

**BETHANY CHAPEL COMMUNITY CHURCH
CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

Effective January 17, 2021. Supersedes February 16, 2020 Revision

PREAMBLE

Bethany Chapel Community Church welcomes all who seek spiritual refuge in our sometimes chaotic world. We seek to love and to serve our Heavenly Father and our fellow humans in times of joy and in hours of need. We ask for the Guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our endeavors, and attempt to follow in the path of our Savior who promises that *whosoever shall believe in Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.*

ARTICLE I – CREDO

“The Spirit of Love Will Guide You”

(1890’s inscription on wall behind altar, rediscovered and preserved during 2003 chapel renovations)

ARTICLE II – MISSION AND TRADITION

1. **Spiritual:** Bethany Chapel Community Church (Bethany) is composed of members who believe in God as heavenly Father, who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and as such are organized for Christian worship, for the furtherance of Christian fellowship, and for the ongoing work of Christian witness.
2. **Historic:** Bethany was organized on June 7, 1889 as the Bethany Chapel Society for “...the purpose of establishing a religious society and with the intention of erecting a chapel or house of public worship at the village of Goff’s Falls...”, a mission that was then accomplished and continues now in its fulfillment. Listed in New Hampshire State Registry of Historic Places, October 25, 2001.
3. **Denominational:** Bethany is affiliated with the United Church of Christ as a member church of the Hillsborough Association, New Hampshire Conference.
4. **Legal:** Bethany is a Corporation in the State of New Hampshire under a charter granted June 21, 1954. It owns the Real Property located at 54 Newbury Road, Londonderry N.H. It is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) religious organization.

5. **Governance:** Bethany is self-governing and autonomous in the Congregational Tradition.
6. **Community:** Bethany seeks to minister to the spiritual needs of its members and of all others in need of God's Word regardless of geographical residence. Bethany also has a special calling to serve those in the traditional and evolving Goffe's Falls area of Londonderry/Manchester NH by acting as a focal point for community activity in order to help preserve the character and maintain a sense of historical and spiritual continuity of this unique neighborhood.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

1. Any person who has been baptized as a Christian and who has a desire to become a member of Bethany Chapel Community Church may do so.
2. Prospective members shall be given information about the history, mission, governance, affiliations, and other matters unique to Bethany, and be given the opportunity to have their expectations addressed and their questions answered.
3. A person shall become a member by completing the Confirmation process and/or by participating in a Membership Ceremony, during which an Affirmation of Faith and/or Letter of Transfer from a previous Church is offered by the new Member and accepted by the Congregation.
4. Active membership is maintained by regular participation in Worship Services and in other works of the Church, and/or by regularly contributing to its support as they are able. Active Members are eligible to serve on Church boards and committees and may vote in Church business meetings.
5. It is the responsibility of all members and particularly of the Pastor and of the Deacons to encourage reasonably high levels of membership activity through communications and individual counsel and support. If, after at least a year, an Active Member has not been in communication with the Church nor has participated in its support, the Deacons may, by vote, assign the person to Inactive Membership. The Pastor and Deacons should, however, continue efforts to communicate with Inactive Members and minister to their needs. Active Membership would be restored at any time at the Member's request by subsequent action of the Board of Deacons.
6. Inactive members may not vote in Church business meetings. Since Active Members of Bethany are, by association, also active members of the United Church of Christ, Inactive Members of Bethany will not be counted on UCC membership rolls.

7. Release from (Active or Inactive) Membership shall be granted upon the Member's request, including the generation of a letter of transfer to another Church as applicable. No person shall be involuntarily removed from Membership except by death.

ARTICLE IV – ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. **Boards and Committees:** The following shall make up the operational structure of Bethany (detailed duties and officers defined in further articles):

- a. Pastor
- b. Church Council
- c. Board of Deacons (Diaconate)
- d. Board of Trustees
- e. Various committees as described below

2. **Officers:** The following shall be considered Officers of the Church:

- a. Pastor, Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Chairmen of the Boards of Trustees and Deacons.
- b. Officers shall not serve in more than one of these capacities concurrently, unless deemed temporarily necessary by action of the Church Council.
- c. Officers of the Church may be called upon to deal with matters of a sensitive nature as they pertain to the workings of the Church and with issues of a personal nature involving Members and others associated with the Church.
- d. Officers shall be held to the highest ethical standards and are expected to fulfill their duties with moral leadership and in a confidential manner consistent with the private needs of the individuals involved.

