

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
MT. SINAI CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
(Approved by congregational vote 10/22/17)

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be the Mount Sinai Congregational Church located at Mount Sinai, New York. Filed with the Suffolk County Clerk, March 1943.

ARTICLE II - MISSION AND COVENANT

- A. We seek guidance for our actions in every time and place from Holy Scripture, interpreted through reason, faith, and conscience.
- B. In Jesus's new commandment to love one another, we recognize that all people are children of a loving God and that we are called out to create a welcoming community for all who seek to follow that commandment.
- C. We covenant with one another and with God to adhere to our mission
 - 1. to proclaim in word and deed that Jesus is the Christ, our Lord and Savior;
 - 2. to celebrate his living presence in our midst through worship, study, community, and service;
 - 3. to share his gospel of truth, justice, peace, and love with all people.

ARTICLE III – GOVERNANCE

- A. The Mt. Sinai Congregational Church is composed of its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation granted by the State of New York. The Council shall set the policy and direct the total church mission and program.
- B. This church has joined the United Church of Christ as a Congregational Church without break in its historical tradition and without change in its government. Mt. Sinai Congregational Church shall be in covenant with the Suffolk Association, the New York Conference, and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

- A. Mt. Sinai Congregational Church welcomes into its membership any person, regardless of age, race, abilities, economic or marital status, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identification who loves Jesus Christ and whose purpose is to live according to Christ's laws of love. Membership will be conferred upon evidence of Baptism and recommendation of the Membership and Mentoring Action Team.

- B. Upon personal request or recommendation of the Membership and Mentoring Action Team for cause, a member's name may be removed by vote of the congregation at a duly called church meeting.

ARTICLE V - OFFICERS AND BOARDS

In accordance with New York State non-profit law, the officers of the church shall consist of a moderator, vice moderator, treasurer, and clerk. They are accountable to the Council. Officers and board leads shall be members of the congregation and, to the best of their ability, be committed and dedicated to the responsibilities of their position as listed in the church bylaws and in the church policy manual, as well as to attendance at meetings, church activities, and worship services. All officers and board leads shall be elected by majority vote of the membership at the annual congregational meeting.

- A. The Council is the primary body of this church. It shall maintain general oversight of all the activities of the church, always keeping the mission of the church in mind when making decisions. The Council shall plan prayerfully for the church's future, provide a forum for communication among the various ministry boards and teams, and stress thoughtful deliberation of church policy.
- B. Ministry boards and action teams manage and conduct the work of the church in accordance with their mission statements.
- C. Selection of persons to serve in the various offices, boards, and teams of the church shall reflect the diversity of the church's membership.
- D. Terms of officers and board leads shall commence on January 1 of the year following their election. The interval between the election of officers and board leads and their assumption of office shall be for the purpose of training.
- E. All meetings of the Council and the various boards and teams are open for anyone to attend, by prior arrangement and coordination with their leaders, except as noted in the church bylaws. Meeting dates, times, and locations shall be announced through the various communication streams of the church and recorded on the office calendar. Council and boards shall ordinarily meet on a monthly basis. The Council reserves the right to move into executive session when non-Council members are present.
- F. Any elected officer or ministry board lead may be removed by a majority vote of the congregation at a meeting called by the moderator for that purpose by request of the Personnel Action Team. A volunteer may be removed by a majority vote of the Personnel Action Team alone.

ARTICLE VI - SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Public services of worship shall be held each Sunday, except when temporarily suspended in an emergency, and at any other time as determined by the Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board. That board shall also determine when the Sacrament of Holy Communion shall be

observed. The Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered at such times as the minister designates.

- A. Annual Meeting An annual meeting shall be held on the first Sunday in November to elect officers and board leads and to transact business, including approval of the annual budget. A proposed budget will be available to the congregation for review one month prior to the annual meeting.
- B. Special Meetings The moderator in consultation with the Council may call special meetings for business. Board leads, standing action team coordinators, and members of the congregation may ask the moderator to call a special meeting after presenting the reason for the request before Council. The purpose of any meeting shall be stated in the call, allowing two Sundays' notice with publication in the weekly written announcements.
- C. Regular Services as Business Meetings In case of necessity the regular Sunday meeting of the church may be considered the time to transact business except in cases of corporate action that requires legal notice or business specifically assigned to other meetings. The purpose of any meeting shall be stated in the call, allowing two Sundays' notice with publication in the weekly written announcements.
- D. The quorum for all congregational meetings shall be 10% of the membership roll at the time of the meeting.
- E. Congregational meetings shall conform to the process outlined in the most current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

This constitution and bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of a quorum of the members present at any congregational meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose. The proposed amendments require 30 days advance notice and public reading of notice with publication according to the most current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I - MINISTER AND OFFICERS

The minister's and officers' duties and responsibilities are outlined in these bylaws; full descriptions are in the minister's letter of call and the policy manual of the church.

