

# CONSTITUTION

**THE CRESSKILL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, INC.**

**CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY**

**June 8, 2008**

**The Members of the Cresskill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Cresskill, New Jersey, will provide and maintain a church for the worship of God and for Christian Education. We follow the traditions of the faith and practice of the United Church of Christ. We will aid in any endeavor that will promote a higher spiritual and moral life in the community.**

## ARTICLE I

### **Name and Address**

The name of this Church is:

**The Cresskill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

The address of this Church is:

**85 Union Ave., Cresskill, New Jersey 07626**

## ARTICLE II

### **Guiding Beliefs**

#### **Section 1. How Our Church Operates**

The Church finds its guidance through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It further finds guidance in the Holy Scriptures through reason, faith, conscience and tradition. We acknowledge that God is still speaking to us.

This Church is an independent ecclesiastical body, affiliated with the United Church of Christ. It cooperates in the free fellowship of member churches, seeking advice and assistance in the spirit of Christian love and fellowship.

The government of this Church is vested in its Members, who shall have the right of control in all its affairs. It is subject to the Laws of the State of New Jersey relating to Religious Societies and Congregations and to Corporations Not for Profit.

## **Section 2. Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of this Church shall be as follows:

Jesus tells us to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus, we gather as a community where questioning, listening and learning leads us toward faith and understanding.

We promise to support each other's relationship with God and encourage each individual's calling.

We strive to be compassionate and to minister to those in need.

We work to right injustice and advance peace.

We seek to be good stewards of God's creation.

We endeavor to live our faith both inside and outside our doors.

All are invited to participate in the life of our Church.

We are a loving, open-minded, caring, dedicated Church on a journey to learn, laugh, discover, grow, and worship God together. We invite you to experience our genuine, friendly, and fun hospitality.

### **Section 3. Open and Affirming Statement**

Cresskill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is an Open and Affirming community. We find our guidance through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and continue to honor the principle that discrimination is incompatible with Christ's Gospel of unconditional love.

We believe and affirm that every person has worth as a unique creation made in the image of God. We therefore welcome into the life of our church all persons, including but not limited to those of every race, culture, age, gender, socio-economic status, physical or mental ability, marital status, faith and sexual orientation such as those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

We specifically welcome and affirm: participation in our worship services and sacraments, celebration of life and commitment ceremonies, service as teachers in all facets of Christian Education, and participation in all Church activities, boards and committees, regardless of sexual orientation. As part of our commitment, we affirm equal opportunity employment for all.

We believe with the theologian-philosopher Henri Nouwen that "true liberation is freeing people from the bonds that have prevented them from giving their gifts to others." We rejoice in committing ourselves to further learning and advocacy to end oppression, discrimination, intolerance, and lack of understanding of any specific group of persons.

## **Section 4. Covenant**

The covenant binding members of this Church shall be as follows:

We covenant with God and one another to seek the many ways in which God is made known to us.

We seek that presence in Jesus the Christ, in the Bible, in worship, in each other, in ourselves, and in our everyday world.

We share the blessings of God that flow among us and accept the cost and joy of serving the whole human family.

We will pray for and with each other.

We will seek to love one another, even when we disagree.

We commit ourselves to this way of life, trusting God's grace.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Membership**

#### **Section 1. Definition**

Wherever used in this Constitution, members of this Church (hereinafter referred to as "Members" or "Membership") shall be persons who have been recommended for Membership by the Board of Deacons and the Pastor.

They shall be persons who have:

- a. Been baptized or are baptized upon joining, and
- b. Confessed their faith in God and find their guidance through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Persons may also become members

- a. Upon presentation of a satisfactory letter of transfer from another church, or
- b. Upon reaffirmation of faith at time of joining.

