

FIRST CHURCH OF LOMBARD
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CONSTITUTION
Approved December 6, 2015

Article I. NAME

The name of this church shall be the First Church of Lombard, Inc., United Church of Christ.

Article II. PURPOSES

The object of this church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God and in making God's will dominant in the lives of people, individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

MISSION STATEMENT

First Church of Lombard United Church of Christ is called together by a vision of God's shalom, God's wholeness, justice, and peace. We commit to model a community of faith and spirit that works toward unity, openness, understanding and peace, offering love, justice, healing and wholeness for all people.

We covenant together to be God's faithful people by:

- Becoming partners in a pilgrimage of faith, creating an environment that encourages worship, growth and exploration.
- Providing quality Christian Education experiences for everyone.
- Sharing ourselves and our resources to become compassionate, effective ministers, striving to be supportive of and caring for those in need both locally and globally.
- Recognizing, celebrating and giving thanks for the many diverse gifts of God among and around us.
- Declaring ourselves to be an Open & Affirming congregation that welcomes into the full life and ministry of the church persons of every race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and economic status, believing that through our diversity we all can grow in a unity of faith.

Article III. FELLOWSHIP

Sec. 1. This church is self-governing, but freely and joyfully enters into a covenantal fellowship of mutual counsel, concern, and mission with all other settings of the United Church of Christ. This relationship includes participation in CMA Cluster 4; the Chicago Metropolitan Association; the Illinois Conference, UCC; the General Synod of the United Church of Christ; the national offices of the United Church of Christ; and global partners of the United Church of Christ.

Sec. 2. This church acknowledges its spiritual union with the Church in all lands and times, as well as our shared responsibility to be an instrument of God's love to all people in every place. It will, therefore, seek and extend that fellowship and cooperation with all churches, including churches of other denominations, in our community and beyond.

Sec. 3 This church believes that God's love is boundless, and that no limit can be placed on the ways in which God may act and be revealed. It believes that all human beings are

spiritual creatures, and that there are countless ways in which the spiritual life is experienced and expressed. Further, it believes that Christian charity requires demonstrating the love of Christ to all people. Therefore, this church pledges to be in fellowship with non-Christian traditions and houses of worship, people of other faiths, and people of no explicit religious faith.

Article IV. FAITH

Every member of this church is granted at baptism the blessing of Christian freedom, with the right and responsibility to grow in his or her understanding of the faith according to the dictates of his or her conscience. Therefore, this church includes in its membership people who hold a wide range of views concerning theology, religious practice, and personal and social ethics. We encourage and celebrate this diversity as we believe it strengthens our fellowship.

We believe that “God is still speaking.” As a Puritan forefather put it, “God hath yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy word.” God’s revelation is continually being disclosed to us in many ways. Therefore, guided by the Holy Spirit, each member is encouraged to consult scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as he or she grows in the faith and strives to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Because our faith is rooted in resources that are ancient and contemporary, as well as sacred and secular, it is able to speak to the realities of today’s world.

Nonetheless, ours is a Christian church, acknowledging Christ as its sole head, professing Jesus as Lord, and believing that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the essence of Christian fellowship and the basis for living our faith in the world. We believe that the faith of Jesus Christ is best learned and lived in the community called the church, and that this faith is best expressed in the word agape – sacrificial love in action for others.

This church embraces the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology, understanding it as an authentic testimony of faith, but not a test of faith:

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow on upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

COVENANT

We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purposes to walk in the ways of Jesus Christ, made known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all people, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human community. Depending as did our fathers and mothers upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the world God intends, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

Article V. MEMBERSHIP

Sec. 1. New Members

- a. Membership in this church is open to all who desire to lead a Christian life and to participate in the fellowship of this church. Members may be received by confession of faith or by letter of transfer from any Christian Church.
- b. An appropriate group, appointed by the Church Council, shall discuss the meaning of this commitment with prospective members.
- c. Upon completion of the Confirmation program, or upon reaching the age of 16, whichever comes first, and making the commitment stated in Section 1(a) of this article, any person may be admitted to membership in this church.