A. Minister

1. The minister shall be charged with leading the church in its mission.
2. The minister shall preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, have responsibility for all services of public worship, give pastoral guidance, and ensure that the sick and homebound are cared for.
3. The minister shall become a member of the church and of the local United Church of Christ association of which the church is a member and will represent the church at denominational functions, including association and conference meetings, and General Synod.
4. The minister shall act as the head of staff for all church employees and be a part of the review process of the personnel team.
5. The minister shall participate on the Minister/Parish Action Team.
6. The minister shall serve as an *ex officio* member of Council and offer counsel as an *ex officio* member of all ministry boards and action teams.
7. The ministerial relationship may be dissolved either by the minister or by the congregation at a congregational meeting called for that purpose. Either the minister or the congregation must give written notification of such intention three months in advance. The three-month provision may be waived by mutual consent. In the case of loss of ministerial standing on the part of the minister, relations shall cease at once, in accordance with the procedures established in the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.
8. All terms and conditions of persons in called positions shall be included in the Letter of Call according to guidelines of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ.

B. Moderator

1. The moderator calls all official meetings of the congregation and appropriately publicizes the call to meeting in accordance with Article VI, Section 2 of the church constitution.
2. The moderator is the presiding officer of the Council and all congregational meetings.
3. The moderator sets an agenda for all Council and congregational meetings in consultation with the minister.
4. The moderator reports the activities of the Council monthly to the congregation.
5. The moderator schedules with all staff members, ministry boards and action teams their attendance at one Council meeting a year.
6. The moderator accepts resignations of Council members.
7. The moderator serves a two-year term and may not serve consecutive terms.

C. Vice Moderator

1. The vice moderator serves in all functions of the moderator in the moderator's absence.
2. The vice moderator serves as lead for Personnel Ministry Board and represents its associated action teams on Council.
3. The vice moderator notifies persons elected to boards and offices.

4. The vice moderator serves a two-year term and becomes moderator in the subsequent year.

D. Clerk

1. The clerk serves as secretary and voting member of Council and at congregational meetings.
2. The clerk keeps the corporate seal and maintains all Council and congregational meeting minutes, which will be made available in the church office in coordination with the administrative assistant.
3. The clerk maintains the church policy manual in the church office in coordination with the administrative assistant.
4. The clerk maintains membership records, including reception and termination of membership, Baptisms, and marriages.
5. The clerk keeps a record of church history.
6. The clerk serves a three-year term and may serve successive terms.

E. Treasurer

1. The treasurer maintains the accounts of all funds, receipts and disbursements of the church; and keeps necessary records.
2. The treasurer is a voting member of Council and provides financial reports to Council, the Finance Ministry Board, and any ministry board or action team that requests reports.
3. The treasurer and Financial Ministry Board Lead prepare and present at the annual meeting a report of the financial condition of the church.
4. Working with the Finance Ministry Board, the treasurer prepares a budget.
5. The treasurer, in consultation with the Finance Ministry Board, may enlist an assistant treasurer and/or a financial secretary to assist in the work of the treasurer. Job descriptions with the duties and responsibilities of each position are in the policy manual.
6. The treasurer serves a three-year term and may serve successive terms.

ARTICLE II - COUNCIL AND MINISTRY BOARDS

A. COUNCIL

The Council consists of minister, *ex officio*, and eight voting members: moderator, vice moderator (as Personnel Ministry Board Lead), clerk, treasurer, and leads, or their designated representatives, of the Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board, the Congregational Nurture Ministry Board, the Social Justice Ministry Board, and the Finance Ministry Board.

1. The Council shall plan prayerfully for the church's future and provide a forum for communication among the various ministry boards and action teams.
2. Keeping the mission of the church before it, the Council shall listen to, discuss, and support the work of the minister, staff, ministry boards, and action teams.
3. The Council shall periodically review, approve, and, as needed, write policy.
4. The Council shall work with ministry boards to evaluate their mission statements and annual goals.

5. The Council shall resolve any case of financial conflict of interest, as well as any disputes within or among boards and/or action teams.
6. The Council may enlist temporary action teams to serve special purposes on behalf of the Council.
7. When necessary the Council shall propose a slate of candidates for a Minister Search Action Team for the approval of the congregation. Once formed, the Minister Search Action Team shall report directly to the congregation. Using the “Search and Call” process of the UCC and with the counsel of the associate conference minister, the Search Action Team will identify a qualified minister in good standing to present to the congregation for approval at a duly called meeting.
8. In times of ministerial transition, Council shall appoint an Interim Minister Search Action Team.
9. The quorum for all Council meetings is a simple majority of the Council membership.
10. Council decisions are approved by a simple majority of the Council membership.