## **Section 2. Privileges and Obligations**

- a. Members in Good Standing shall be entitled to vote and put forth motions at any Congregational Meeting of the Members.
- b. Members shall be eligible to serve as Church Officers and as members of Boards and Committees. Committees may also ask nonmembers to serve on their Committee.
- c. Members are expected to be faithful in living and carrying out the essentials of the Christian life, to seek earnestly for guidance through prayer and communion with God, to attend the worship services of the Church, to provide for the financial support of the Church and its wider mission, to accept places of leadership when elected or appointed, and to have a part in the organized work of the Church through its organizations.
- d. Members who have not participated in the Church for a continuous period of two years shall be so reminded in writing by the Board of Deacons. Their names shall be placed on the Inactive List by the Church Clerk if there is no adequate response. Upon resumption of participation, their names shall be restored to active membership by action of the Board of Deacons. Members on the Inactive List are not considered in Good Standing.
- e. Unless otherwise specified, all references in this Constitution to “Members” shall mean “Members in Good Standing”.

## **Section 3. Dual Membership**

Membership in this Church does not preclude or affect membership and participation in any other faith community. A Member who wishes to maintain membership in another church shall be recorded as having Dual Membership.

## **Section 4. Termination**

Termination of Membership shall be by a letter of transfer requested in writing by a Member or requested with a Member’s approval by the minister or other proper official of another church, to which transfer of membership is desired. Termination shall date from notification of acceptance of a Member by another

church. Members who desire to terminate their Membership voluntarily may do so by written request.

## ARTICLE IV

### **Congregational Meetings**

#### **Section 1. Definition**

A Congregational Meeting shall mean a planned gathering of the Membership for the purpose of conducting formal business of the Church. Such business may include, but is not limited to, election of officers, adoption of the budget, call or dismissal of a pastor, purchase or sale of property, and amending the Constitution. Meetings do not apply to such gatherings as worship, educational activities or social events.

#### **Section 2. Scheduling and Notice**

- a. The Annual Meeting of the Members shall be held on the last Thursday in June. At its discretion, the Church Council may change the date of the Annual Meeting by not more than four weeks.
- b. Special Congregational Meetings may be called by the Pastor or any of the Boards or Committees.
- c. The Moderator may issue a call for a special meeting when so petitioned by 10% of the Members in Good Standing. Such a meeting, with the specific object clearly stated, may not be held earlier than three weeks after the call.
- d. A Congregational Meeting shall be announced from the pulpit, and by communication to the Members starting three weeks before the meeting, stating the agenda. Notice of the meeting shall be inserted in the Sunday Bulletin.

#### **Section 3. Voting and Procedures**

- a. Members of the church in Good Standing, as defined herein, are the only persons entitled to vote or make motions at any Congregational Meeting.

- b. Members must be present in order to vote at any Congregational Meeting.
- c. Ten per cent of the Membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any Congregational Meeting. No formal action shall be taken unless a quorum is present.
- d. Any matter submitted to the Members for action at any Congregational Meeting shall be approved or disapproved by a majority vote of those attending, unless otherwise provided herein.
- e. The Membership, at its discretion, may vote to have a closed Meeting where nonmembers are excused.
- f. Any procedural questions arising in Congregational Meetings not addressed in this Constitution shall be resolved in accordance with the latest edition of "Robert's Rules of Order."

## ARTICLE V

### **Pastors and Staff**

#### **Section 1. Pastor**

- a. The Pastor shall be called to the pulpit by the Congregation upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee.
- b. The Pastor of the Church shall be the spiritual leader of the Church and shall have primary responsibilities for: preaching the Gospel; administering the sacraments; organizing services of public worship; promoting the spiritual welfare of the Church and the people it serves; and performing the customary duties of pastoral ministry.
- c. The Pastor shall have the responsibility for the direct supervision and development of the Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Seminary Interns and the Church Secretary. The Pastor shall work with the Personnel Committee to conduct performance reviews. The Pastor shall work with the Personnel Committee to establish policies and procedures for the hiring and performance of the staff, and shall consult with the Boards and Committees

regarding their needs from the staff.

