

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS



Stafford Springs Congregational Church

Revised: November 26, 2017

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STATEMENT OF FAITH

Our church believes in God,
The Eternal Spirit,
The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
And also our Father,
And to His deeds we testify:
He calls the worlds into being,
Creates man and woman in His own image.
He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.
He judges men and nations by His righteous will which is declared through His prophets and apostles.
This church believes in Jesus Christ,
The man of Nazareth,
Our crucified and Risen Lord
Who came and shared our common lot.
He conquered sin and death,
He reconciled the world to Himself.
God Himself bestows upon us His Holy Spirit.
He created and constantly renews the church of Jesus Christ to heal the nations, He binds in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.
He calls us into His church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
To be His servants in the service of men,
To proclaim the gospel to all the world,
To resist the powers of evil,
To share in Christ's baptism and eat at His table,
To join Him in His passion and victory.
He promises to all who trust Him forgiveness of sin and fullness of grace, Courage in the struggle for justice and peace.
He promises to us that His presence will be with us in all our trials and tribulations.
He promises to be with us when we rejoice.
He promises to us an eternal life in His kingdom which has no end.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be The Stafford Springs Congregational Church, a corporation located in the Town of Stafford, Connecticut and formed according to the laws of the State of Connecticut. In June, 2008, the church was received into membership by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC).

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to worship God, to hear and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the Sacraments, to promote Christian fellowship and unity within this church, and to render loving service to all.

ARTICLE III: POLITY.

The government of this church shall be vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject to the laws of the State of Connecticut relating to Ecclesiastical Societies and church corporations.

ARTICLE IV: FAITH AND COVENANT

- A. This church acknowledges Jesus Christ to be its Lord and Guide and welcomes all who profess faith in Christ; it affirms the right and obligation of all Christians to follow the dictates of their own consciences as guided by the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. The church recognizes two Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion. We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness and love; and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord and Savior, who lived and died and rose again for us and our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who renews, comforts and inspires all people.
- B. We covenant with one another to seek and respond to the Word and the Will of God. We are united in striving to know the Will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known to us or yet to be revealed. We know it to be the mission of Christ's Church to proclaim the Gospel to all people, and, as one body, to labor for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, and the reign of peace. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we work and pray together for the transforming of the world into the Kingdom of God: we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and await the life everlasting.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

- A. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been baptized or will be baptized in the name of the Father, Son Jesus and Holy Spirit. Membership shall be conferred at a Service of Worship following recommendation by the Pastor and a favorable vote by the Board of Deacons. Membership may be determined by one of the following: membership ceremony, making a profession of faith, letter of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith.
 - 1. Members shall pledge themselves to attend worship regularly, to live a Christian life, to share in the life and work of the church, to contribute to its support and its benevolences, and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of all.
 - 2. It is recommended that all candidates for membership should study the history of our faith, with an understanding of Congregationalism.
 - 3. Members received by a Letter of Transfer from another Christian congregation will be introduced by the Pastor and their Letters read to the congregation.

- B. Any member who desires a Letter of Transfer to another Christian congregation is entitled to receive it, and the Clerk shall forward such letter upon a written request. Membership in this church shall cease upon the Clerk responding to the notice.
- C. Any member of the church who fails to attend services of worship or to participate in any activities or to contribute in any way to the support of the church for a period of one year, upon approval by the Board of Deacons and after notice to the Clerk and Pastor, shall be placed on the Inactive Member list and be so notified by the Board of Deacons. Such member may be re-instated to active membership by the Board of Deacons after consultation with the Pastor. Inactive Members shall have no vote. The Board of Deacons shall re-evaluate membership lists when deemed necessary, in addition to annual reviews.
- D. Any member may request in writing to be released from the membership covenant. After consideration by the Diaconate and upon its recommendation, a letter of release will be issued by the Clerk.

ARTICLE VI: GOVERNANCE

The governing body of this church shall be the active membership assembled in meetings. The vote of a majority of the members present at the meeting shall be the action of the church, unless specified elsewhere in these Bylaws. A quorum shall consist of ten percent of those in active membership.

ARTICLE VII: WORSHIP GATHERINGS

Regular Gatherings for Worship shall be held on the Lord's Day at such time as scheduled by the Diaconate. Special Gatherings for Worship may be held upon the advice of the Pastor and of the Diaconate.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion shall be observed on the first Sunday of each month, unless otherwise directed by the Diaconate, and at such other times as the Diaconate may determine to be appropriate.

ARTICLE VIII: CHURCH MEETINGS

Annual, Quarterly, and Special meetings shall not be held in the sanctuary.

