

ST. PETER’S CHURCH OF COUPLAND

COUPLAND, TEXAS

BYLAWS

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BY-LAWS

These Bylaws, consistent with the Constitution of St. Peter's Church of Coupland, further define and/or regulate the officers, boards, committees and membership. They also describe its free and voluntary relationship with the Heart of Texas Association and the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ, and with the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, its Executive Council, and the Covenanted, Affiliated and Associated Ministries.

Article I. Obligation to the United Church of Christ

- .A. Delegates and alternates from this congregation may volunteer or be elected each year to the Annual Meeting of the South Central Conference.
- B. The Congregation may regularly contribute towards the support of the United Church of Christ according to the rules and actions of the General Synod and the South Central Conference through either budget or special giving opportunities.
- C. This Congregation, either through its Pastor or competent officials, shall make such reports to Conference authorities as may be requested.
- D. The official year of the Congregation shall be from January 1 to December 31.

Article II. Membership

A. Persons may be admitted to communicant membership of this church by any one of the following methods:

1. By baptism and either confirmation, or profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. By transfer from some other church of this or any other Christian denomination.
3. By renewal of profession of faith and restoration to communicant membership.

B. Voting eligibility commences at completion of Confirmation or age 14.

C. Candidates may signify their intentions to the Pastor or any member of the Church Council.

When such persons offer themselves for membership, it shall be the duty of the Pastor, or other person appointed by him/her, to instruct them in the meaning of the Christian Faith. After the Church Council has approved the candidates, and after the Sacrament of Baptism has been administered to those who have not been previously baptized, they shall come before the Congregation, take vows, and be received into the fellowship of the church.

D. Any candidate for membership who for some good reason is unable to appear before the Congregation may, at the discretion of the Pastor and with the approval of the Church Council, be received elsewhere. In the event of emergency, the Pastor may receive such persons without the approval of the Church Council, in which case he/she shall report his/her action at the next meeting.

E. Any member in any other Christian Church may unite with this church by certificate of transfer from his/her former church or by declaration of Christian Faith. Any

communication from a former church which indicates that the candidate was a member shall be regarded as a certificate of transfer.

- F. A Voting member shall participate in the life and work of the church. This includes regularly attending worship services and/or other church functions (unless physically unable) and supporting the church financially and/or with time or talent. The membership list shall be reviewed in the fourth quarter of each year by the Pastor and the Church Council. Any necessary changes will be made at that time and the members notified.
- G. If any member shall unite with another Congregation without a letter of transfer, the Church Council shall remove his/her name from the membership roll.
- H. If a member of this church shall change his/her place of residence to another community so far removed from his church that he/she cannot participate regularly in its worship and activity, he/she shall be encouraged to transfer his/her membership, preferably to a United Church of Christ, in the community of his/her newly established residence.
- I. Any member may, on his/her request, be granted a letter of transfer.

Article III. Election of Officers

- A. Church Council Members shall be elected by a majority vote cast at the Annual Congregational Meeting. Church Council Members shall be elected for a term of three

years, three of them being up for election each year. As there are eight (8) members composing the Church Council, three members shall be elected every year with the exception that two (2) shall be elected every third year.

- B. Church Council Members may be re-elected for one consecutive term. A person appointed to fill a partial term can only then serve one more elected consecutive term. A Church Council Member may serve two consecutive, three-year terms but can be re-nominated after one year of absence from the Council.
- C. Nominations shall be made for positions of Church Council Member by the Nominating Committee appointed by the Church Council.
- D. To be eligible for the position of Church Council Member, the candidate shall have been a member of the Congregation for at least one year.
- E. The Church Council may appoint members to fulfill the term of any vacancies that occur, either taking first from the prior annual meeting's election ballots, or second, from a new recommendation list.