- d. There shall be a Pastoral Relations Committee to advise and support the Pastor.
  - 1. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall have five members who are selected by the Pastor and the Nominating Committee.
  - 2. There shall be no limitation on continuous service of any individual on the Committee unless otherwise determined by the Pastor and the Nominating Committee.
  - 3. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet as it sees fit or upon specific request of the Pastor, but in no case less than two times a year.
- e. The Pastor supervises a Discretionary Account with the help of the Chairs of the Boards of Trustees and Deacons. Funds may be distributed for emergency use by Members of the Congregation. The funds must be reimbursed to the Church.
- f. The Pastor shall serve as a non-voting member of all Boards and Committees.
- g. The Pastor shall have, or show that he/she will obtain, ministerial standing in the New Jersey Association of the United Church of Christ.
- h. The position of Pastor may be filled jointly by two or more persons who have been duly selected and called to serve as Co-Pastors and to share the authority and responsibility of the role of Pastor.

## **Section 2. Associate Pastor**

- a. By vote of the Congregation, the position of Associate Pastor may be established. In such case (or if an Assistant Pastor is appointed), the Pastor, as described in Section 1 of this Article, shall automatically be designated the Senior Pastor.
- b. The Associate Pastor shall be called to the pulpit by the Congregation

upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee.

- c. The Associate Pastor shall share the responsibility for the work of the Church, under the direction and advice of the Senior Pastor, and shall have such additional duties as may be prescribed by the Personnel Committee and the Senior Pastor.
- d. The Associate Pastor shall act for the Senior Pastor upon request, or without such request in case of the disability or absence of the Senior Pastor.
- e. The Associate Pastor shall have or show that he/she will obtain, ministerial standing in the New Jersey Association of the United Church of Christ.

### **Section 3. Assistant Pastor/Pastoral Interns**

- a. At the discretion of the Trustees and the Pastor, a position of one or more Assistant Pastors or Pastoral Interns may be established.
- b. The Assistant Pastor or Pastoral Interns shall share the responsibility for the work of the Church, under the direction and supervision of the Senior Pastor, and shall have such additional duties as may be prescribed by the Personnel Committee and the Senior Pastor.
- c. The Assistant Pastor or Pastoral Interns shall be hired in a staff role, and shall not be called to the pulpit by the Congregation.
- d. The Assistant Pastor or Pastoral Interns shall have, or show that they will obtain ministerial standing in the Association of the United Church of Christ in which they are “in care.”

### **Section 4. Interim Pastor**

- a. When a pastoral vacancy exists, the Personnel Committee shall appoint a Search Committee to select an Interim Pastor to temporarily fill this position with the approval of the Congregation.
- b. The Interim Pastor shall, in accordance with a written employment contract, serve at the pleasure of the Congregation and shall not be eligible to be called to the pulpit as a permanent Pastor.

## **Section 5. Music Director**

- a. The Music Director shall be recruited and evaluated by the Personnel Committee.
- b. The Music Director is responsible for the Music Ministry of the Church.
- c. The Music Director collaborates with the Pastor and the Music Committee in planning the most effective and spiritually fulfilling use of music in worship and in the life of the Church.
- d. The Music Director also serves as the Organist/Choir Director.

## ARTICLE VI

### **OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1. Moderator**

- a. The Church Moderator shall be elected annually to serve a one-year term and may be re-elected for successive terms for up to three years. The Moderator may not be elected to a fourth successive term without at least a one-year hiatus.
- b. The Moderator shall be the lay leader of the Church Corporation and shall preside at all Congregational Meetings of the Church and all meetings of the Church Council. The Moderator shall be considered the chief lay officer and shall be a delegate to the Central Atlantic Conference annual meeting, as well as to the New Jersey Association meetings, by virtue of the office. The Moderator shall be a member ex-officio of all Boards and committees.

#### **Section 2. Treasurer**

- a. The Treasurer shall be elected at an Annual Meeting of the Congregation for a term of four years and shall be eligible for re-election.
- b. The Treasurer shall account for all monies for the operation of the church, and the support of the Church benevolences and other

purposes. He/she shall disburse these funds according to the budget or upon the direction of the Board of Trustees.

