
 - e. Council and Board meetings may be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VII. Officers

- A. **Pastor**: The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period. The Pastor shall provide the congregation with spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and will administer the rites and sacraments of the church. He/she will maintain a presence in the church and work with the administrative assistant to provide administrative leadership. The Church Council or its designee shall provide a current job description for the position of minister. The Pastor shall serve as a voting member of the Church Council and be a non-voting member of all Boards and Committees.
1. In case of pulpit vacancy, the Church Council will nominate a Pulpit Committee. The names of Committee members chosen shall be presented to the membership at a special meeting for approval. This Committee shall select a candidate, negotiate a contract, and present the candidate to the membership for approval. A two-thirds vote of the members present shall be required for approval.
 2. The Pastor may be removed only by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at a Congregational meeting.
- B. **Associate Pastor**: The Associate Pastor shall work with the Pastor in the areas of spiritual leadership, pastoral care, educational programs, and administration of rites and sacraments of the Church. The Church Council or its designee shall provide a current job description for the position of Associate Pastor. The Associate Pastor shall serve as a voting member of the Church Council. The Associate Pastor will serve at the pleasure of the Church Council for annually renewable one-year periods.
- C. **Moderator**: The Moderator shall be a lay person responsible, with the Pastor, for directing the life and work of the church, and shall be chair of the Church Council and shall preside at all meetings of the Church Council and at congregational meetings where Church business is conducted.
- D. **Church Council**: The Church Council shall be the executive board of the Church, responsible to the members for the direction and coordination of all Church affairs, both spiritual and temporal. Membership shall consist of the Moderator, the Pastor, Chairs of the Boards and one Member-at-Large elected by the congregation. They shall establish policy for the Board of Trustees in carrying out its corporate responsibilities.
- E. **Member-at-Large** shall be a member of the Church Council and the Personnel Committee and shall act in the absence of the Moderator.
- F. Boards:
1. **Board of Deacons**: It shall consist of not less than six members, (1/3) one third elected each year for terms of three years, plus one youth Deacon, elected annually for a one year term. The Chair of the Music Committee shall report directly to the Board of Deacons. The Choir Director, Organist, and Chair of the Music Committee shall be non-voting members. The Board shall be concerned with the spiritual life of the Church including but not limited to worship, membership, sacraments, ministry, and other matters as the Church Council may direct.
 2. **Board of Trustees**: It shall consist of not less than six members, (1/3) one-third elected each year for terms of three years. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Trustees subject to the approval of the Church Council, and shall be a non-voting member of the Board. They shall be

concerned with the administration and expenditures of funds; properties; and housekeeping, maintenance, altering, repair and improvement of Church buildings. They shall consult with all Boards and Committees in order to submit a proper budget for approval by the members at the annual meeting. They shall be subject to the vote of the members in any matters concerning the buying, selling, or mortgaging of Church real property. They shall be responsible for securing the money for Church programs, (i.e. Stewardship program). They shall be subject to policies established by the Church Council.

3. **Board of Education**: It shall consist of not less than three members, (1/3) one-third elected each year for a term of three years. The Board shall be responsible for Christian education among adults, youth, and children. Teachers, advisors and leaders of youth groups shall be non-voting members. Youth group leaders are responsible to the Board of Education.
4. **Board of Mission and Action**: It shall consist of not less than six members, (1/3) one-third elected each year for a term of three years. They shall be responsible for encouraging study and discussion of the Church's mission in the light of today's problems and needs. They shall develop and/or coordinate the various activities of the Church in the area of social action in the community, nation and the world.

G. Committees

1. **Nominating Committee**: Three members not currently holding elective positions shall be appointed by the Church Council and presented to the members for confirmation at the annual meeting. They shall serve for a period of one year and shall be responsible for nominating a slate of candidates to fill those regularly occurring vacancies for the next year. The proposed slate shall be presented to the Church Council for approval, rejection, or revision prior to its presentation at the annual meeting. They shall assist the Church Council as requested in recruiting people to fill other vacancies.
2. **Endowment Fund Committee**: It shall consist of not less than six members, appointed by the Church Council for indefinite terms. The Committee shall be responsible for education, administration, record keeping and promotion of gifts to the Church through memorials, bequests, trusts, gifts and the like. They shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees.
3. **Memorial Gardens Foundation Committee**: It shall consist of nine members, appointed by the Church Council for indefinite terms. They shall be responsible for administering the gardens. They shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees.
4. **Personnel Committee**: It shall consist of the Moderator, the Member-at-Large, and three members appointed by the Church Council for three year overlapping terms. The Personnel Committee will elect a Chair. The Committee will establish policies, subject to the approval of the Church Council for all staff, which shall include such things as job description, power to hire and fire, evaluation, salary and benefit programs. The Committee shall be subject to the Church Council and shall seek the counsel of the appropriate Boards and Committees.
5. **Stewardship Committee**: It shall consist of one chair, elected each year for a term of one year, and other members recruited by the chair. They shall be responsible for the stewardship program of the church. They shall be responsible to the Church Council.
6. **Benevolent Committee**: Its purpose is to share in some manner in the organization of the semi-annual Rummage Sales and any other fund-raising activity in which the Committee wishes to

participate. The Committee is open to all members and friends of Hope Church.

7. **Social Life Committee**: It shall consist of one chair, elected each year for a term of one year, and other members recruited by the Chair. The Committee shall be responsible for the assimilation of members into the social life of the Church. Its primary function is to help members feel a sense of belonging by providing opportunities for social interaction.
8. **Safety Committee**
9. **Pastoral Support Committee**
10. Other groups may be established with the consent of the Church Council.
11. Boards are authorized to establish committees which may include members and friends of the Church, in communication with the Church Council.

H. Election of Officers

1. The Moderator and the Member-at-Large shall be elected for two years.
2. All members and friends of the Church are eligible for elective office including Chairs of respective Boards. No one shall hold more than one elective office at a time.
3. No member shall serve more than six consecutive years in one elective office or as a member of the Church Council.
4. All other positions shall be filled according to the Personnel policy or in the absence thereof by the Church Council.
5. If any incumbent is unable to serve for any reasons, a resignation shall be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Board or Committee on which that person serves or, in the case of members of the Church Council, to the Moderator.
6. Should any vacancy occur prior to the expiration of a term of office, it shall be filled by appointment by the Church Council for the period of the unexpired term of office.

ARTICLE VIII. Amendments

The foregoing Articles may be altered at any Church meeting by a vote of two-thirds of those active members present, provided there is a quorum and provided that written notice of the proposed alternation has been given ten days prior to the meeting at which it is to be voted upon.