3. **Congregational Meetings:**

- a. **Worship Services:** Scheduled each Sunday and for special occasions in the Church calendar as prescribed by the Diaconate. Worship Services are open to all who have a desire to attend and participate.
- b. Two types (**Annual** and **Special**) of Business Meetings can occur, as described below. All Business Meetings shall be conducted by the Moderator with minutes taken by the Clerk (or designees appointed by the Church Council).

The schedules for Annual and Special Meetings shall be set (and may be modified for good cause) by action of the Church Council. Notices of Annual or Special Meetings shall be published, and posted by the Clerk at

least two (2) weeks prior to the Meeting, and also announced by a Council representative during Worship Service at least one week in advance of such Meeting. The nature of business to be transacted shall be included in the Notice.

- c. **Annual Business Meeting:** Normally scheduled for the third Sunday in January, following the Worship Service. At this meeting, all chairmen of Boards and Committees, and of other Church organizations will present reports, and any necessary Church Business will be conducted and voted upon.
- d. **Special Business Meetings:** Called by the Clerk at the request of a Church Board, the Church Council, or at the petition of at least five (5) Active Members. Only the business indicated in the call for the Special Meeting will be conducted and voted upon
- e. A quorum of 35% of Active Members eligible to vote is required for transacting Church business. Any Active Member unable to physically attend a meeting may be considered present by assigning another Member to vote for them by proxy or by virtual attendance certified by the Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. A majority vote of those present shall be sufficient except as otherwise indicated.
- f. **These by-laws** may be amended by a two-thirds vote in any Business Meeting providing the text of the proposed amendment was published and promulgated to the congregation at least two weeks prior to that Meeting.
- g. Robert's Rules of Order shall apply during the conduct of Business Meetings in the absence of other specific rulings.
- h. All Meetings shall be opened with a prayer seeking guidance of the Holy Spirit that the results of the meeting will be in accordance with God's will.

ARTICLE V – PASTOR

1. The Pastor shall:
 - a. Provide the Church with Christian leadership.
 - b. Promote the Spiritual welfare of the Congregation.
 - c. Conduct Worship Services.
 - d. Preach the Gospel.
 - e. Administer the Sacraments.
 - f. Lead Adult Bible Study.

- g. Coordinate Church activities in collaboration with Boards and Committees.
 - h. Represent the Church in the Community at large.
2. Upon a vacancy in the Pastorate, the Search Committee (see Article VI) shall seek and recommend a replacement Candidate to the Congregation in a Special Business Meeting. A new Pastor shall be called by a two-thirds favorable vote.
 3. The Pastorate is a paid position, with the rate of compensation approved by the Congregation at the Annual Business Meeting.
 4. The Pastor shall be an Ordained Minister in good standing with the Hillsborough Association and the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ.
 5. The Pastor shall become a Member of Bethany within 90 days of call acceptance.
 6. The Pastor shall be an *ex-officio* but non-voting member of all Boards and Committees.
 7. The Pastor is called to serve an indefinite term. Termination may occur at the Pastor's request or by a three-quarters vote at a Special Business Meeting. A 60 days notice is to be given in either case.

ARTICLE VI – CHURCH COUNCIL

1. The purpose of the Church Council is to act as the focal point for coordination and communications between the Pastor, the various boards, committees, and organizations within the Church, and with individual Members, and to deal with matters not specifically within the realm of other groups.

The Council is advisory in nature. It can recommend and refer action to be taken by Boards or by the Congregation as a whole, but is not intended as an overall governing board.

2. The Council shall consist of all Church Officers (Moderator, Chairmen of all Boards, the Pastor, Treasurer and Clerk; see Art. IV.2. above). Others may be invited to participate in Council meetings as deemed appropriate and acceptable by the Council.
3. Meetings of the Council shall be conducted by the Moderator (or designee). A quorum of five, including at least representatives of the Trustees and Deacons is necessary to conduct business. In the event an Officer is unable to attend a

Council meeting, a designee acceptable to the rest of the Council may attend and represent that Officer.