- c. The responsibilities of the Treasurer shall include:
  - 1. Maintenance of all Church bank accounts and investments
  - 2. Maintaining payroll records, paying all employees, filing all tax forms and paying taxes
  - 3. The Treasurer shall attend all regular meetings of the Board of Trustees and provide a written report to the Board of all the financial transactions for the previous period.
- d. The Treasurer shall provide a summary of receipts and disbursements at the Annual Meeting, covering the past eleven months.

### **Section 3. Financial Secretary**

- a. The Financial Secretary shall be elected at an Annual Meeting of the Congregation for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-election.
- b. The Financial Secretary shall receive and take charge of all offerings for current expenses and benevolence subscriptions, deposit the receipts and provide the Treasurer with the summary breakdown.
- c. The Financial Secretary shall keep the details of such subscriber accounts confidential.
- d. The Financial Secretary shall provide category totals to the Board of Trustees for budget, checkup and annual audit purposes, and summaries to the Stewardship Committee annually.
- e. The Financial Secretary shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.
- f. At the request of the Financial Secretary, the Board of Trustees may appoint an Assistant Financial Secretary who shall assist in the duties of the office and act as Financial Secretary when needed.

## **Section 4. Church Clerk**

- a. The Church Clerk shall be elected at an annual meeting for a term of three years and shall be eligible for reelection.
- b. The Church Clerk shall be responsible for the following:
  1. Keep a record of each business meeting of the Congregation and the Church Council, which is to be available at the next meeting. All meeting records shall be retained for a period of five years.
  2. Keep a register of each member's name, date of admission, withdrawal, or death; and maintain the Inactive List.
  3. Keep a record of all baptisms, weddings and funerals.
  4. Notify all officers, staff, members of Boards and Committees and delegates of their election or appointment by the Congregation or Church Council.
  5. As Secretary of the Corporation, be custodian of the official Church records and the Corporate Seal.
  6. Issue notice of meetings to the Congregation when required.
  7. Issue letters of transfer or withdrawal at the direction of the Board of Deacons.

## ARTICLE VII

### **Boards, Committees and Associations**

#### **Section 1. Board Election Provisions**

- a. All Members in Good Standing of the Congregation shall be eligible to serve on all Boards established under this Constitution.
- b. A Member may serve, at most, on two Boards at a time. Members may also serve on one or more Committees.
- c. Unless otherwise provided, members of all Boards shall be elected at

an Annual Meeting for three-year terms, with one-third elected annually. In case of vacancies, each Board may appoint an eligible Church Member to complete the term, subject to confirmation at the next Annual Meeting.

- d. Board members may serve two successive full terms, after which they shall not be eligible to serve on that Board for one full year. However, anyone retiring from one Board shall be eligible for election to another Board of the Church.
- e. At the Annual Meeting, voting shall be done by ballot when two or more candidates are nominated for an office.
- f. Each Board shall elect its Chair annually, at its first meeting following the Annual Meeting.

## **Section 2. Board of Trustees**

- a. The Board shall consist of 12 members.
- b. The Board shall meet monthly, except that meetings in July and August may be suspended. Extraordinary meetings may be held as required for emergency matters.
- c. The Chair of the Board of Trustees shall also serve as the President of the Corporation.
- d. The Chair of the Board shall appoint a delegate to Central Atlantic Conference meetings. A delegate is also appointed to New Jersey Association meetings.
- e. The Trustees shall be in charge of Personnel, Finance, and maintenance of the Church grounds and the Parsonage. The Board shall have actual oversight of all Church property, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the Congregation authorizing such action.
- f. The Board shall authorize the Treasurer to expend budget monies under its control.
- g. The Board shall arrange for the preparation of the Annual Budget and shall appoint at least two members to a Stewardship Committee to

assist in raising the required budget monies.

