

BYLAWS

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EASTON

A Member of the
United Church of Christ



Amended January 19, 2014

ARTICLE I - NAME.....	4
ARTICLE II - POLITY.....	4
ARTICLE III - DOCTRINE	4
ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP	5
Section 1 – Qualifications	5
Section 2 – Conditions	5
Section 3 – Responsibilities	5
Section 4 – Rights.....	5
Section 5 – Special Categories of Members	5
Section 6 – Termination of Membership	6
ARTICLE V – GOVERNING BODY	6
Section 1 – The Governing Body	6
Section 2 – The following actions shall be reserved exclusively to the Governing Body	6
Section 3 - The Governing body may pass from time to time, Special Policies which do not amend By-laws but do call for special actions by the Church. Such Policies shall be binding on the Church, and be published as an addendum to the By-laws.....	7
ARTICLE VI – CHURCH COUNCIL	7
Section 1 - Membership	7
Section 2 – Duties.....	7
ARTICLE VII – PASTORS	8
Section1 – Qualifications and Responsibilities	8
Section 2 – Selection and Acceptance	8
Section 3 – Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships	9
ARTICLE VIII – BOARDS OF THE CHURCH.....	9
Section 1 – Board of Deacons.....	9
Section 2 – Board of Christian Education.....	9
Section 3 – Board of Christian Outreach.....	10
Section 4 – Board of Finance	10
Section 5 – Board of Facilities Management.....	11
Section 6 – Term Limitations on Boards	11
ARTICLE IX – OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES	11
Section 1 – Officers.....	11
Section 2 – Officers: Terms and Duties	11
Section 3 – Other Committees	13
Article X – Services	13
Section 1 – Worship Services.....	13
Section 2 – The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper	13
Section 3- Other Services	13
Article XI – Board and Committee Meetings	14
Article XII – Meetings of the Governing Body.....	14
Section 1 – Annual Meeting	14
Section 2 – Preliminary Budget Meeting	14
Section 3 – Special Meetings	14
Section 4 – Emergency Business Meetings	14

Section 5 – Notices of Call.....	14
Section 6 – Quorum	15
Section 7 – Voting.....	15
Section 8 – Official Church Year	15
Section 9 - Robert’s Rule of Order	15
Article XIII – Amendments.....	15
Section 1	15
Section 2	16
Article XIV – Seal.....	16
Article XV – Termination	16
Addendum to By-laws of The Congregational Church of Easton.....	16

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this Church shall be: The Congregational Church of Easton. It is located in Easton, Connecticut.

ARTICLE II - POLITY

The government of this Church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs subject, in legal matters, to the Articles of Incorporation granted it by the Secretary of the State of the State of Connecticut.

While this Church is amenable to no ecclesiastical judicatory, it is receptive to the mutual counsel, comity and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ and/or that of any other ecclesiastical association with which the Church may be affiliated and acknowledges the value of sharing such bodies' aims and work.

ARTICLE III - DOCTRINE

This Church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience under the guidance of the Old and New Testaments and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The following Covenant, therefore, is not a test, but an expression of the spirit in which the Church interprets the Word of God.

Our Covenant

We confess our faith in God, our heavenly Father; in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; and in the Holy Spirit, revealing to us the will of God in Christ. We endeavor, through the study of the Scriptures, to find guidance for our lives. We believe the mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, to work for the dissemination of knowledge, the advancement of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. We look with faith toward the coming of the Kingdom of God and the attainment of life everlasting. We covenant together, therefore, as one fellowship, agreeing to abide by the government and discipline of this Church unless and until we are regularly dismissed therefrom. This we do for the glory of God, seeking Faith, Fellowship and Service in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – Qualifications

Membership in the Church shall be open to all persons who love the Lord Jesus Christ and publicly assent to our Covenant of Faith.

Section 2 – Conditions

- A. Any baptized person may be admitted to membership on confession of faith (and baptism if not previously baptized), by reaffirmation of faith or by presentation of a Letter of Transfer from another church of which he or she was a member.
- B. A person who assents to the Covenant shall be received as a member of this Church by his or her public affirmation of the Covenant at any regular worship service of the Church designated by the Deacons for the reception of new members, or in case of unusual circumstance, at some other occasion approved by the Board of Deacons.

Section 3 – Responsibilities

Members are expected to be faithful to all duties he or she deems essential to the Christian life, based on study of the Scriptures; to attend regularly the services of the Church when physically possible; to give systematically for its support and benevolence; to share in its organized work; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the Church and the winning of others to Christ.

Section 4 – Rights

All members may vote in all transactions of the Church requiring the approval of the Governing Body.

