

**BYLAWS OF THE  
SOUTHWEST HARBOR  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

**(AS AMENDED January 20, 2007)**

A member church of the  
Conservative Congregational Christian Conference

P. O. Box 727  
29 High Road  
Southwest Harbor, Maine

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SOUTHWEST HARBOR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
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**I. NAME**

The name of this church shall be Southwest Harbor Congregational Church. This church cherishes and continues the history of the Mount Desert Congregational Church of Tremont and later Southwest Harbor, which in 1792 was the first Church of Christ organized on Mount Desert Island. The church building which serves as the home of the congregation, known formerly as the Union Church, North Side, Southwest Harbor, will always bear the plaque designating it as "First Church of Mount Desert Island Congregational, organized October 17, 1792."

**II. PURPOSE**

Into a world where people hurt from spiritual, emotional, social and physical ills, God calls His Church to bring forth healing through the Gospel. It is for this purpose that this congregation is gathered. Therefore, the members of this congregation see themselves as ministers to the world around them; the congregation stresses the importance of gathering weekly for worship, fellowship, and the preaching and teaching of the Gospel; it celebrates the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; it encourages personal spiritual growth; it recognizes the importance of equipping and educating all members, young and old, to serve God in the world; it rejoices in the power of the Holy Spirit which supports and strengthens the fellowship and communion of this congregation.

**III. COVENANTS**

- A. We covenant with the Lord and with one another, and bind ourselves in the presence of God to live together in all His ways, as He reveals them to us through His word of truth. (Adaptation of the Salem Church Covenant, 1629)
- B. We confess our faith in God, our Heavenly Father, and our reverent love for Jesus Christ, our Savior, and our willingness to be guided by the Holy Spirit. We promise, as members of this church, to walk together as Christian brethren, obedient to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and do submit to the government and discipline of this church until we are regularly dismissed. And this we do for the glory of God, for the good of our fellow men, and for our mutual growth, in Christian grace seeking to do all in faith, fellowship and service, in the Spirit of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Covenant of the Mount Desert Congregational Church)

**IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH**

- A. We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testament, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written.
- B. We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- C. We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- D. We believe that for salvation of lost and sinful man regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

- E. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling power and fullness the Christian is enabled to live a godly life in this present evil world.
- F. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- G. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ.

V. **GOVERNMENT AND ORGANIZATION**

A. This congregation recognizes Jesus Christ as the only head of the Church. The affairs of this local church are under the government of the members of the congregation. To execute the affairs of this congregation without the need to resort to a congregational meeting each time a decision is needed, the church will follow the biblical model of having Elders and Deacons administer the affairs of the congregation. As mandated in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:17, and Titus 1:5, this congregation recognizes a plurality of elders and interprets that to mean more than one elder. As such, the body of Elders shall consist of the Pastor (or teaching elder) and at least one overseeing elder. However, for practical reasons, it is strongly encouraged that the body of Elders be maintained at three or more. The Elders will oversee the church administration, the teaching ministries, the Trustees and the Deaconate. The Deaconate shall be formed into several ministries to focus their call and efforts.

B. Officers and Moderator

- i. The officers of the church are the chairman of the Trustee ministry, the Clerk and Treasurer. The officers shall serve as the legal representatives of the church in civil matters. Officers must be members of this congregation. Vacancies created by the early resignation of an officer shall be filled by election by the Trustees for their chairman, and election by the congregation for the Treasurer or Clerk.

(a) The Chairman of the Trustee Ministry

See Trustee ministry (section 5B)

(b) The Clerk

The Clerk shall perform such duties as usually pertain to the office of clerk of an assembly under the guidance of the elders. The Clerk shall take the minutes of the congregational meetings. The Clerk shall keep a register of the members of the church, with dates and modes of their reception and removal and a record of baptisms. The Clerk shall issue notices of congregational meetings. The Clerk shall prepare the appropriate statistics pertaining to membership, baptisms and any other topics deemed important by the elders for inclusion in the church's annual report. The Clerk shall serve as Historian for the congregation and as such shall oversee the care of the records and artifacts pertaining to the ongoing history of the church. The Clerk shall perform the duties of the Treasurer in the absence of the treasurer. The Clerk shall serve an unlimited number of one year terms.

(c) The Treasurer

The Treasurer shall perform the usual duties incumbent upon that office under the guidance of the elders. The Treasurer shall prepare financial statements for the elders as requested and a statement for the annual congregational meeting. The Treasurer shall prepare a draft budget for the coming year and present it to the elders. The treasurer shall serve an unlimited number of one year terms.