- h. The Board shall provide for an annual audit of the Financial Secretary's records and the Treasurer's accounts.
- i. Committees of the Board of Trustees
  - 1. Stewardship Committee
    - a) The Stewardship Committee shall consist of seven or more members appointed from the various Boards and include the Financial Secretary, Treasurer and Pastor.
    - b) The purpose of the Stewardship Committee shall be to review requirements for the raising of Church funds, and administer solicitation of required funds.
  - 2. Nominating Committee
    - a) The Committee shall consist of the Chairs of the various Boards and the Moderator.
    - b) The Committee shall meet each April to recommend candidates for the various Boards and Officers and their names shall be presented for election at the Annual Meeting. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting.
    - c) When necessary, the Nominating Committee may meet at other times during the year to make recommendations for various positions.
    - d) The Committee may, when required, assist the Pastor in the selection of members for the Pastoral Relations Committee.
  - 3. Property and Grounds Committee

The Committee shall consist of one Trustee and other volunteers and shall have the responsibility of maintaining the Church, Parsonage and the grounds. Meetings are scheduled when necessary.

#### 4. Budget Committee

- a) The Committee shall consist of the President of the Board of Trustees, four other members of the Trustees, the Treasurer, and the Pastor.
- b) The Committee's responsibilities shall be to prepare a draft of the Budget for the Board of Trustees, which in turn shall then be submitted for approval to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. Meetings are scheduled when necessary.

#### 5. Personnel Committee

- a) The Committee shall consist of the Chair of the Board of Trustees, and two other members from any Board. The responsibility of the Committee is the recruiting of staff and evaluating the performance of the Pastors, Music Director, Church Secretary, Sexton, and Child Care Provider. Meetings are scheduled when necessary.
- b) When required, the Personnel Committee shall nominate a Pastoral Search Committee with broad representation from the various Boards and the Congregation as a whole. The Pastoral Search Committee may seek guidance from the Conference Minister.

#### 6. Finance Committee

The Committee shall consist of three members of the Board of Trustees and will be responsible for monitoring the Church investments. Meetings are scheduled when necessary.

### **Section 3 –Board of Deacons**

- a. The Board of Deacons shall consist of at least nine and no more than twelve members.
- b. The Board may appoint up to two Church Members between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one as Junior Deacons for one-year terms. The Board shall assign their responsibilities. The purpose is to train younger members in the duties and responsibilities exercised by the

Deacons for the Church's spiritual life.

- c. The Board shall plan all regular and special worship services, provide ushers, and provide for the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- d. Music Committee
  - 1. The Music Committee shall consist of at least three members.
  - 2. The Music Committee coordinates the musical program in cooperation with the Pastor, Music Director, and the Choir.
  - 3. The Committee interviews candidates for the Music Director position who have been previously screened by the Personnel Committee. Recommendations are then made to the Personnel Committee.
  - 4. The Music Director shall be an ex-officio member of the Music Committee.
- e. The Board shall assist the Pastor in the oversight of the spiritual welfare of the Congregation.
- f. The Board shall assist the Pastor in conducting new member classes.
- g. The Chair of the Board shall select one Member of the Congregation to be a delegate to the meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference and one Member to attend the New Jersey Association meeting.
- h. The Board shall appoint at least two of its members to the Stewardship Committee.
- i. The Board shall review the Congregational Membership list at least annually, determining any change in status between Active and Inactive membership and report any changes to the Clerk.
- j. The Board shall hold regular monthly meetings, except that meetings in July and August may be suspended. Special meetings may be called by the Chair, the Pastor, or at the request of four members of the Board.
- k. The Board shall be responsible for overseeing any cases of

inappropriate behavior that may arise in the Church community.

#### **Section 4. Board of Christian Education**

- a. The Board shall consist of six to seven members.
- b. The Board shall meet once a month, except that meetings in July and August may be suspended. Extraordinary meetings may be held as required for urgent matters.
- c. The Board shall be responsible for:
  1. Supervision of the Sunday School program for all children, youths and adults.
  2. Curriculum selection, in consultation with the Pastor.
  3. Recruitment of Sunday School staff and nursery caregiver.
  4. Assistance to the Pastor (or a Designated Youth Leader) with Youth Fellowship activities.
  5. Coordination of educational and special programs and activities.
  6. Assistance and support for the Pastor, as necessary, with the Confirmation program.