4. Key functions of the Council shall be:
 - a. To consider long-range plans for the Church.
 - b. To facilitate rapport and promote open and accurate communication within the congregation and with the Community as a whole.
 - c. To act as a grievance committee for problems brought to its attention.
 - d. To act as, or to form a Nominating Committee responsible to it, which shall recommend a slate of qualified and willing candidates for elective office at the Annual Meeting, and to fill vacancies as they may occur during the year.
 - e. To organize and launch a Search Committee when a new Pastor is to be called. This Committee shall consist of one representative from each Board and three other Active Members. The Search Committee shall seek advice from and coordinate its efforts with the UCC Conference, including the task of hiring of an Interim Minister and the development of church and new pastor profiles to aid in the search process.
 - f. To serve as or to assign a Pastoral Relations Committee after the Search Committee completes its mission.
 - g. To take temporary action on procedural issues, and to recommend amendments to these by-laws and other changes in Church policy or organization as may be warranted by circumstance.
 - h. Call for a Special Church Business Meeting to resolve any major issue that cannot be resolved by other internal means.

5. The Church **Moderator**:
 - a. Shall be an Active Member elected by the Congregation at the annual meeting.
 - b. Conducts Church Business Meetings and chairs Church Council meetings.
 - c. Acts as the principal point of contact for Bethany in the absence or debilitation of the Pastor and Board Chairmen.

6. The Church **Clerk**:
 - a. Shall be an Active Member who is elected annually by the Congregation.
 - b. Posts notices for and takes the minutes of all Church Business Meetings.
 - c. Takes and publishes minutes of Church Council meetings.
 - d. Is responsible for maintaining the list of Active and Inactive Members.
 - e. Keeps records of baptisms, weddings, and other important events and milestones in the life of the Church.
 - f. Prepares and publishes the Church's Annual Report.

- g. Performs other record-keeping duties as deemed appropriate by the Church Council.
7. A Church **Assistant Clerk** may be elected annually by the Congregation to assist in the Clerk's duties. The Assistant Clerk shall have the same general qualifications and duties as outlined in (6.) above.

ARTICLE VII – BOARD OF DEACONS

1. The mission of the Board of Deacons is to oversee the spiritual life and worship life of Bethany Chapel Community Church.
2. The Board of Deacons shall consist of a minimum of four Active Members each elected by the Congregation to serve a term of three years. The Board shall annually select its own chairperson who would become the primary contact for Bethany in the absence or debilitation of the Pastor.
3. The duties of the Deacons are to:
 - a. Collaborate with the Pastor in the spiritual work of the Church.
 - b. Provide laity assistance in worship services and in the administration of the sacraments. This includes coordination of Baptisms, Infant Dedications, Lord's Supper, Discipleship, and New Member ceremonies.
 - c. Administer the stewardship drive and accept annual pledges.
 - d. Promote active participation in worship services and the works of the Church.
 - e. Extend the hand of fellowship and provide guidance to members in need.
 - f. Seek out new families in the community and identify them to the Pastor.
 - g. Visit those who are homebound and ensure access to monthly communion for those unable to attend worship if it is desired.
4. The board shall meet once a month. A quorum of three members is necessary to conduct its business.
5. The following Committees are under the supervision and guidance of the Board of Deacons and will report to the Board of Deacons at least once every quarter:
 - a. **Music Committee:** shall consist of a minimum of three Active Members elected annually by the Congregation to serve one-year terms. This committee is responsible for working with the Pastor and the Music Director (see c. below) to provide sacred music during worship services. The Music Committee shall annually select its own chairperson.

- b. The Committee shall maintain, promote, and oversee a Music Team comprised of voice and instrument performers and be responsible for enlisting Music Team members from the Congregation.
- c. The Committee shall select a musically talented and proficient Music Director who will be responsible for the supply of music for worship services. The Music Director will collaborate with the Pastor and the Music Committee to train and direct the Music Team.
- d. If agreed to by the Congregation, the Music Director position may be a paid position with the rate of compensation approved by the Congregation at the Annual Business Meeting. The Music Director will be an *ex-officio* member of the Music Committee.

6. **Christian Education Committee (CEC):** Shall consist of a minimum of four Active Members elected annually by the Congregation to serve one-year terms.