- A. The Annual Meeting of this church shall be held the last Sunday in January (snow date first Sunday in February) for the election of Officers, Boards, and Committees, and for the transaction of such other business as may be set forth in the Call to the Meeting. The Cabinet, Officers, Boards, Committees, and related organizations shall submit their Annual Report in writing by the second Sunday in January.
- B. Quarterly meetings may be held to discuss and vote on financial issues that arise during the course of the year. A Special Meeting of the church may be called by the Moderator, by the Cabinet, by the Pastor or by a petition to the Cabinet signed by a quorum of the active membership. If the Call is by petition, the Cabinet shall convene the meeting within three weeks of receipt of the petition.

The Call to the Annual Meeting, Quarterly Meeting, or a Special Meeting shall be published in the church newsletter and/or a special mailing, postal or electronic, at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting. The Call shall be read during the Service of Worship at least once prior to the date of the meeting and printed in the church bulletin.

ARTICLE IX: PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Roberts Rules of Order (Revised) shall be the authority for all matters of procedure not otherwise covered by this Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE X: OFFICERS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

- A. The Officers of this church, elected for a three-year term (with the exception of the Pastor), shall be:
- Moderator
 - Pastor
 - Clerk
 - Treasurer
 - Assistant Treasurer
 - Financial Secretary
 - Church School Superintendent
- B. The Official Boards of this church shall be:
- The Board of Deacons (Diaconate)
 - The Board of Trustees
 - The Board for Christian Education
- C. Committees of this church shall be:
- The Stewardship Committee
 - The Nominating Committee
 - The Pastoral Search Committee
 - The Pastoral Relations Committee
 - Bylaws Committee
- D. The Moderator, Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, Members of the Diaconate, Members of the Board of Trustees, and Members of Board of Christian Education must be active members of this church. Other Boards and Committees have no membership requirement.
- E. The Cabinet of this church shall consist of the Officers of the church, a representative from each Official Board, and one representative from each of the church-related organizations, as well as one representative from the congregation.

The Moderator shall serve as Chairperson and the Clerk as Secretary. The Cabinet shall have the responsibility to make necessary revisions to the church budget, call Special meetings, appoint PRC, fill board vacancies, and oversee committee communication.

- F. Officers and members of Boards shall be elected by action of the church assembled at Annual Meeting.
1. Members of Official Boards shall not be eligible for re-election to the same office until at least one year shall have elapsed after completion of a second full term of office. If there are no candidates to fill vacant positions the eligibility may be waived at the discretion of the Nominating Committee or Cabinet.
 2. Persons filling vacancies by appointment shall serve only until the next Annual Meeting, at which time a permanent replacement shall be elected to complete the unfilled term.

3. A member of an Official Board absent without due cause from three consecutive meetings of that Board will be sent a letter by the Clerk stating that, after the fourth absence, the member will be presumed to have resigned and the position will be declared vacant by the Cabinet.
4. The terms of Officers and members of Official Boards shall conclude at the Annual Meeting in the year specified.
5. Upon completion / resignation of term any individual holding church property (such as, but not limited to keys, computers, checkbooks, financial records, etc.) shall be required to return such property upon completion or resignation of term. The Church Clerk will notify all financial institutions when necessary of signature changes.

G. All organizations related to or sponsored by the church shall be regarded as integral parts of the church and shall present a report of activities at the Annual Meeting of the church and be re-presented monthly at Cabinet.

ARTICLE XI: OFFICERS

- A. MODERATOR:** The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the church and Cabinet. In the absence of the Moderator, the Pastor or Clerk may preside until a Moderator pro tempore shall be elected for that meeting. The Moderator shall be responsible for creating agendas of all business meetings and Cabinet meetings and for creating all calls to business meetings as outlined in Article VIII. C. The Moderator shall be a non-voting member of all Official Boards and Committees.
- B. PASTOR:** The Pastor shall lead the church in fulfillment of its purposes, shall be a duly ordained Minister, and shall be an ex officio member of all Official Boards and Committees of the church. The Pastor shall have charge of the Worship Service of the church, and have freedom of the Pulpit. Working closely with the Diaconate and Director of Music in planning Worship Services, and in consultation with the Diaconate in matters pertaining to outreach and relationships with the congregation, the Pastor shall carry on a full ministry of preaching, pastoral care, and leadership. The term of the office shall be of indefinite duration and may be terminated either by the Pastor or the congregation, upon ninety days written notice, or sooner as may be mutually agreed. If, in a duly called meeting of the congregation, the pastoral tenure or salary is under discussion, the Moderator may invite the Pastor to be absent during the course of such discussion.