(d) The Moderator

The Moderator shall be appointed by the elders and shall preside at the congregational meetings. In the event of the Moderator's absence, one of the elders shall serve as pro-tem Moderator and shall preside. The moderator shall serve an unlimited number of one year terms. The term shall commence immediately following the annual meeting.

C. Elders and Elder Ministries

i) Elders

An Elder must be a man who is mature in his Christian faith and in his walk with the Lord. He must be knowledgeable of the Scriptures and dedicated to prayer. Those selected to be elders shall be examined as required by 1 Timothy 3:10 and 5:24-25, as to the qualifications for eldership recorded in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Elders are to actively shepherd the flock of God. In shepherding the flock, they are to:

- protect the congregation against the teaching of false doctrines,
- provide for the spiritual welfare of the congregation,
- provide general oversight for the work and programs of the church,
- serve as stewards of the congregation's resources,
- direct the Faith Promise program,
- decide theological issues,
- administer church discipline,
- oversee the worship service,
- preside over the Lord's supper and baptism,
- arrange for pulpit supply,
- oversee the use of the sanctuary,
- oversee the electronic media ministry, and
- conduct membership classes and receive new members.

(a) The Teaching Elder

The Pastor is the Teaching Elder of the congregation. The Pastor, being "first among equals"(1 Timothy 5:17), is the person primarily responsible for the preaching and teaching of God's Word, and the administration of the sacraments. We believe that the Pastor is called to this church by the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the same work, the congregation gives voice to that call by a 90% written vote of the members present at the congregational meeting called for that purpose. The Pastor shall become a member of this congregation at the time he accepts the call. The Pastor shall serve the congregation as long as he and the congregation agree that the call remains. The Pastor's service to this congregation may be ended with a sixty-day notice by the church or thirty-day notice by the Pastor. The church and Pastor shall affect any separation in the best interests of both.

(b) The Overseeing Elders

Overseeing Elders with the Teaching Elder shall provide pastoral care to the congregation. The congregation should strive to have no fewer than two serving Overseeing Elders. New Overseeing Elders shall be selected by the current elders of the church and shall be presented to the congregation for confirmation. Confirmation shall require a 90% written vote of the members present at the congregational meeting called for that purpose. Overseeing Elders shall be such so long as they remain a member of this congregation. Sabbaticals shall be provided as are deemed appropriate by the elders. The Overseeing Elders will nurture the relationship between the congregation and the Pastor and propose the Pastor's compensation package.

ii) The Elder Ministries

The Elder Ministries are Christian Education, Youth and Trustee. Each ministry shall consist of three elected/voting members and as many non-elected/non-voting members as the chairman deems appropriate. Anyone serving as an elected/voting member of a ministry must be a member of this church. Each ministry will elect its own chairman at the first meeting following the Annual Congregational Meeting. A simple majority shall constitute a quorum. A ministry member with two consecutive unexcused absences from meetings shall by their actions be considered to have requested resignation from that ministry. Absences shall be excused by vote of the other members of the ministry and except in unusual circumstances only if the chairman of the ministry was notified prior to the absence. Election to a ministry shall be to a three-year term or for a lesser period if to complete an unexpired term. One elected member term in each ministry shall expire each year. A member may serve up to six years before resting from the ministry for at least one year. New terms shall begin immediately following the annual congregational meeting.

(a) The Christian Education Ministry

The Christian Education Ministry is responsible for providing Christian education programs for all who are willing to learn from the Bible and nursery service when required. The Christian Education Ministry shall appoint and shall supervise a Director of Children's Ministries. The appointment shall be confirmed by the elders. The Christian Education Ministry shall also appoint a Librarian.

The Director of Children's Ministries

The Director of the Children's Ministries shall implement, coordinate and provide direct supervision for a Christian education program for children pre-school through sixth grade. The Director shall be a member of this church.

The Librarian

The Librarian is responsible for maintaining both the child and the adult libraries by processing new books, tapes and videos and overseeing the circulation of books, tapes and videos.

(b) The Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry shall design, conduct, and monitor programs for youth from grades seven through twelve in our church and community. The programs shall provide an environment for seekers to understand Christianity and for young Christians to grow in the Holy Spirit and prepare them to seek and understand God's will in their lives.