Section 5 – Special Categories of Members

A. Associate Member

Persons who wish to participate in the fellowship of the Church while maintaining memberships in another church, or who have joined another Church and wish to maintain formal relationship with this church may, with the approval of the Board of Deacons become Associate Members. Associate members may not vote or serve as Officers of the church or members of any Boards.

- B. Inactive Member
The Board of Deacons may place any member on the Inactive List if the member has not participated in the active life of the Church for two years or whose address cannot be determined. The Board will establish procedures for placing names on the Inactive List and dropping them from the roles after two additional years. Inactive Members may not vote. Members not physically able to attend services shall not be placed on the inactive list nor shall those who the minister believes should remain on the active list.

Section 6 – Termination of Membership

- A. By Letter or Withdrawal

A member may on request to the Board of Deacons be granted a letter of Transfer to a named Church. The name of the member will be deleted from the Church Rolls upon Issuance of the Letter of Transfer.

A member may be released from membership without transfer to another Church by communicating that desire to the Board of Deacons.
- B. By joining another church without a Letter of Transfer

Under this condition, the Board of Deacons may authorize removal of the member from the Church Rolls.

ARTICLE V – GOVERNING BODY

Section 1 – The Governing Body

The Governing Body of this Church shall be the membership assembled in a Church Meeting.

Section 2 – The following actions shall be reserved exclusively to the Governing Body

- A. The Calling and Dismissal of Pastors.
- B. Purchase, sale, lease or mortgage of Church real estate.
- C. Approval of the annual operating budget and capital budget, if any
- D. Election of Officers, Board and Committee members as required in the By-laws.
- E. Amendment of the By-laws.

Section 3 - The Governing body may pass from time to time, Special Policies which do not amend By-laws but do call for special actions by the Church. Such Policies shall be binding on the Church, and be published as an addendum to the By-laws.

ARTICLE VI – CHURCH COUNCIL

Section 1 - Membership

The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, a Chairperson elected by the Governing Body and the Chairpersons of Board of Deacons, Christian Education, Christian Outreach, Finance, Facilities Management and the Church Member who serves as liaison to the New Academy Preschool by virtue of appointment as a non-voting member of its Board.

Section 2 – Duties

- A. The Church Council shall be the Executive Body of the Church acting on all matters not reserved to the Governing Body or assigned to other Boards in these By-laws, and shall have responsibility for over-all policy and planning of the Church to include but not limited to:
 - 1. Review and coordination of the programs and activities of the Boards, Committees, Associations, organization and lay staff of the Church.
 - 2. Recommendation of adjustments of policy and administration in any area of church endeavor as it deems in the best interest of the church.
 - 3. Coordination of activities of Church boards and committees to assure that specific individuals or groups have taken responsibility for implementing tasks in a timely manner.
 - 4. Approval of all contracts.
 - 5. Approval of all budgets prior to submission to the Governing Body.
 - 6. Appointment of the Office Administrator, who will report to the Pastor and will be responsible to the Church Council.
 - 7. Publication of the Annual Report.
 - 8. Filling vacancies, based on the recommendations of the Nominating Committee, that occur during the church Year for any Office, Board or Committee, for which another board is not responsible.
 - 9. Authorization of bank signatories.
 - 10. Recommendation of auditors, subject to approval by the Governing Body at a special or annual meeting.
- B. Records: The Church Council shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings and be responsible for the safekeeping of all Church records.

ARTICLE VII – PASTORS

Section 1 – Qualifications and Responsibilities

- A. The Pastors of this Church must be ordained ministers and shall hold, or attain upon acceptance as Pastor, full and regular ministerial standing in any ecclesiastical association with which this Church is affiliated.
- B. As a duly elected leader of this Church's congregation, the Pastor shall have in his or her charge the worship services of the Church, administration of the Sacraments and pastoral care of members of the Congregation. In concerted and cooperative effort with the Board of Deacons, he or she shall seek to enlist followers of Christ, extend solace, guidance and encouragement to those who seek pastoral help, and act upon all matters that will enhance the spiritual welfare of this Church and its members.
- C. The Pastor shall be the administrative head of the Church staff, a voting member of the Church Council and an ex officio member of all other Church Boards, without vote. The Church Staff shall include other Pastors, the Director of Music, the Sunday School Superintendent, the Office Administrator, Custodians and any other positions that may be so designated by the Church Council.
- D. The Pastor shall make a report of the year's work at the Annual Meeting.
- E. The Pastor shall report to the Board of Deacons and be responsible to the Governing Body.