Call of a Pastor: Election of a Pastor, upon nomination by the Pastoral Search Committee, shall be by at least a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Full Members of the church present and voting at a meeting of the church duly called for that purpose. Upon election to the pastorate, a letter of Call shall state the relationship agreed upon by both the Pastor and the church, with copies given to the Pastor and the Clerk. Election as Pastor shall also confer status of active membership.

- C. CLERK:** The Clerk shall keep a full and faithful record of all meetings by the church and by the Cabinet in secure files in Genesis Center; shall keep an accurate register of members of the church, with date of reception or removal; shall record all church baptisms, child dedications, marriages, and deaths; shall issue letters of Transfer or Removal; shall issue the Call to meetings; and shall conduct such correspondence and perform such other duties as may officially pertain to the office of Clerk.

- D. TREASURER:** The Treasurer shall be elected for a three-year term. S/he shall maintain an accurate account of all moneys received or disbursed; these accounts shall be subject to semi-annual audit. The Treasurer shall be bonded. S/he shall pay all bills incurred by the church promptly and shall forward all moneys received for our church's wider mission or from special offerings to the appropriate agencies. S/he shall prepare and file all required state and federal reports and shall make all necessary deposits for state and federal accounts. It is recommended that the Treasurer shall be a member of the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall be a member of the Stewardship Committee.
- E. FINANCIAL SECRETARY:** The Financial Secretary shall be elected for a three-year term except that the initial election shall be for a two-year period. The Financial Secretary shall receive and keep an accurate record of all pledges made, all payments toward pledges, loose offerings, Sunday School offerings, special offerings and donations verified by a second party. S/he shall make prompt deposit of all moneys received and shall forward an accurate weekly record of all deposits to the Treasurer and church secretary. The Financial Secretary shall be bonded.
- F. ASSISTANT TREASURER:** The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer in all financial matters and, in the absence of the Treasurer, shall have power to sign checks in the name of the church. The Assistant Treasurer shall be bonded.
- G. CHURCH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:** The Church School Superintendent shall oversee the operation of the Church School, supervising the ordering of curriculum and supplies, shall keep a record of Church School attendance, and report the activities of the Sunday School to the C.E. Board. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the Board for Christian Education.
- H. OTHER NON-OFFICER POSITIONS**
- 1. HISTORIAN:** The Historian shall keep a record of important events in the life of the church. Any official certificate will be stored in the files of the church.
 - 2. AUDITORS:** The Auditor(s) shall meet annually with the Treasurer or the Assistant Treasurer to review and audit the financial records of the church.
 - 3. CHURCH SECRETARY:** This position reports directly to the Pastor of the Church. The job description and employment contract are reviewed and maintained on an annual basis in conjunction with the Board of Trustees. A written annual performance evaluation will be conducted between the Pastor and the incumbent. The results of the evaluation and the Pastor's recommendation for compensation changes will be presented to the Board of Trustees to aid in their proposal to the Stewardship Committee.

ARTICLE XII: OFFICIAL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

- A. GENERAL:** Each Board or Committee shall elect a Chairperson and a Secretary at its first session following the Annual Meeting and shall keep a written record of decisions, policies, and business transacted. Written reports will be submitted to Cabinet for inclusion in all scheduled meetings. The decision of a Board or Committee shall be the majority vote of those members present at a duly called meeting. Each Board or Committee may appoint such sub-committees as are necessary to carry out the duties of that Board or Committee.

- B. BOARD OF DEACONS:** The Board of Deacons or Diaconate shall consist of up to six members, with two members elected each year for a three-year term. The Diaconate shall share with the Pastor in overseeing the spiritual life of the church, shall assist in the administration of the Sacraments, and shall have charge of supply of the pulpit (including an Interim Pastor) during the absence or disability of the Pastor. The Diaconate shall be responsible, in cooperation with the Pastor, for worship, outreach, fellowship, and recommending persons for membership. The Deacons shall be responsible for overseeing acolytes, greeters, readers, and ushers for services.
1. The Diaconate shall work closely with the Director of Music and Pastor to ensure that appropriate music is provided for the worship services of the church.
 2. The Diaconate shall make recommendations to the Stewardship Committee regarding the Pastor's compensation following a yearly review.
 3. The Diaconate shall make recommendations to the Stewardship Committee regarding the Director of Music's compensation following a yearly review.
- C. THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** The Board of Trustees shall consist of up to five members: the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer and three to four members, with one member elected each year for a four year term. The Board shall have in its charge the care and custody of the property of the church and shall advise the Treasurer in the investing of all church funds, but it shall not have power to buy, sell, mortgage, or transfer any real property without specific authorization by the church.
1. The Board shall be responsible for budgeting all facilities maintenance and repairs, musical equipment, custodial equipment and services, and secretarial services
 2. The Board shall make recommendations to the Stewardship Committee regarding the church secretary's compensation following a yearly review completed in conjunction with the review of the annual written performance evaluation and recommendations of the Pastor.
 3. The Board shall publish guidelines for the use of church property and facilities.
 4. In the event that an emergency involving damage to church property should arise and a meeting of the full Board is not possible, the Chair person may take appropriate action to meet that emergency upon approval by two other members of the Board and advice of the Treasurer.
- D. THE BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** The Board for Christian Education shall consist of up to six members, with a minimum of one member elected each year for a four- year term. The Board shall be responsible for a well-rounded program of Christian Education, shall prepare annual budget requests to be presented to the Stewardship Committee, and in concurrence with the Church School Superintendent shall recruit and appoint a staff of teachers.
- E. THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE:** The Stewardship Committee shall be composed of the Moderator (as chair), Pastor, Treasurer, and one representative from each of the Official Boards. The Committee shall prepare a proposed budget to be presented to the Annual Meeting of the church and shall appoint such canvass teams as may be necessary to conduct an annual fund drive.