Article IV. Church Council

- A. The Church Council shall transact the business of the church; make provision for the preparation and funding of the budget for the Congregation, as well as other benevolent

purposes. It shall audit the financial accounts and make complete provisions for the adequate support of the staff. It shall keep a complete and accurate record of the proceedings, it is the custodian of congregational records, and shall submit any or all records to the Conference when occasion requires or the Conference requests.

B. The Church Council shall keep a complete record of baptisms, members, confirmation, reception of new members, erasures of names, marriages and deaths.

C. The Treasurer will be elected by the Council at the same organizational meeting as the other officers. If the Treasurer is elected from the ranks of the elected Council members, then this position will have full voice and voting rights as any other Council member.

However, if no duly elected Council member is qualified for the position of Treasurer, then the Council will have the option to fill this office with any qualified member of the church.

Under such circumstances, the Treasurer's position will have no voting rights but will have voice rights at Council meetings. Further, the Council may consider remuneration for the Treasurer's services. If after searching for a Treasurer for three months and no church member steps forward to fill this position, the Council will have the permission of the congregation to contract with an outside accountant to outsource the responsibility.

D. Council may authorize any extraordinary expense if funds are available. Any extraordinary expense of \$2,500 or more must be presented to the Congregation for approval at a Called Congregational Meeting using guidelines set forth in Article XII of Constitution.

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E. The Executive Committee, made up of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer of the Council and Financial Secretary may authorize emergency expenditures up to \$2,500 when the Council is not in session. The expenses must be reported at the next meeting of

the Council and to the Congregation at the earliest possible time.

- F. The installation of the duly elected Council Members shall take place in the first worship service following the election.
- G. The Church Council shall, through its President, appoint such committees as it may find necessary to accomplish its work.
- H. The Church Council shall meet within 2 weeks after the Annual Meeting of the Congregation for the purpose of organization and thereafter at least once every month at a place and time convenient to the members for the transaction of such business as may properly come before it. Special meetings are subject to the call of the President or the Pastor. Council Members and Committee Chairpersons will convene after the January Council Meeting to set yearly goals.
- I. The Church Council shall elect a President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. To be elected to the office of President, a Council Member must have served at least one year on the Church Council.
- J. It is the duty of the President to see that all meetings of the Church Council are regularly scheduled, to open and conduct such meetings, and to see to the execution of all resolutions. All legal and financial matters and documents are required to be signed by both the Church Council President and Secretary. Regular and called meetings of the Congregation shall be announced publicly on two Sundays preceding the meeting.
- K. The Vice-President shall preside at all meetings where the President is not present and also when business pertaining to the President and his/her administration is before the Congregation. He/she shall do all in his/her power to help the President and make his/her administration easier.
- L. The Secretary shall keep a record of all transactions at the meetings of the Congregation

and the Church Council, attend to all the correspondence, keep a correct list of all members and their addresses, showing also the dates of their admission and of their withdrawal. He/she shall, with the President, sign all contracts, loans, and deeds.

M. The Treasurer shall have charge of all monies for the congregational support received from the Financial Secretary. He/she shall prepare all vouchers, seeing that all bills incurred by the Church Council, or by their directions, are paid as they become due. In the absence of the Treasurer, the Bookkeeper will assume all responsibilities of the Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall give a full financial report of monies received from the Financial Secretary at each regular Council Meeting as well as at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

These reports may be done in person or through electronic or paper means.

N. The Financial Secretary shall receive all dues and monies. He/she shall issue receipts, where requested, for money received and send statements to all members at least annually.

O. The President of the Church Council and the Pastor are ex-officio members of all committees of the Congregation.

P. The Council shall convene committees to assist in attaining its goals. It will specify the purpose of these committees and oversee their work.

Q. The Council's work will include reviewing, modifying and approving the budget of the church; setting annual mission direction and goals for the Congregation; approving all personnel actions; reviewing the work of all Committees through the Chairpersons' Reports; approving new initiatives of Committees and Chairpersons; and taking such action as it deems necessary to promote the mission of the church. An outside audit is recommended every five years.