Section 2 – Selection and Acceptance

- A. When a vacancy occurs in the Pastorate of this Church, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a committee to search for and recommend a candidate. This committee shall be presented to the Governing Body for approval and shall select its own chairperson.
- B. The search committee's recommendation shall be presented directly to the Governing Body for its approval.
- C. Assistant or Associate Pastors shall report to the Pastor and be responsible to the Governing Body. They shall be ex-officio members of the Church Council, without vote.
- D. The election of a pastor to be called to the Church shall be by at least two-thirds favorable vote by ballot of those active members of the Church present and voting at a meeting called for that purpose.

Section 3 – Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

- A. If a Pastor desires to terminate his or her relationship prior to normal retirement, the termination shall be effective only after 60 days notice is conveyed in writing to the Board of Deacons by the pastor.
- B. The services of the Pastor may be terminated by a majority vote of the Board of Deacons followed by a majority vote of the Church Council and a two-thirds vote of the active members of the church present and voting at a Special Meeting. At least 60 days notice then must be given to the Pastor in writing by the Board of Deacons.
- C. If a Pastor of the Church loses his/her ministerial standing for just cause, the pastoral relationship shall be dissolved forthwith.

ARTICLE VIII – BOARDS OF THE CHURCH

Section 1 – Board of Deacons

- A. The Board shall consist of at least four but no more than six members elected at the Annual Meeting. Vacancies during the year shall be filled by the Church Council.
- B. The Board is charged with assisting the Pastor with the spiritual life of the Church and the community. It shall be concerned with, but not limited to, promoting regular worship by all members, the Sacraments and rites of the church, the appointment of the interim pastors, scheduling of Ushers and Greeters, and the orientation of new members into the fellowship.
- C. The Board will propose an annual budget for the services of the Pastor(s) and the Director of Music, as well as worship service and musical supplies.
- D. The Board will establish written contracts with the Ordained staff and Director of Music subject to the approval of the Council. As a member of the Church Staff, the Director of Music will report to the Pastor and be responsible to the Board of Deacons.
- E. The Board will appoint Church members recommended by the Nominating Committee, and be responsible for a Music Committee, a Pastoral Relations Committee, and a Flower Committee. Guidelines for these committees will be established by the Deacons.

Section 2 – Board of Christian Education

- A. The Board of Christian Education shall consist of at least three but not more than seven members elected by the governing body at the Annual Meeting. Vacancies during the Church year may be filled by the Church Council.
- B. The Board is charged with the supervision and direction of the educational work of the church for children, youth and adults.
- C. The Board will propose an annual budget for its work.

- D. The Board may engage and develop a contract with a Church School Superintendent, subject to approval of the Church Council. As a member of the Church Staff, the Superintendent will report to the Pastor and will be responsible to the Board of Christian Education.

Section 3 – Board of Christian Outreach

- A. The Board of Christian Outreach shall consist of at least three members and no more than seven, elected by the governing body at the Annual Meeting.
- B. The Board is charged with studying and keeping the church informed about the Church's Wider Mission, the denominational mission program and special, economic or other situations that relate to the Church. It shall cooperate with other Boards to motivate the Church to fulfill its mission of Christian kinship in our own community, state, nation and the world.
- C. It shall submit to the Board of Finance each year the organizations to which the church should contribute from its budget, and recommend to members during the year, special giving opportunities, recognizing that the Board of Finance must approve any fund raising activity.

Section 4 – Board of Finance

- A. The board of Finance shall consist of four voting members, including the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer all elected by the Governing Body at the Annual Meeting.
- B. The Board is charged with achieving and maintaining the financial well being of the Church by generating sufficient revenues to provide for operating and capital expenditures and adequate reserves for the future. The Board's duties shall include the following:
 - 1. Preparation of the Annual Budget.
 - 2. The Annual Pledge Drive.
 - 3. Approval of all fund raising projects in coordination with other Boards, as appropriate.
 - 4. Church investments.
 - 5. The acceptance of all gifts to the Church and the activities of the Memorial and Special gifts committee, whose membership will be appointed by the Board of Finance from recommendations of the Nominating Committee.
 - 6. The activities of the Collectors Committee, whose membership will be appointed by the Board from recommendations made by the Nominating Committee.

Section 5 – Board of Facilities Management

- A. The Board of Facilities Management shall comprise four members elected by the Governing Body at the Annual Meeting.
- B. The Board shall be responsible for maintenance of all church property including the Parsonage, and development of long term space needs. It shall prepare a budget for maintenance, renovation, acquisition or disposition for inclusion in the Church Budget.
- C. The Board shall assess the long term physical needs of the church and recommend appropriate action to the Church Council.
- D. The church sexton shall be appointed by the Board and, as a member of the Church Staff, shall report to the Pastor and be responsible to the Board of Facilities Management.