- F. THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE:** The Nominating Committee shall be composed of the Pastor (as Chair) and one representative from each of the Official Boards, The Committee shall prepare a list of nominations for Officers and Members of Official Boards whose terms shall expire at the Annual Meeting, to be presented to the Annual Meeting of the church, such nominees having first consented to be so named. Before the Nominating Committee meets, the church will be made aware of positions available, and volunteers will be requested at that time.
- G. The BY-LAWS COMMITTEE:** The BY-LAWS Committee is an adhoc committee and shall be formed when it is deemed necessary to review and consider modifications to the Church by-laws. It is recommended that representation from each Official Board of the Church be asked to participate. Bylaws aren't public documents and they exist as a foundational framework that describes how the organization will operate to guarantee honesty, transparency and accountability. They should never be modified to accommodate the needs of an individual but solely for the purpose of serving the needs of the Church.
- H. THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE:** The Pastoral Search Committee shall be formed when a vacancy exists in the Pastorate and shall be composed of at least five members elected by the church representing a cross-section of the church membership. The Committee shall nominate a new Pastor at a meeting of the church called for that purpose. Upon the election of a new Pastor, the Pastoral Search Committee shall continue in office for the period of one year to assist the new Pastor in relations with the congregation, advising the membership of changes which may be found appropriate in the Pastor's contract with the church.
- I. THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE:** In keeping with the By-laws, a Search Committee shall remain in place for one (1) year following the arrival of a new minister. It shall serve as the Pastoral Relations Committee for that time. At the conclusion of the year, it shall be disbanded.
1. At that time, a Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) shall be formed. It shall consist of five members, none of whom shall be a paid employee.
 2. The PRC membership shall represent a cross-section of the church membership: male and female, older and younger, long-time members, and relative newcomers.
 3. The PRC shall be recommended by the Cabinet. In the first year, three members shall be named for two-year terms and two members named for three-year terms. In ensuing years, members shall be named for three-year terms. Term limits shall be the same as for Official Boards.
 4. All discussions and proceedings of the PRC shall be entirely confidential.
 5. It shall be the duty of the PRC to advise the minister with regard to successes being achieved and about any concerns that may arise from the congregation. It shall consult with the minister to explore ways in which the success may be continued and extended and the concerns resolved.
 6. If a circumstance reaches an impasse, the PRC will advise the Cabinet.

ARTICLE XIII: CHURCH PROPERTY

- A. The church may, in its corporate name, for the objects and purposes of the church, sue or be sued; acquire assets by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise; own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose of property, both real and personal; purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for, transfer and convey property; receive and hold in trust both real and personal property, and invest and reinvest the same; and make any contracts deemed appropriate.

- B. Should the church be dissolved, its assets and all property, bequests, gifts or grants contained in any Will or instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to such organization which is organized and created exclusively for charitable purposes as the Cabinet shall determine, or in the absence of such determination, as the laws of the State of Connecticut shall determine, except where such Will or instrument makes specific provision otherwise with regards to dissolution of the church.

ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS

Suggested changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of this church may be made to the Bylaws Committee prior to a quarterly meeting. If any change is to be made, the committee must present the proposed changes to a duly called church meeting for acceptance by an affirmative vote by a quorum of two-thirds of members present, provided that the text of the proposed amendment has been made available through an every-member mailing, postal or electronic, at least three weeks prior to that meeting.

ARTICLE XV: ADOPTION

This Constitution and these Bylaws were adopted by action of the church on November 26, 2017, and replace all previous Constitutions and Bylaws. They became effective on November 26, 2017.