Sec. 2. Membership

- a. The right to vote and hold elective office shall be open to all active members.
- b. The Church Council shall periodically review the membership list with the following considerations of the activities of the members:
 - 1) Regular attendance of worship services, or receiving of sacraments or pastoral care.
 - 2) Taking part in the Church educational program.
 - 3) Serving on church ministry teams and activities or other contributing of time and talent.
 - 4) Providing financial support.
 - 5) Participating in Women's Fellowship or other fellowship activities of the church.
 - 6) Showing in some other manner a desire to be a part of the fellowship of the church.
- c. Members may request, and upon written notification:

- 1) Be given a letter of transfer to any Christian Church, or a letter certifying their past membership.
 - 2) Be released from membership.
- d. Members whose addresses have been unknown for a period of one year may be removed from active membership by vote of the Church Council. Members so removed shall be notified by letter mailed to last known address; if no response is received in thirty days, the member will be placed on the inactive list. Inactive members have no right to vote or hold elected office.
 - e. Members who no longer participate in the activities of this church as outlined in Section 2(b) above shall be contacted by an appropriate committee to determine their relationship with the church and to make recommendations to the Church Council regarding their membership status. The Church Council, after due deliberation, may remove from membership those persons who indicate that they are no longer interested in participating in the fellowship of the church. The Church Council may restore to active membership list those who express a desire to resume participation in the fellowship. This review of membership shall be conducted every two (2) years on even numbered years and deliberation on changing member status shall be completed by Church Council prior to that year's annual Congregational Meeting.

Article VI. GOVERNING BODY

- Sec. 1. The government of this church shall be vested in its members, who shall exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to the applicable laws of the state of Illinois and to the Articles of Incorporation granted it by the State of Illinois.
- Sec. 2. The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled at a Congregational Meeting. Except as otherwise provided herein, the vote of a majority of the members voting shall be the action of the church. A quorum shall consist of those members who are present at a properly called meeting as set forth in Article X, Section 4 of this Constitution; members who wish to vote must be present at the meeting.
- Sec. 3. The following decisions shall be reserved exclusively for the congregation acting in accordance with provisions of Sections 1 and 2 of this Article:
 - a. The calling and dismissal of ministers and assistant or associate ministers (in accordance with provisions of Article VIII.)
 - b. Purchase or sale of church real estate (in accordance with provisions of Article IX.)
 - c. Approval of the annual budget.
 - d. Election of the ministry team leaders, the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
 - e. Amendment of the Church Constitution (in accordance with provisions of Article XII.)

Article VII. COUNCIL

- Sec. 1. The management of the affairs of the Church between annual Congregational Meetings shall be vested in a Church Council to be elected by the congregation.
- Sec. 2. The Church Council shall be the policy-making body and shall transact the business of the church, make provision for the determining and raising of the current expense budget

and its Christian service and benevolences, and provide for the review or audit of financial accounts and for the adequate support of staff.

- Sec. 3. The Church Council shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all church records, and report to the church at its regular and special meetings.
- Sec. 4. No more than one Church Council member may come from the same household.
- Sec. 5. No Church Council member may come from the same household as a staff member of the church.
- Sec. 6. All acts of the Church Council are subject to the will of the congregation.
- Sec. 7. The Church Council shall be composed of the officers (Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer), and the ministry team leaders. The called minister(s) shall be members of the Church Council but do not have a vote. The terms for Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer shall be as set forth in the By-Laws. No one shall serve as an officer for more than six consecutive years. The ministry team leaders shall be elected for two-year terms. They may be nominated and elected for a second consecutive two-year term at the option of the membership, but then shall be ineligible for re-election to that ministry team lead position for two years after.
- Sec. 8. Functions of the Church Council shall be:
- a. To meet monthly or as frequently as deemed necessary to carry out its work.
 - b. To appoint such ministry teams, task forces, and other groups as it deems appropriate to carry out the work of the church and to fill any vacancies until the next election. Vacancies in officer positions shall be filled by the Church Council until the next Congregational Meeting, not to exceed four (4) months from the date of appointment of the replacement.
 - c. To recommend to the congregation what it believes to be an appropriate position on matters reserved to the congregation for decision.
 - d. To recommend such other matters to the congregation for action as it shall deem appropriate.
 - e. To create and/or amend the By-Laws of the Church, subject to ratification by the majority of members voting at the next Congregational Meeting.
 - f. To give direction, review, and general oversight to the work of ministry teams, task forces, and other groups as it may appoint.
 - g. To instruct the proper officers in all fiscal matters, including the payment of bills.
 - h. To provide through its officers and minister a Personnel Committee, focusing on functioning and issues of church staff.
 - i. To have care and custody of the property of the church, real and personal, as a sacred trust in accordance with the provisions of applicable state laws and this Constitution and By-Laws.
 - j. In any case where a state law may require action to be taken by trustees, the Church Council is designated to serve and authorized to act in that capacity.
 - k. It is the responsibility of the Moderator and/or Vice-Moderator to report, as immediately as possible and without delay upon their becoming aware, any suspected act of sexual misconduct or abuse, mishandling of funds, or other criminal activity related to the activities of the church, by church staff or volunteers, to the appropriate civil authority (as well as the Illinois Conference in cases involving activities of the Minister.)