- a. The CEC oversees programs that are designed to impart Biblical and other relevant lessons about our Christian Faith to form a solid core of knowledge upon which to base and guide our individual journeys of Faith. These programs shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - Bible Studies
 - Daily devotional literature provided to the congregation. Currently “The Upper Room” or similar.
 - Sunday School Curriculum
 - Youth Discipleship Programs
- b. The CEC shall annually select its own chairperson who will be responsible for calling meetings and overseeing the implementation of Christian Education Programs such as Sunday School, Bible Studies, Youth Discipleship Programs, etc.
- c. The CEC shall meet before the first Sunday in September to choose Curriculum for the upcoming year and shall meet at least three additional times between September and June. A quorum of three members is necessary to conduct its business.
- d. The CEC shall prepare a budget for the following year and give it to the Trustees three months before the Annual Meeting.
- e. The CEC chairperson shall coordinate with the Trustees and oversee the expenditure of funds allocated for its programs.

7. **Missions Committee:** Shall consist of a minimum of four Active Members elected annually by the Congregation to serve one-year terms.

Mission Statement: To support the proclamation of the gospel to all who will believe, alongside any efforts to relieve the suffering, feed the hungry, comfort the broken, and encourage those without hope in this world. Matt. 25:35-46.

Responsibilities Include:

- a. The Mission Committee will endeavor to educate the Congregation about the wider missions of the Church, promoting active participation in mission work, distribution of mission literature, and arranging for periodic mission speakers.
- b. The committee shall meet a minimum of four times per year, more frequently if necessary. A quorum of three members is necessary to conduct its business.
- c. The committee shall annually elect its own chairperson.

ARTICLE VIII – BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1. The Board of Trustees oversees and manages the Church's property and finances.
2. The Board of Trustees shall consist of a minimum of four Active Members, each elected by the Congregation to serve a term of three years.
3. The duties of the Trustees are to:
 - a. Collaborate with the Pastor in the care and use of the physical property and tangible resources of the Church.
 - b. Administer business and financial affairs of the Church, including all trust funds.
 - c. Approve expenditures and authorize payment of bills by the Treasurer.
 - d. Oversee maintenance and repair activity and capital improvement of Church property.
 - e. Provide for proper audit of financial records.
 - f. Recommend salary adjustments for those in paid positions that are subject to Congregational approval. Negotiate salaries for other personnel.
 - g. Prepare a budget proposal for consideration at the Annual Business Meeting.
4. The Trustees may acquire or dispose of property in the normal course of affairs up to a \$1,000.00 limit. Transactions over this limit must have Congregational approval.
5. The Trustees may authorize the making, drawing, or acceptance of contracts, bonds, bills, or exchange of promissory notes on behalf of the Church.
6. The Board shall select its own Chairman who would become the primary contact for Bethany in the absence or debilitation of the Pastor and the Chairman of the Board of Deacons.

7. The board shall strive to meet at least nine times during a calendar year. A quorum of three members is necessary to conduct its business.
8. The Church **Treasurer**:
 - a. Shall be an Active Member who is elected annually by the Congregation.
 - b. Is an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Trustees.
 - c. Is responsible for receipt, disbursement, and accounting of Church monies as directed by the Board of Trustees and in collaboration with other Boards and Committees that raise and/or expend these funds.
 - d. Presents a trial balance to the Board of Trustees on at least a quarterly basis.
 - e. Prepares and presents a report of the financial condition of the Church at the Annual Business Meeting.
 - f. Under direction of the Board of Trustees, in the name of the Church, executes and delivers all deeds of real estate and other instruments conveying property, other contracts, agreements, or obligations of the Church.
 - g. Shall give bond for faithful discharge of duties in such sum as may be required by the Board of Trustees.
9. A Church **Assistant Treasurer** may (if deemed appropriate by the Trustees) be elected annually by the Congregation to assist in the **Treasurer's** duties. The Assistant Treasurer shall have the same general qualifications and duties as outlined in (8.) above.
10. The Board of Trustees may create and oversee special committees to perform certain functions such as fund raisers, meals management, and the like.

ARTICLE XI - OTHER MATTERS

1. **Church Delegates** shall be elected annually by the Congregation to represent the Church at:
 - a. Church Women United.
 - b. Hillsborough Association.
 - c. UCC annual meetings.
 - d. Other venues as appropriate.
2. **Other Committees or Organizations** directly or indirectly connected with the Church may be formed and are considered to be integral facets of Bethany's overall program, and are thus asked to submit a written synopsis of their activities to the Church Clerk for inclusion in the Church's annual report. Each organization using the Church's facilities should be registered with and should conform to guidelines set forth by the Board of Trustees.