(c) The Trustee Ministry

The Trustee Ministry shall oversee the real property of the church. The Trustee Ministry is responsible for the care and maintenance of all real property, the use of the facilities, except the sanctuary, and maintenance of an insurance program. The Trustee Ministry does not have the power to sell, mortgage or transfer any real property of the church valued in excess of \$5000.00 without the specific vote of the congregation. The Trustee Ministry shall hire and supervise the Sexton.

D. Deacons and the Deaconate Ministries

i) Deacons

The Deaconate shall consist of four deacons. Each shall serve as the chairman of one of the four Deaconate ministries according to his/her giftedness and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Anyone serving as a deacon shall be a member of this church. Deacons will be elected to a three-year term by the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting, or for a lesser period if to complete an unexpired term. Terms will begin and expire immediately after the Annual Congregational Meeting. One term will expire each year with two terms expiring every third year. The Deaconate will elect its own chairman and make its own ministry assignments. The deacons will share the worship service duties with the elders. The chairmen of the Congregational Care and Local Outreach Ministries and one of the elders will administer the Deacons' Discretionary Fund. Persons nominated as deacons shall have demonstrated the fruits of the Spirit according to I Timothy 3:8-13.

ii) Deaconate Ministries

The Deaconate Ministries are Congregational Care, Hospitality, Local Outreach, and Christian Missions. Each ministry shall consist of one deacon who will serve as Chairman, two elected/voting members, and as many non-elected/non-voting members as the chairman deems appropriate. Anyone serving as an elected/voting member of a ministry shall be a member of this church. A simple majority shall constitute a quorum. A ministry member with two consecutive unexcused absences from meetings shall by their actions be considered to have requested resignation from that ministry. Absences shall be excused by vote of the other members of the ministry and except in unusual circumstances only if the chairman of the ministry was notified prior to the absence. Election to a ministry shall be to a two-year

term or for a lesser period if to complete an unexpired term. One elected member term in each ministry shall expire each year. A member may serve up to six years before resting from the ministry for at least one year. New terms shall begin immediately following the annual congregational meeting. Any church member or persons regularly worshiping with this congregation may participate in the ministries as non-voting members with approval of the Chairman.

(a) The Congregational Care Ministry

The Congregational Care Ministry shall focus on the members of the congregation and those who regularly participate in the activities of this congregation. It shall provide for and supervise programs of lay parish calling and new attendee integration. It will identify and respond to the needs of the congregation. It will follow up with visitors by visits and/or correspondence as appropriate.

(b) The Hospitality Ministry

The Hospitality Ministry shall coordinate activities such as coffee fellowships, receptions for weddings and funerals and church dinners and make sure that they are recorded on the church calendar. This ministry shall be responsible for organizing and training Sunday morning greeters, for overseeing the flowers for Sunday worship services, for seasonal church decorations and for overseeing the church kitchens.

(c) The Local Outreach Ministry

The Local Outreach Ministry shall develop, promote and execute events and opportunities for the church to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the local community of Mount Desert Island with special emphasis on Southwest Harbor and the surrounding communities.

(d) The Christian Missions Ministry

The focus of this Ministry shall be those who are outside the sphere of the Local Outreach Ministry. The Christian Missions Ministry shall develop and promote opportunities for our church to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ, material and spiritual aid to those in need in our state, nation, and world.

E. Council & Committees

i) The Leadership Council

The leadership council shall be comprised of the chair of each ministry (or a duly appointed representative) as well as the treasurer, the clerk and the office manager. The Leadership Council shall normally meet once a month in order to provide council to the elders, facilitate communication and organization between ministries and organize the church calendar. At least one elder shall be present at each meeting. The meeting shall be presided over by the pastor or an overseeing elder.

ii) The Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for nominating: the Clerk, the Treasurer; the deacons; all people who serve as voting members in the ministries of the church; and on the Search Committee when constituted. This committee shall be appointed annually by the elders and shall report via the elders to the congregation. The Nominating Committee shall have at least three members, one of whom must be an elder. The members shall meet during the month following the annual congregational meeting to elect a chairman and begin work. Members may serve an indefinite number of one-year terms.

iii) The Search Committee

The Search Committee shall be constituted by the elders when the need arises. The Search Committee shall be responsible for discerning the will of the Holy Spirit in identifying new pastoral staff. The Search Committee shall consist of: two elders appointed by the elders and five members-at-large selected by the Nominating Committee and confirmed by the congregation. No member of the pastoral staff may serve on this committee. It shall report

directly to the congregation. The committee shall elect its own chairman.

