

# WEST GLOUCESTER TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## BYLAWS 3/13/2016

### ARTICLE I – Name

The name of this Church, which was incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1893, shall be the West Gloucester Trinitarian Congregational Church, United Church of Christ as of the ratification of this document.

### ARTICLE II – Mission

The mission of this Church shall be to join together followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in divine worship, Christian education, and devoted service to humanity so that the will of God may become prominent in our lives and in the lives of others throughout the world.

### ARTICLE III – Polity

This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head. It finds its guidance in matters of faith and discipline in the Holy Scriptures as interpreted by the Spirit of God through reason, faith and conscience; through the tradition and experience of Christian churches, especially those that have expressed their faith through a congregational and democratic form of discipline and government; and through the inspiration of prayerful, consecrated thought and inquiry. The government of this Church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs.

### ARTICLE IV- Statement of Faith

We believe in God, as an eternal spirit and the God of our savior Jesus Christ.  
God called the worlds into being, created persons, and set before us the ways of life and death.  
God seeks to save us from aimlessness and sin.  
God comes to us through our crucified and risen savior, Jesus Christ, through whom sin and death were conquered.  
God gives us the Holy Spirit, creating the church of Jesus Christ and binding in covenant all faithful people.  
God calls us to accept the joy and cost of discipleship, to live in the service of others, to resist the powers of evil, and to share in baptism and eat at his table.  
God promises forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage to struggle for justice and peace, and eternal life in God's realm.

## ARTICLE V – Membership

1. The members of this Church shall be persons who have been received by affirmation of the Church and have:
  - a. accepted its covenant,
  - b. presented satisfactory letters of transfer from other churches
  - c. or by affirmation of faith
  - d. or baptism, if not previously baptized,
  - e. and on recommendation of the Diaconate and Pastor.
2. Reception ~ Persons who assent to the covenant, have been recommended by the Diaconate, and have been approved by affirmation at a regular meeting or service of the Church may become members. They shall be received at a Communion service or at some other time as ordered by the Church. Any who are unable to attend in public, after approval by the Church, may be received by the Diaconate on behalf of the Church.
3. Expectations ~ Active Members are expected, insofar as they are able;
  - a. to attend the regular worship of the Church and the celebration of Holy Communion,
  - b. to live the Christian life,
  - c. to share in the life and work of the Church,
  - d. to contribute to its support and benevolence,
  - e. and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and community.
4. Termination of Membership ~ Any member in good and regular standing may request a letter of withdrawal or transfer. It shall be granted by the Diaconate at the member's request. The right to vote shall be suspended when a letter is granted.
5. Inactive Members
  - a. Members whose addresses have long been unknown, or who for two years have not communicated with the Church or contributed to its support, may be transferred to an inactive list by vote of the Church as recommended by the Diaconate. From the date of such transfer such persons shall cease to be reported on the active membership roll. Reasonable effort shall be made to notify the persons concerned before such action is taken.
  - b. Should a member become an offense to the Church and to its good name by persistent breach of the behavioral covenant, the Church, on recommendation of the Diaconate, may censure such members, moving them to the inactive list. This may be done only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to amendment in accordance with the law of Christ (Matt. 18:15-17).
  - c. Any person whose membership has been deemed inactive may be restored to active voting status by vote of the Church at a duly called meeting.

6. Associate Membership ~ Persons who assent to the covenant and have been recommended by the Diaconate but do not wish to give up membership in another church may become associate members upon approval by vote at a regular meeting or service of the Church. Associate members may serve on any committee except the Diaconate or Church Council and will have voice but not vote at any duly called business meeting of the Church.

## ARTICLE VI - Services and meetings

The services and meetings of the Church shall be as follows:

1. Worship.
  - a. Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday, except when temporarily suspended by vote of the Church or an act of God.
  - b. The sacrament of Holy Communion shall be celebrated at such times as the Diaconate may determine. Baptism of children or adults shall be administered at a time appointed by the Minister or the Diaconate. No sacrament is to be refused to any non-member wishing to receive it.
  - c. Other services for worship, inspiration, prayer, and study may be held as determined by the Church.
2. Business Meetings.
  - a. Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting shall be held following the regular morning worship service on the fourth Sunday of September of each year to hear the yearly reports of the officers and to elect officers, transact business, and adopt plans for the new year. In the event of an act of God, the Annual Meeting may be rescheduled to the first Sunday in October, following the regular morning worship service.
  - b. Finance Team. The Finance Team shall present the budget and timeline of other financial considerations to the council at least one month prior to the annual meeting.
  - c. Church Council Meetings. Church Council meetings shall be held at least ten (10) times per year. Additional meetings may be called by the Council Chair, Finance Chair, or by petition of five (5) active members, to hear, discuss, and act upon urgent matters that should not be deferred until the next meeting of the Council. Meetings are open to all Church members; however, only designated members of the Church Council have voting rights. The purpose of the meetings is to hear reports of Church concerns and transact the day-to-day business matters of the Church.
  - d. Special Meetings. Special Church meetings for business may be called by the Minister, the Diaconate, the Church Council, or on written request of five active members of the Church and shall be called by the Clerk. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call.