B. MINISTRY BOARDS

1. Structure And Responsibilities

Ministry boards and their affiliated action teams carry out the work of this faith community. A ministry board shall consist of the board lead and affiliated standing and temporary action team coordinators. Ministry boards are identified for the following areas: Worship and Sacraments, Congregational Nurture, Social Justice, Personnel, and Finance. The boards’ duties and responsibilities are outlined in these bylaws; full descriptions are in the policy manual of the church.

- a. All ministry boards operate to advance the mission of the church. Each shall have a mission statement appropriate to its area of responsibility and will align its policies with that mission.
- b. Ministry boards shall determine their associated action teams and the number of members necessary to carry out the tasks of each board.
 - 1) Standing action teams perform the assigned tasks of the ministry boards.
 - 2) A ministry board may enlist temporary action teams to serve special purposes on behalf of the board.
 - 3) Standing and temporary action team coordinators shall meet with the ministry board lead on a regular basis.
- c. Participation on all action teams, standing or temporary, is open to active members and non-members.
- d. All ministry boards and action teams shall keep minutes at their meetings. These are forwarded to the church office for filing.
- e. The quorum for all ministry board meetings is a simple majority of the board membership.
- f. Ministry board decisions are approved by a simple majority of the board membership.

2. Ministry Board Members

Leads for the Ministry Boards of Worship and Sacraments, Congregational Nurture, Finance, and Social Justice are identified by the Nominating Action Team, working with the vice moderator and minister, *ex officio*, and are approved by congregational vote at the annual meeting of the church.

- a. Ministry board leads work with the Nominating Action Team to identify standing action team coordinators for their respective boards.
- b. The standing action team coordinators work with their board leads to enlist additional volunteer members for their teams and organize and schedule meetings with those volunteers.
- c. Individual ministry boards and standing action teams shall attend, as a group, at least one Council meeting per year and work with the moderator to agree on a date.
- d. Ministry boards and standing action teams shall annually
 - 1) review their goals for the year, to be presented by the ministry board lead at the March Council meeting;
 - 2) prepare funding requests to be included in the budget and present them to the Finance Ministry Board by September 15;
 - 3) review all policy as pertains to the work of their boards and/or action teams and apprise Council of changes;
 - 4) review their mission statements and evaluate the alignment of their boards' and action teams' work with the mission of the church; and
 - 5) prepare a written annual report to be filed in the church office by January 15.

3. Worship And Sacraments Ministry Board

The board lead and standing action team coordinators work with the minister and music director in planning all aspects of the worship service, including music, liturgy, children and youth participation, special services, and seasonal decorations. The board strives to make worship accessible and meaningful for a diverse congregation. The board lead and standing action team coordinators enlist volunteers to assist with worship tasks. A full list of duties and responsibilities is in the policy manual.

- a. The board lead
 - 1) serves on Council,
 - 2) serves a one-year term and may serve one additional term in succession,
 - 3) works with the Nominating Action Team to recruit standing action team coordinators,
 - 4) schedules board meetings with standing action team coordinators, and
 - 5) manages pulpit supply in the absence of the minister(s).

- b. Standing action team coordinators are members of the ministry board and attend planning meetings. Each coordinator will be responsible for at least one of the following areas.
 - 1) enlisting and scheduling volunteers to serve for a liturgical season as indicated in the board's section of the church policy manual; and
 - 2) working with the board lead to recruit a pool of volunteers who will serve communion, act as ushers, greeters, and liturgists, and in other worship roles as determined by the board.

4. Congregational Nurture Ministry Board

Working with the minister and the Christian education coordinator, this board engages the congregation actively in faith formation and development, and in caring, prayer, fellowship, and community. The board lead and standing action team coordinators will enlist volunteers to assist with the responsibilities for this board's programs. A full list of duties and responsibilities is in the policy manual.

- a. The board lead
 - 1) serves on Council,
 - 2) serves a one-year term and may serve one additional term in succession,
 - 3) works with the Nominating Action Team to recruit standing action team coordinators, and
 - 4) works with the minister and Christian education coordinator to schedule meetings with board members and staff.
- b. Standing action team coordinators are members of the ministry board and attend planning meetings. Each coordinator will be responsible for at least one of the following areas.
 - 1) managing programs for children and youth education, in conjunction with the Christian education director;
 - 2) overseeing adult education and fellowship activities,
 - 3) supporting the mission of the caring ministry and its participants;
 - 4) providing opportunities for encouraging church membership and mentoring of new members, working with the clerk to maintain membership records, including reception and termination of membership, Baptisms, and marriages; and
 - 5) coordinating temporary action teams for special gatherings.