#### **Section 5. Board of Outreach**

- a. The Board shall consist of seven to nine members.
- b. The Board shall be responsible for shepherding all mission and outreach efforts of the Church. It shall promote missions and the exercise of Christian conscience in community affairs locally, nationally, and where needed. It shall promote and sustain the relationship of the Church with the United Church of Christ and with others on their spiritual and faith journeys.
- c. Committees of the Board of Outreach (Other committees may be formed as necessary)

1. Mission Committee

- a) The committee shall maintain support for community and mission workers.
- b) The committee shall strive to encourage the Members to fully appreciate and participate in mission giving.
- c) The committee will encourage active community volunteer participation and Christian mission in general.

2. Outreach Activities Committee

- a) The committee will support the development of activities that will attract people to the Church.
- b) Church Members may make proposals to this committee for new activities.

3. Sunshine Committee

The Committee is responsible for communicating with the Members of the Congregation at times of family celebrations, illness, loss of a family member, or at any other times where spiritual care and support are indicated.

- d. The following functions may be handled by the whole Board or developed into additional committees.

1. Advertising. The Board will oversee and implement advertising strategies and endeavors to promote the Church's mission and identity to the community-at-large.
2. Visitors. The Board will oversee outreach efforts to attract and sustain new visitors to the congregation. Possible new members could be referred to the Board of Deacons for new membership classes.

## **Section 6. Ladies Aid**

Historically, the Ladies Aid Society has been very instrumental in the development of our early Church. Reaching out to the community helped the Church grow.

Today the Ladies Aid is composed of women who are interested in fellowship, and fundraising for our Church. Any woman may join and it is not limited to Members of the Church.

Normally, meetings are held once a month except in the summer.

## **Section 7. Women's Association**

The Women's Association meets monthly and is open to women who are Members of the Church or the community. There is a President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Purposes of the Association include friendship, fellowship, and social/fundraising activities such as the spring Strawberry Festival.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Fund Raising Committee**

The Fund Raising Committee shall consist of two Members and the Pastor.

The Committee will meet monthly.

The purpose of the Fund Raising Committee is to schedule and coordinate fund raising efforts of the various Committees of the Church by:

- offering suggestions to various Committees that need fund raising ideas;
- setting reachable monetary goals; and
- tracking and displaying fund raising results.

## ARTICLE IX

### **Church Council**

The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, all elected officers of the Church, and the member representatives of the various Church organizations, for example, the Ladies Aid.

The Church Council shall meet during the second or third week in April each year to review the work of all organizations and make recommendations for action required during the current year or to be included in the next Annual Meeting agenda.

In the event the Moderator is absent, the Church Clerk shall preside during the election of a temporary moderator from the Church Council members present. If a vacancy occurs among elected officers during the current year, the Church Council shall appoint an interim officer to serve until the next Annual Meeting.

## ARTICLE X

### **Amending the Constitution**

**Section 1.** Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by:

- a. A special committee set up for that purpose; or
- b. A majority vote of the Church Council; or
- c. A petition signed by at least ten Members in Good Standing.

**Section 2.**

The Church Clerk shall distribute the proposed amendment to all Members in Good Standing, and announce the date of the special or regular Congregational Meeting at which the amendment shall be considered. An announcement shall also be made from the pulpit at each Sunday service until the date of the meeting, and the notice shall also be placed in the Sunday bulletin. The meeting shall take place at least fifteen days after the first Sunday announcement.

**Section 3.**

A two-thirds vote of the Members present at the Congregational Meeting shall be required to accept each amendment.

**ARTICLE XI****Transition****Section 1.**

This Constitution shall take effect the day following the next annual meeting after the approval.

**Section 2.**

All actions taken under the previous Constitution up to the time of adoption of this Constitution shall remain valid and fully in effect, unless and until rescinded or modified through future actions by the appropriate Church organizations.

**Section 3.**

Officers and Board Members elected under the old Constitution shall be entitled to serve out their full terms, regardless of any limitations imposed under Article VII, Section 1 of this Constitution.

**ARTICLE XII****Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution, the procedure shall be in compliance with state and federal laws regarding non-profit organizations. All assets shall be donated to the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC. No funds shall benefit any Member of the Cresskill Congregational Church UCC.