F. The Music Director

The Music Director is responsible for all music of the church. The Music Director is hired by and responsible to the elders

G. The Church Administrator

The Administrator shall work to coordinate on a day-to-day basis the operations of the church. The Church Administrator shall also serve as the Office Manager.

H. Committees and other Positions

The congregation, the Officers, the Elders, the Deaconate, or the Ministries of the church may appoint committees and task forces for specific purposes.

VI. **MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION**

A. Annual Meeting

This congregation shall have one regular annual meeting each year, held during the month of November. The agenda shall include the receiving of written reports from all officers, ministries, and committees; the election of officers and ministry members; the adoption of the budget; and the setting of goals for the coming year. Election as an officer or to a ministry of this church shall require a majority vote of the members present at the meeting at which the election is held. The meeting must be posted seven days in advance on the front door of the church building and notice must be read from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday.

B. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the elders, or by any six members of the church. Such members must submit to the elders, in writing, the purpose of the special meeting and sign and date it. The elders shall then set a date for the meeting as soon as possible to allow for the attendance of the elders, and a quorum of the membership. Special meetings shall be preceded by seven days written and posted notice wherein the time, date, and purpose of the meeting is stated.

C. General Information

- i) The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31.
- ii) Non-members representing organizations outside of the church may not attend congregational meetings unless invited by the elders.
- iii) A quorum must be present to do business at a congregational meeting. 40% of the membership must be present for a regular or special meeting in order to constitute a quorum.
- iv) All members of the church shall have full voting power in the affairs of the church, except in the case of buying and selling property or mortgaging of same, or other matters where civil law requires, voting privilege shall be restricted to those eighteen years of age or over.

VII. **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

A. By baptism one becomes a member of the church universal. Infants and children may be baptized, providing one parent is a baptized Christian. At an age of accountability, which varies according to the individual, one may become a member of this congregation in order to join this church in its mission.

B. There are two ways of joining this church:

- i) Confession of Faith - Persons may join this church by participating in a membership class which meets the guidelines of the elders. If the elders determine that a person is of serious purpose and willing to profess his or her intention to serve Christ in the world, this person may be accepted into full membership by confession of faith during a service of worship. A person wishing to join this church must be baptized publicly in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ii) Reaffirmation of Faith - Persons who have previously publicly confessed their faith may join

this church by participating in a membership class which meets the guidelines of the elders. If the elders determine that a person is of serious purpose and willing to reaffirm his or her intention to serve Christ in the world, this person may be accepted into full membership by reaffirmation of faith during a service of worship. A person wishing to join this church must be baptized during a service of worship.

C. Membership:

- i) Members - This congregation expects its members to participate in worship and the Lord's Supper regularly, to contribute to the financial support of the church in its local and wider mission, to participate in church meetings, and to participate in the program and mission of this congregation.

D. Termination of Membership:

- i) Membership shall be terminated by the elders if any of the following reasons exist:
- (a) Death of a member.
  - (b) Request of the member.
  - (c) Notification that a member has joined another church.
  - (d) Failure to respond to correspondence.
  - (e) Unknown address.
  - (f) Other sufficient cause. This includes but is not limited to:
    - lack of regular participation in worship and the Lord's Supper,
    - lack of financial support of the church,
    - lack of participation in church meetings,
    - lack of participation in the overall programs and mission of the church,
    - disciplinary action that might be taken as a result of a member failing to live a life exemplary of the Covenants and Statement of Faith of this congregation.

E. Restoration of Membership:

- i) The elders may restore the membership of any person whose membership has previously been terminated.

## VIII AUDITOR

- A. An auditor shall be appointed by the elders to verify the accounts of the treasurer prior to the annual congregational meeting. The auditor shall submit his/her report to the congregation in the annual report. The auditor does not need to be a member of the church.

## IX AMENDMENTS

- A. These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any duly called and convened special or regular meeting of the church. Copies of the proposed amendments will be posted with the notice of the meeting.

## X QUORUMS

- A. Unless otherwise designated in these bylaws, a quorum shall refer to a simple majority. Ex-officio members do contribute toward a quorum.

## XI EX OFFICIO

- A. Persons who are ex officio members of committees and boards have full voting privileges and are counted in a quorum.

## XII BYLAWS

- A. These bylaws supersede all other bylaws of this church