- e. Rules and Regulations. Notices of all business meetings of the Church shall be given at least two Sundays in advance from the pulpit, posted in the narthex and posted electronically if possible. Notices for meetings called to consider questions of financial policy shall be posted two Sundays in advance and held the following week. A quorum shall consist of 25% of voting members but no less than ten (10) voting members. Unless otherwise required, a majority vote is decisive, and unless restricted by law all active members of the Church are entitled to vote.
- f. Diaconate Meetings. The Diaconate shall meet monthly for at least ten (10) months of the year. Meetings are closed due to confidential issues. The purpose of the meetings will be to hear reports and guide the Church in spiritual matters. Members may also make presentations for guidance and discussion by appointment.

## ARTICLE VII – Leadership

The Leaders of the Church (active voting members) shall be the following:

- 1. Pastor.
  - a. The Pastor shall be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Church with the assistance of the Diaconate. The Pastor shall seek to enlist persons as followers of Christ, preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, have care of the services of worship, and administer the activities of the Church in cooperation with the various boards and committees. The Pastor may be an advisory member of all boards and committees.
  - b. The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite time by a two-thirds vote of the Church. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the Diaconate (or a special pastoral supply committee) shall make a canvass of available ministers, settle upon the one who in their judgment should be called to the pastorate, introduce the candidate to the Church, and at a duly called meeting, propose the Pastor's call.
  - c. While the term of the Pastor shall be indefinite, the Church may, by majority vote of a meeting called for the purpose, request the Pastor's resignation. The intent to request this resignation must be announced - as with all other business - two Sundays before the meeting. Likewise, the Pastor may depart voluntarily by presenting a letter of resignation to the Diaconate. A 90 day notice shall be given in either instance or upon other terms to which both mutually agree, except in the case of loss of ministerial standing on the part of the Pastor, in which case the Church-Pastor relationship may be dissolved immediately.

2. Diaconate. There should be six members of the Diaconate (ideally three men and three women). Members of the Diaconate will be elected to serve three year staggered terms. At each Annual Meeting, two members will be elected to replace the two outgoing members. Nominees must be members of the Church in good standing for one year prior to election. Outgoing members must wait one year before serving again.
  - a. The Diaconate is responsible for ministering to the spiritual needs and faith issues of the congregation and in matters of Church policy in regards to spiritual issues.
  - b. The Diaconate shall determine the appropriateness of proposed services and activities that will take place in the sanctuary.
  - c. The Diaconate shall be responsible for administration of the Deacons' Fund which shall be funded from specified donations. They shall administer this fund to the sick and needy. The Deacons' Fund shall be allowed to accumulate a sum of not more than \$600.
  - d. The Diaconate shall encourage mission work and administer mission requests and disseminate mission funds.
  - e. The Diaconate shall support stewardship as a faith issue.
  - f. The Diaconate shall be responsible for the preparation and service of Holy Communion and will oversee the efforts of hospitality and visitations.
  - g. The Diaconate will be responsible for providing guidance to the Pastor, working as a liaison to improve communication between the Congregation and Pastor.
  - h. The Diaconate should make a recommendation to the Church Council about the Pastor's salary and benefits.
  - i. The Diaconate is responsible for securing Pastoral supply and Interim Pastors.
  - j. The Diaconate will inform the council for the need to have a Pastoral Search Committee and will recommend members for a Pastoral Search Committee to the council, remembering to include diverse representation of members of the congregation.
  - k. The Diaconate is responsible for the approval of prospective Church members prior to a congregational vote.
  - l. One member of the Diaconate shall be a member of the Nominating Committee.
  - m. Meetings of the Diaconate are closed and confidential; however, Church members may present ideas and issues to the Diaconate with prior notification.
  - n. The Diaconate will be responsible for selecting recipients, by unanimous vote, of the Deaconess Plate and Elder Deacon's Cane. The Diaconate will honor one man and one woman, who have served the Church with honor and distinction for a period of not less than twenty five years, with a lifetime appointment of "Elder" hence the honorary title of "Elder Deacon" and "Elder Deaconess" respectively, and the status of permanent members of the Diaconate. The Elder Deacon will be presented with the "Deacon's Cane" and the Elder Deaconess with the "Deaconess's Plate". These will remain in the holder's possession throughout their life and then be returned to the Church. Upon the death of either, a special committee shall be appointed by the Church Council to nominate one or more persons deemed worthy to succeed to the Elder's title and status. Appointment shall be by unanimous vote of the Diaconate.