Article VIII. MINISTER(S)

Sec. 1. Qualifications and Responsibilities

- a. The Minister(s) shall be ordained and shall be officially recognized by the United Church of Christ.
- b. The Minister(s) shall have freedom of pulpit in matters of faith and ethics accorded to the dictates of the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, the heritage of the United Church of Christ, and the realities of the world. They shall have under their care all services of public worship and shall perform the functions of religious teacher and counselor in public and private. They shall be agents of reconciliation and seek to enlist men and women as followers of Christ. They shall supervise the church office.
- c. The Minister(s) shall be encouraged to participate in the wider church, both in the community and in the denomination.
- d. The Minister(s) shall abide by the responsibilities and duties of the office including those defined in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry, particularly subsections entitled "The Ordained Minister's Code."

Sec. 2. Call and Release of the Minister(s)

The decision by the congregation to call or release the minister(s) shall require a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting duly called for that purpose.

Article IX. PROPERTY

Sec. 1. The church may in its corporate name, subject to the action of the congregation, sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest or otherwise and own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property real and personal for such work as the church may undertake and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purposes of the church; it may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the object and purposes of the church.

Sec. 2. Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interest of which it shall then be possessed, including devise, bequest, gift, or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the Illinois Conference of the United church of Christ or its successor.

Sec. 3. The purchase or sale of the church real estate, and/or the mortgaging, borrowing or other assumption of indebtedness tied to church real estate shall require a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting duly called for that purpose.

Article X. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Sec. 1. The annual Congregational Meeting of the church shall be held in the fourth quarter of each year. At this meeting, the officers of the Church Council, ministry team leaders, the Minister(s), and such other church organizations as the Church Council may deem appropriate shall submit annual reports in writing and shall submit to the membership a

proposed program for the coming year outlining the chief goals and emphases to be pursued.

- Sec. 2. At least one additional Congregational Meeting shall be held during the course of the year for informational purposes or for needed action.
- Sec. 3. Special Congregational Meetings may be called by the Church Council, by the moderator, by the vice-moderator, by the Minister(s), or by petition to the Church Council signed by not less than ten percent of the members eligible on church matters. The Church Council shall call such meetings within three weeks from receipt of the petition and notices of such meetings shall be sent to the members by the church clerk in accordance with the provisions of Section 4 below.
- Sec. 4. Notice of all Congregational Meetings of the church shall be submitted to the membership in writing not less than fifteen days in advance of the meeting and such meetings shall be announced at the regular Sunday morning worship service(s) on two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting. In the instance of special Congregational Meetings, the purpose(s) of the special Congregational Meeting shall be described in the written and oral notices to the membership. E-mail or other electronic communication shall constitute a communication in writing as required herein.

Article XI. PROCEDURES

Roberts Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and/or By-Laws.

Article XII. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at a duly called Congregational Meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members voting, proper announcement of the text of the proposed amendment(s) having made at least fifteen days prior to the meeting.

Article XIII. ENABLING ARTICLE

This Constitution will become operative on January 1st following its ratification. All officers and Church Council members for that year are to be elected on the basis of this Constitution. The tenure of all Church Council members will begin on that date.

Article XIV. REVIEW

This Constitution will be formally evaluated after it has been in effect for five years, and after each subsequent five-year period.