R. An in-house audit will be conducted once a year. A standing audit committee of two, whose only purpose is to perform the audit, will be appointed by the Church Council. The

Treasurer or Financial Secretary shall not be appointed to this Committee. This audit will be completed before March 15. A new audit committee will be appointed each year.

Article V. The Pastor

A. Duties of the Pastor

1. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and

rites, visit the sick and homebound, comfort the distressed, and set a good example to his/her Congregation. The Pastor shall have responsibility for planning and leading services of worship; preaching and teaching the Word of God; administering the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the Rite of Confirmation; conducting Pastoral visitations and officiating at weddings and funerals.

2. The Pastor shall hold as a “privileged communication” any confidence or information of a confessional nature given to him/her in private by an individual in the course of his/her work.
3. No other person shall perform any religious ceremony in the church without the consent of the Pastor. To invite a speaker, either during a temporary absence of the Pastor or special occasions, the consent of both the Pastor and the Church Council is necessary.
4. The Pastor’s salary shall be paid promptly in monthly installments and shall be sufficient to relieve him/her of temporal cares and to preserve the dignity of his/her calling. The salary shall be reconsidered by the Church Council at least once each year and presented to the Congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting. His/her moving expenses, when he/she assumes the position, shall be paid in full by the Congregation.
5. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this election, in a non-conflict situation, three months notice shall be given by either the Pastor or the Congregation, unless by mutual consent.
6. The Pastor may represent St. Peter’s Church of Coupland at Association and Conference meetings and, as time permits, participate in other ecumenical and community activities.
7. The Pastor shall, as opportunities present themselves, participate in continuing education programs in order to strengthen the pastoral ministry of St. Peter’s Church of Coupland.
8. For the health and well being of the Pastor, his or her family, and the Congregation, the

Pastor is expected to take at least one day off each week. Additional personal time off including vacation time shall be negotiated with the Personnel Committee and approved by the Church Council.

9. The Pastor shall make an annual report to the Congregation. A monthly activity report will be submitted to the Church Council when requested.
10. In case of illness or vacation, the Church Council, working with the Pastor, is responsible to find and approve a replacement for the Pastor, working with the Heart of Texas Association Minister and the Conference Minister.

B. Procedures for Calling a Pastor

1. When a vacancy in the office of Pastor occurs, the Minister of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be notified immediately. A Search Committee of St. Peter's Church of Coupland will be formed to fill pastoral or other ministerial vacancies. It shall be the responsibility of the Council to appoint a Search Committee to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of Pastor.
2. In filling a vacancy or securing interim pastoral services, the Church Council will report the vacancy, and may seek the counsel of the Conference Minister and the Heart of Texas Association Church and Ministry Committee. The Church Council will be responsible for all issues between the Interim Pastor and the Congregation. The Church Council may request the assistance of the Pastoral Relations Committee as needed.
3. The Search Committee will request that the South Central Conference Minister secure relevant information about any candidate whom it wishes to consider for the vacancies.
4. Any UCC Minister with Privilege of Call may confer with the Conference Minister concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the minister's request, their name shall be submitted by the Conference Minister for consideration to the Search Committee.

5. A trial sermon may be held at a neutral pulpit in the Association in coordination with the candidate and the Search Committee and the Association Minister prior to the presentation of the candidate to the Congregation.
6. The Search Committee will present a candidate it recommends to the Church Council. If approved, the candidate will be presented to the church for approval at a Called Congregational Meeting.
7. A favorable vote of 90% by written ballot constitutes a call.
8. The terms of the call will be presented to the Heart of Texas Association Church and Ministry Committee. The call format will be agreed upon by the Association. The call will name the participation in the United Church of Christ Pension Fund, the UCC Minister's Health Insurance Program (if desired), and other terms agreed upon between the candidate and the Search Committee. The Pastor, the church, the Association and the Conference Minister shall each receive a copy of the call paperwork.
9. When a UCC ordained minister accepts the call to St. Peter's Church of Coupland, the Minister and St. Peter's Church of Coupland will join in requesting the Heart of Texas Association to arrange for a Service of Installation.
10. The Pastor will be provided with a Pastoral Relations Committee consisting of 5 persons of the Congregation. For the Pastor's first year, two members from the Search Committee (the Chairperson and one to be appointed by the Pastor) will serve with the standing Pastoral Relations Committee. After that year, the Pastoral Relations Committee will revert to its original five members. This Committee will seek to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between the Pastor and members of the Congregation. The purpose of this Committee is to serve as an advisory group to the Pastor and as support for the Pastor's leadership.

11. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period of time. In order to terminate this relationship, three months notice shall be given by either party, unless a shorter notice is mutually agreed upon by both parties. Notice of this decision will be sent to the Conference Minister and the Heart of Texas Association.
12. After appropriate steps of reconciliation have been attempted and are unsuccessful in situations of conflict, the Church Council shall give a recommendation of termination of the Pastor to the Congregation. The Pastor's service must be terminated by a two thirds written ballot vote at a properly called Congregational Meeting. Following the Congregational vote to terminate, all pastoral duties will cease. At such time, the Pastor has 30 (thirty) days to vacate the parsonage. All contractual agreements will be honored. Notice of termination will be presented to the entire church membership by a single letter signed by the Pastor and the Church Council President. This letter will be sent by the President of the Church Council, to the Conference Minister and the Heart of Texas Association for appropriate action.

C. Pastoral Relations Committee

1. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall consist of five members: Four congregational representatives elected by the Congregation and one to be recommended by the Pastor and approved by the Council.
2. The committee shall serve as a liaison between the Congregation and the Pastor.
3. The Committee shall elect its own Chairperson.
4. The Committee shall be concerned with the welfare of the Pastor and the Pastor's family and shall seek to maintain harmonious relations between the Congregation and the Pastor.
5. The Committee shall meet at least quarterly and shall serve as advocate and advisor for

and to the Pastor.

6. In the event of conflict between the Pastor and the Congregation, or dereliction of duty, or ethical or moral misconduct by the Pastor, the Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet with the Pastor. If necessary, the Chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee shall inform the Church Council and seek guidance from the Heart of Texas Association and/or the South Central Conference.
7. Should the Heart of Texas Association have reason to question the fitness for ministry of any of the pastoral leaders of St. Peter's Church of Coupland every effort will be made to cooperate fully in the investigation, to remain in covenant with all parties, and to provide appropriate leadership and nurture for the Pastor and the Congregation during and after the fitness review.

D. Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations

1. If St. Peter's Church of Coupland, UCC selects a ministerial leader who does not have privilege of call in the United Church of Christ, the minister may seek Dual Standing from the Heart of Texas Association.

Article IV. Finances of the Church

- A. The finances of St. Peter's Church of Coupland shall be administered by a budget system.

The budget shall be composed of two parts: local church support and denominational ministries. It shall be prepared in detail by the Budget Committee and approved by the Church Council before being presented to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

- B. To secure necessary funds for the needs of the church, enlistment appeals by the Mission and Stewardship Committee are to be developed annually. The budget needs of the Congregation, as well as suggested ways for proportional giving are to be presented to each member through these appeals. Giving, through the use of weekly envelopes, is to be encouraged.
- C. All payments to the support of the church shall be credited to the donors, and proper account shall be kept of each contribution.
- D. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in a bank approved by the Church Council, and the account therein shall be in the name of the church.
- E. It shall be the continuing duty of the Church Council to inform the Congregation of the financial needs of the church.
- F. Contributions designated for specific causes and objects shall be promptly forwarded, after approval by Church Council, according to the intent of the donor.

As Amended

1983, 1991, retyped as is 2003, 2012, March 7, 2013, January 21, 2024, March 17, 2024