Section 6 – Term Limitations on Boards Suspended until Reinstated

Members of all Boards are limited to two successive three-year terms, after which there shall be a one year period after which he or she will be eligible to re-election on that Board.

ARTICLE IX – OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

Section 1 – Officers

- A. The officers of the Church shall be a Pastor or Pastors, a Chairperson of the Church Council, a Moderator, a Clerk of the Church, a Financial Secretary, a Treasurer, and Chairpersons of the Board of Deacons, the Board of Christian Education, the Board of Christian Outreach, the Board of Finance and the Board of Facilities Management.
- B. All officers must be members of the Church, and lay officers shall have been members of the Church for 12 months prior to election.
- C. Chairpersons of the Board of Deacons, Board of Finance, Board of Christian Education, Board of Christian Outreach and Board of Facilities Management shall be elected by their respective Boards and any vacancy during the church year will also be filled by the respective Board.
- D. All other officers, except the Pastor, will be elected at Annual Meetings of the Church. Any vacancies that occur during the Church year shall be filled by the Church Council.

Section 2 – Officers: Terms and Duties

- A. The Chairperson Church Council shall be elected to a two year term. The chairperson shall preside over the Church Council and be responsible for achieving the goals shown in Article VI.
- B. The Moderator shall be elected for a term of one year and may be re-elected twice. The Moderator will preside over all Business Meetings of the Governing Body.

- C. The Clerk of the Church shall be elected for a term of one year and may be re-elected. The Clerk shall:
1. Keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the church and the Church Council, of which he or she will be secretary.
 2. Maintain a register with the names and addresses of members of the Church, with dates and modes of their reception and removal, also a record of baptisms, marriages and deaths.
 3. Issue letters of transfer.
 4. Preserve on file all communications and written official reports.
 5. Give legal notice of all meetings when such notice is required.
 6. Perform such other duties as are prescribed by law or are usually considered to pertain to the office of Clerk of an assembly.
- D. the Financial Secretary shall be elected to a three-year term, renewable to a maximum of nine years. The Financial Secretary shall: be a voting member of the Board of Finance, and shall be responsible for:
1. The receipt, collection, deposit and accounting of all funds received by the church, except as otherwise provided, and shall report same to the Treasurer and Board of Finance.
 2. The keeping of individual accounts of all contributors and pledges to the church, and shall issue periodic statements thereof, as directed by the Board of Finance.
- E. The Treasurer shall be elected to a term of one year, may be re-elected and shall be a voting member of the Board of Finance. The Treasurer shall:
1. Deposit all funds received by the Church with the exception of offerings deposited by the Collectors and report same to the Board of Finance.
 2. Maintain custody of all the funds of the Church, including bank accounts and securities under policies established by the Board of Finance.
 3. Pay the bills of the Church, including salaries and taxes in accordance with Board of Finance policies.
 4. Keep an accurate record of income and expenses and all Church assets.
 5. Provide a financial statement for inclusion in the Annual Report and publish periodic reports as required.
 6. Assist the Board of Finance in providing Budget exhibits.
- F. The Church Historian shall be elected by the Congregation for a one year term and may be re-elected. The Historian shall:
1. Gather, assess, update, and maintain a file of information and sources of information on the establishment, facilities, noteworthy activities and accomplishments of the Church.
 2. Disseminate historical facts of the Church.

Section 3 – Other Committees

- A. Delegates (two lay members) to the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for one year terms, and together with the Pastor shall represent the Church at Conference Meetings.
- B. Delegates (two lay members) to the Fairfield East Association shall be elected at the Annual Meeting and together with the Pastor, represent the Church at meetings of the Fairfield East Association.
- C. The Nominating Committee shall consist of three members of the Church who shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. The Pastor shall serve in an advisory capacity, without vote.
 - 1. The Committee shall prepare a list of nominations for Officers, Board and Committee members, and at large members of the Nominating Committee for the ensuing year and publish such nominations at least one week before the Annual Meeting.
 - 2. the right of any member of the Church to make a nomination from the floor shall always be recognized.
 - 3. When a vacancy exists in any Officer position or for any seat on a Board or Committee at any time between Annual Meetings, the Nominating Committee shall prepare a slate of nomination(s) for said position(s) and present them to the Church Council for ratification. Individuals who have been elected to fill such a vacancy shall serve in their positions until the subsequent Annual Meeting.