- d. Voting Members of the Church Council:
  - i. Three Councilors-at-Large -There shall be three Councilors-At-Large. Each Councilor-At-Large will be elected to serve a three year staggered term. At each Annual Meeting one member will be elected to replace the outgoing Councilor-at-Large. Outgoing Councilors-at-Large must wait one year before serving as Councilors-at-Large again. All Councilors-at-Large are voting members of the Church Council. Councilors-At-Large will represent the concerns of the Ministerial Teams and Church membership.
  - ii. Pastor (if a voting member of the Church, is voting)
  - iii. Clerk
  - iv. Treasurer
  - v. Assistant Treasurer
  - vi. Moderator (in case of a tie)
  - vii. One Representative from each
    - 1. Diaconate
    - 2. Christian Development (if a voting member of the church) or a Councilor-At-Large designee
    - 3. Building and Grounds (if a voting member of the church) or a Councilor-At-Large designee
- 5. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall have the overall responsibility for all the monies of the Church. The Treasurer shall pay the bills of the Church, invest funds with the approval of the Church Council and submit a detailed monthly report to the Church Council. The Treasurer shall have custody of all papers relating to the property of the Church and perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office of Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year. The Treasurer shall be a voting member of the Church Council and an advisory member of the Finance Committee. At no time should a person assume the role of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer at the same time.
- 6. Assistant Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall collect all monies of the Church. All monies shall be deposited with receipt and weekly detailed reports given to the Treasurer and a monthly report to the Church Council. The Assistant Treasurer shall keep records of all pledges, furnish subscribers with a yearly statement of their accounts and ensure that all gifts are acknowledged. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve a term of one year and shall be a voting member of the Church Council and an advisory member of the Finance Committee. At no time should a person assume the role of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer at the same time.
- 7. Moderator. The Moderator shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year, not to exceed five consecutive years. It shall be the duty of the Moderator to preside at all congregational meetings, as well as the meetings of the Church Council.

## ARTICLE VIII – Ministry Teams

Ministry Teams ~ are appointed by the Church Council to work on specific tasks within the church family. They may be made up of active members, inactive members or friends of the church and will have NO voting privileges unless they are active members.

1. Christian Development. There shall be a Christian Development team composed of at least three members. The team shall have the supervision and direction of the educational work of the Church. It is authorized to have charge of the Church school, to nominate a superintendent, to appoint and relieve teachers and to inaugurate and maintain any other religious educational activities recommended by the Pastor that the committee may adopt. It may be responsible for negotiating contracts (ie nursery care), and for other expenditures within its budget. All contracts shall be approved by the Council before being executed on behalf of the Church. It is also the task of the team to insure all persons who have contact with children have been CORI'ed and adhere to the Safe Church Policy. The committee shall cooperate with the Diaconate in the educational aspects of social service and benevolence. It shall submit a budget to the Finance Committee. A designated member of this team shall be a voting member of council, if they are voting members of the Church. The educational work of the Church includes;
  - a. Sunday School
  - b. Adult Education
  - c. Annual delegates. At the Annual Meeting, the Church Council shall appoint a delegate to serve where the Church is called upon to send representatives to other councils or meetings for the denomination.
  
2. Church Finance. There shall be a team on church finance consisting of three appointed members. The Church Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be advisory members of the team on Church Finance. Additional members may be appointed by the Church Council in such numbers as the council shall deem advisable. The Finance Committee provides fiscal oversight to include development and presentation of an Annual Budget, investment recommendations; and the annual all-membership stewardship canvas. Each year it shall be the task of the Finance Committee to review income and expenditures from the prior year and to solicit income and expense projections from the Ministry teams in order to develop a budget for the coming fiscal year. The Finance Team will then present the draft Budget to the Church Council for approval prior to it being presented to the Membership at Annual Meeting. The Finance Team is also responsible for the planning and oversight of the every-member stewardship canvass. It is also the function of this committee to arrange for a review of the Church's financial records prior to the Annual Meeting. A member of the Finance Team (an active member of the Church) should be knowledgeable of the policies and procedures of both the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. This person should have the ability to step into the role of either Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer in case of emergency. The Finance Team will report to a designated Council Member-at-large and will attend council meetings as requested.