5. Social Justice Ministry Board

This board, comprised of the board lead and standing action team coordinators, focuses on the church's broader outreach ministry in the world around us, including national and international missions programs of the United Church of Christ, our church's local food pantry, local ecumenical programs and mission-oriented organizations. The board lead and standing action team coordinators will seek volunteers to assist with the responsibilities for this board's programs. A full list of duties and responsibilities is in the policy manual.

- a. The board lead
 - 1) serves on Council,
 - 2) serves a one-year term and may serve one additional term in succession,
 - 3) works with the Nominating Action Team to recruit standing action team coordinators, and
 - 4) schedules board meetings with standing action team coordinators.

- b. Standing action team coordinators are members of the ministry board and attend planning meetings. Each coordinator will be responsible for at least one of the following action teams.
 - 1) Food Action Team to enlist volunteers for the Island Heart and church food pantries, to organize special food collections, and to support food missions in the developing world;
 - 2) Shelter Action Team to focus on housing, to study and pursue sanctuary and safe church issues, and to organize temporary action teams for disaster relief;
 - 3) Justice Action team to support the open and affirming commitment and to support the work of the church in areas of civil and human rights; and
 - 4) Wider Church Action Team to support denominational offerings (“5 for 5”) and to represent Mt. Sinai Congregational Church at UCC gatherings such as the Suffolk Association, the New York Conference annual meeting, and General Synod.

6. Personnel Ministry Board

This board exists to support the staff and volunteers who perform the work of the church. The board lead and standing action team coordinators will seek volunteers to assist with the responsibilities for this board’s programs. A full list of duties and responsibilities is in the policy manual.

- a. The vice moderator is lead for this board and schedules meetings with standing action team coordinators and ordained and non-ordained staff, as needed.

- b. Standing action team coordinators are members of the ministry board and attend planning meetings. Each coordinator will be responsible for at least one of the following action teams.
 - 1) The Nominating Action Team shall present at the annual meeting nominees for any open positions of officers and/or board leads.
 - 2) The Minister/Parish Action Team, for which all ordained staff will collaborate with the vice moderator to choose volunteers that are mutually agreed upon, shall support and maintain communication and an open and healthy relationship between the ordained staff and members of the congregation. This standing action team will conduct annual reviews with all ordained staff.
 - 3) The Personnel Action Team shall create and administer personnel practices and policy relating to all church staff, whether paid employees or volunteers.
 - a) The Personnel Action Team shall conduct annual performance reviews of all paid non-ordained staff, including discussions of goals, expectations, and recommendations of salaries and benefits to the Finance Ministry Board.

- b) The Personnel Action Team, in consultation with the minister and the Finance Ministry Board, shall be responsible for interviewing and hiring additional non-ordained staff members as it becomes necessary.

7. Finance Ministry Board

The purpose of the Finance Ministry Board is to plan, direct, and coordinate the financial activities of the church. The board lead and standing action team coordinators seek volunteers to assist with the responsibilities for this board's programs. The Finance Ministry Board works with the treasurer in all areas of its responsibility. A full list of duties and responsibilities is in the policy manual.

a. The board Lead

- 1) serves on Council;
- 2) serves a one-year term and may serve one additional term in succession;
- 3) works with the treasurer to prepare and present at the annual meeting a report of the financial condition of the church;
- 4) schedules meetings with board members, treasurer, and staff;
- 5) serves as coordinator of the Endowment Action Team;
- 6) convenes the Auditing Action Team; and
- 7) works with the Nominating Action Team to recruit standing action team coordinators.

b. Standing action team coordinators are members of the ministry board and attend planning meetings. Each coordinator will be responsible for at least one of the following action teams.

- 1) The Buildings and Grounds Action Team will focus on all aspects of the properties of the church, including repairs and maintenance, renovations or expansions. Either the treasurer or the Finance Ministry Board Lead will advise this action team.
- 2) The Endowment Action Team is charged with the responsibility to invest and expend invested monies in accordance with endowment fund policies.
- 3) The Stewardship Action Team's goal is to help God's people grow in their faith through the gifts of their time, talents, and finances. This team organizes and carries out programs to obtain financial support from the congregation for the church's operating and mission budgets. Either the treasurer or the Finance Ministry Board Lead will advise this action team.
- 4) The Counting Action Team, consisting of multiple two-person teams of counters, is critical to ensure the safeguarding of church funds. This standing action team will work with the treasurer to develop procedures.
- 5) The Auditing Action Team will provide an independent evaluation of the financial records and the internal controls of the congregation for the purpose of providing an opinion of the congregation's financial statements and recommendations for improvements of its internal controls. The Finance Ministry Board Lead convenes this standing action team.