Article X – Services

Section 1 – Worship Services

Worship Services shall be held at specified hours each Sunday unless suspended by the Board of Deacons.

Section 2 – The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper shall be celebrated during the first Worship Service of each month. The Sacrament of Baptism may be held at any time or place specified by the Board of Deacons.

Section 3- Other Services

Other services for worship, inspiration, prayer and instruction may be held as determined by the Deacons on recommendation of the Pastor.

Article XI – Board and Committee Meetings

Within one month after the Annual Church Meeting, Boards and Committees shall meet to elect a Chairperson and schedule regular meetings. A majority of voting members shall be considered a quorum and accurate minutes should be maintained.

Article XII – Meetings of the Governing Body

Section 1 – Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting shall be held in January on a date determined by the Church Council (a) to hear and consider reports of the Pastor, Officers, Boards, Committees and other Church groups, (b) to vote for Officers and Boards and Committees, (c) to vote on adoption of the Annual Budget presented by the Board of Finance and (d) to conduct any other business included in the call.

Section 2 – Preliminary Budget Meeting

A meeting will be held no later than the third Sunday of October for members to hear a report from the Board of Finance on the Preliminary Budget. The Church Council shall be present to answer questions from the Congregation. The Congregation will accept the Preliminary Budget as presented or amended, thereby setting its own targets for the Pledge campaign to follow.

Section 3 – Special Meetings

Special Meetings may be initiated by the Pastor, the Moderator, the Church Council or by any five members of the church who convey to the Moderator or Council that a meeting be called for reasons stated.

Section 4 – Emergency Business Meetings

Emergency Business Meetings may be called without advance notice to the congregation, at the conclusion of any regular Sunday morning service. Any two Officers must concur that sufficient reason exists for calling the meeting.

Section 5 – Notices of Call

Calls for all meetings of the Governing Body shall be made by the Clerk of the Church upon authority of the Pastor, or the Moderator, or the Chairperson of the Church Council. If the Clerk is not available, any Church Officer may issue the Call.

Meeting Calls must include dates, locations and purposes of the meeting. Copies shall be posted in the Narthex and in the Church office at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date; copies shall be distributed either electronically or in hard copy to all church members at least one week before the Meeting and the Call shall be read during Worship Services on the two successive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting.

Section 6 – Quorum

Twelve members of the Church shall constitute a quorum. No business shall be transacted unless a quorum is present.

Section 7 – Voting

All matters or questions shall be decided by a majority vote of qualified voters present, except on amendment or adoption of By-laws which required a two-thirds vote and Call of a Pastor, which requires a two-thirds vote.

Section 8 – Official Church Year

The calendar year shall be the official Church Year and all elected officers, Boards and Committee members shall assume their duties at their first meeting, which shall be called by the outgoing chairperson for a date no more than three weeks after their election at the Annual Meeting.

Section 9 - Robert's Rule of Order

Robert's Rule of Order will apply to all matters of procedure not specifically covered in these By-laws.

Article XIII – Amendments

Section 1

The By-laws may be amended by a two thirds vote of the active members present and voting at an Annual or Special Business Meeting of the Church if the call includes the amendments to be acted upon.

Section 2

Copies of the proposed amendments must be distributed to members at least three weeks in advance and the meeting call including the substance of the amendments must be read during Worship Services on the three successive Sundays preceding the Meeting.

Article XIV – Seal

RESERVED FOR FUTURE USE.

Article XV – Termination

The Church and its property shall be devoted forever to religious purposes. In the event of dissolution of the Church, its property shall become vested in, and its functions as trustee or otherwise, shall be administered by such church or other organization which is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes and which the membership of the church shall designate at a meeting called before said dissolution, or in the absence of such determination, the property shall be transferred to the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Addendum to By-laws of The Congregational Church of Easton

Special Policies passed in accordance with Article V, Section 3 of the By-laws

1. First Fruits
2. Use of Church Facilities by other Groups

1. The following motion was passed as a Policy of the Church at the 228th Annual Meeting of the Church held on January 26, 1992

“Moved that the Congregational Church of Easton establishes itself as a Church which follows the Biblical principles of the tithe and of first fruits, to embody these principles, the following procedures were to be implemented: **AT LEAST 10% OF ALL CHURCH REVENUE NOT INTENDED FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES WILL BE ALLOCATED TO MISSIONS GIVING.**”

2. The following motion was also passed as a Policy of the Church at the 222nd Annual Meeting held on January 26, 1986. It was subsequently amended by the Annual Meeting Reconvened February 3, 2013 as follows.

“Resolved that the Church facilities shall be available to responsible groups and individuals with the permission of the Church Council.”