3. Music Team. The Music team may consist of up to three persons, reporting to the Diaconate. The Music team shall provide for the Church Music and shall oversee the maintenance and repair of the organ and piano. It may be responsible for negotiating contracts with the organist and soloists and for other expenditures within its budget. All contracts shall be approved by the Council before being executed on behalf of the Church. The team will also make budget recommendations to the Finance team. The team should work closely with the Pastor and Diaconate.
4. Nominating Team. At least three months prior to the Annual Meeting of the Church, the Nominating team which shall consist of a member of the Diaconate, an outgoing council member-at-large, and a member of Christian Development will meet to prepare nominations for all officers and members-at-large to be elected at the Annual Meeting.
5. Ladies Aid Society. While the Ladies Aid Society is recognized as an independent auxiliary organization of the Church, it is an important and integral part of the Church. As such, it will be represented by a designated member-at-large on the Council in order to keep a direct line of communication open.
6. Buildings and Grounds. The Buildings and Grounds team may consist of three members. They shall oversee the handling of the tangible property of the Church including real estate (land and buildings) and tangible personal property. They shall supervise the protection, maintenance, repair, cleaning, alterations, and improvements of all tangible Church Property, real or personal. The team may be responsible for negotiating contracts (ie custodial care) and for other expenditures within its budget. All contracts shall be approved by the Council before being executed on behalf of the Church. The team shall submit a Budget to the Finance team and the Church Council must approve any non-budgeted expenditures. A designated member of this team shall be a voting member of Council, if the person is a voting member of the Church.
7. Historian(s). An Historian shall be appointed by the Council to serve for an indefinite term. The Historian(s) will be responsible for the records of membership, baptisms, marriages, and deaths and for preserving all records, pictures, and other objects of historical interest to the members of the Church.
8. Safe Church Committee. The Safe Church Committee will develop new safety guidelines, review and revise existing guidelines. It will ensure guidelines meet legal requirements, audit compliance with existing guidelines and take action necessary to bring church into compliance with guidelines. All guidelines developed or revised by the Safe Church Committee must be approved by the Church Council. The Committee will be made up of the Pastor, a Deacon (elected representative), the Moderator, a representative of Christian Development, a council member, and an active Church member currently not serving on Church Council. Members of the Safe Church Committee will also be the Mandated Reporters for the Church, and will investigate all incident reports and determine actions to be taken if any. Refer to the current Safe Church Policy and Procedure manual for more specifics. An appointed member of the Safe Church Committee will be responsible for complying with all State CORI

requirements pertaining to training and the maintenance of records, maintaining key logs and the weekly calendar, updating the Safe Church Policy and Procedure Manual and educating the congregation of the same.

9. Other teams may be appointed by the Church or the Church Council as needed and shall be governed by the Church Council.

#### ARTICLE IX - Auxiliary Organizations

All organizations and departments connected with the Church and using its equipment are regarded as integral parts of the Church and under its general oversight. The Church retains the right to allow the use of its equipment by other organizations by specific arrangement.

#### ARTICLE X – Memorial Gifts

1. Memorial gifts of money will be received by the Church in memory of loved ones and friends. Gifts may be given to the general endowment fund or may be earmarked for the following to be used as needs arise: Worship, Music, Building Fund or Meal Fund. Other memorial funds may be established by vote of the Church Council.
2. Memorial gifts of furniture/paintings/items: Memorial gifts freely given to the Church will be received without conditions or restrictions and become solely the property of the West Gloucester Trinitarian Congregational Church, UCC.
3. Memorial plaques/stones/benches: In lieu of personal memorials, a “Memorial Plaque Board” has been established for the purpose of recognizing memorial gifts. The memorial plaque board will be housed inside the building with a 1” x 3” brass plate that may be engraved for memorial purposes.

#### ARTICLE XI - Rules of Procedure

In all matters of procedure of the meetings of the Church not covered in these Bylaws, Robert’s Rules of Order revised shall be the parliamentary authority. Suspension of a specific bylaw or portion thereof may happen for a one year period only upon two thirds (2/3) vote of a duly called congregational meeting. At the conclusion of one year, the bylaw reverts to the original unless a duly called congregational meeting has approved a bylaw revision.

#### ARTICLE XII - Indemnification

The West Gloucester Trinitarian Congregational Church, UCC, as incorporated, shall indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as directors or officers, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid upon judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlement (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit, or proceeding in which they, or any of them, are made parties, or a party, or which may be asserted against any of them by reason of being or having been directors or officers of the Corporation, except in relation to matters as to which any such director or officer or former director or officer shall be adjudged in any action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for his own negligence or misconduct in the performance of his duties. Such indemnification shall be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, bylaw, agreement, or otherwise.

### ARTICLE XIII - Amendments

These bylaws may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular or duly called special meeting provided that a notice specifying the substance of the proposed amendment shall have been given from the pulpit or published (print and/or email) on the two Sundays immediately preceding said meeting. Ideally, a bylaws team should reconvene every five (5) years.

Certified to be an accurate and official copy of the bylaws of the West Gloucester Trinitarian Congregational Church as of September 18, 2014.

Cheryl Olson  
Clerk