

**Red-lined The Constitution and By-Laws  
Epiphany United Church of Christ  
2008 West Bradley Place, Chicago Illinois**

PREAMBLE

In obedience to the Word of God, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40), we members of this congregation, covenant ourselves to the following rules and regulations:

ARTICLE I

*Name*

The name of this church shall be Epiphany United Church of Christ, located in Chicago, in the State of Illinois.

ARTICLE II

*Purpose*

The avowed purpose of this church shall be:

- to worship God,
- to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the Sacraments;
- to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal;
- to render loving service toward humankind, and
- to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

The people of Epiphany United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, desire to be a welcoming and an open place to all who seek God and Christian fellowship.

We confess that the Church Universal has not always welcomed gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons and in fact has denied them a place in the Christian community. As one local congregation, we wish to challenge this historic wrong by declaring Epiphany to be an open and affirming church in the United Church of Christ.

We believe that God shows no partiality to people of a particular sexual orientation. Rather, God bestows love equally on all people. We affirm the lives, the worth, the relationships and the spiritual gifts and ministry of people of all sexual orientations.

ARTICLE III

*Polity*

1. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ adopted July 4, 1961 (and as thereafter amended) relating to local churches.

2. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to laws of the State of Illinois relating to ~~corporations~~ not for profit corporations.

#### ARTICLE IV

##### *Faith and Covenant*

1. Faith – this Church acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the son of God, and the Savior of Humanity. It acknowledges as sisters and brothers in Christ, all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant reformers. Among these we include: “The Augsburg Confession”, “Luther’s Catechism” and “The Heidelberg Catechism”. It affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own, in accordance with the teaching of our Lord and practice prevailing among Evangelical Christians. It recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion (also known as The Lord’s Supper).

An expression of this faith is the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith:

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit.  
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,  
and to your deeds we testify:  
You call the worlds into being,  
create persons in your own image,  
and set before each one the ways of life and death.  
You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin,  
You judge people and nations by your righteous will  
declared through prophets and apostles.  
In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior,  
you have come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the world to yourself.

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

You call us into your church  
to accept the cost of joy of discipleship,  
to be your servants in the service of others,

to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
and resist the powers of evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory.

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

## ARTICLE V *Membership*

1. In accordance with the gospel covenant which binds "all faithful people into unity," membership is for those who have been baptized, and either confirmed, or have made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, or ~~be~~by reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer or certification from a Christian Church. Members under the age of 18 will have the same duties and privileges ~~and~~as those over 18; however, they will be unable to vote on congregational matters. They are ~~encouraged~~encourage to join and serve with committees or engage in any other church activities.

### 2. Admission of Members

A. Persons desiring to become members of this congregation must present themselves to the Pastor and familiarize themselves with the Constitution of this church and shall make application to the Church. Application is to be made on a form supplied by the Congregation. This form shall become a permanent part of the church records. Applicants shall, on the first convenient occasion, present themselves at the altar to be publicly received and welcomed and to have their privileges and responsibilities of membership explained to them.

i. Persons may request Associate membership in this congregation by presenting themselves in the same manner and undergoing the same procedures as persons seeking full membership in more than one (1) congregation at the same time. Associate members have the same right, responsibilities and obligations as do other members in good standing.

B. Some of the privileges and responsibilities that members shall pledge to abide are as follows:

- i. Regular attendance at the church worship service and the celebration of the Lord's Supper;
- ii. To live the Christian life;
- iii. To share in the life and work in the church;
- iv. Regular contributions to the church's support and benevolences;
- v. To seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

### 3. Letter of Transfer or Certificate of Release

Any member may, upon request, be granted a Letter of Transfer or Certificate of Release. If, because of a change of faith or for other reasons not involving unchristian conduct, a member requests in writing to be released from their ~~release from his/her~~ membership obligations, the church shall patiently endeavor to secure their continuance in its fellowship. But, failing in such effort, the church may grant the request and terminate his/her~~their~~ membership. Such a request shall be approved by the Pastor and the Church Council, and the Pastor or Recording Secretary shall issue the appropriate Certificate of Release.

### 4. Retaining Members

A member who, despite spiritual care and encouragement, has not attended worship services or contributed in any way to the support of the congregation for a period of two years, (e.g. by volunteering time for church related projects, financially, by communicating with the Pastor, etc.), by recommendation of the Church Council (or an appointed Membership Committee), may, with proper notification, be removed from the Membership Role and placed on an inactive list, which indefinitely suspends membership rights. They may be restored to their former membership through Section 2 above.

## ARTICLE VI *Governing Body*

The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled in the church meeting.

- 1. For normal church action, other than as set forth below ~~show~~ in Article VI, section 2, the quorum required is 15% of the voting members. A majority of the votes cast shall be the decision of the church. (A majority is one more

than half the votes cast.)

2. Constitutional changes can be made only at annual meetings. The quorum required is 20% of voting members. The action of the Church shall require a two-thirds affirmative vote. Also, public announcements of the present text and/or text of proposed constitutional changes is to be made at least four (4) weeks prior to the annual meeting unless the Congregation approves a shorter period at the annual meeting. Proxy votes can be used when requested.

## ARTICLE VII *Council*

1. The Church Council shall be the executive body of this Church. It shall be composed of the Pastor and at least 9 members. Only persons over the age of 18, who are members, 21, who have been a member for at least one year, will be eligible to be nominated for Council membership. Five members shall constitute a quorum.

2. The Church Council shall organize itself each year, electing a President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer. It shall form or appoint such boards or committees, not restricted to Council Members, as will serve to further the purpose of the church.

3. Church Council members shall be elected by a majority vote cast at a congregational meeting. They will be elected for three years. In order to provide continuity, not more than four (4) Church Council member terms should terminate in any one year.

4. Nominations for the Church Council members shall be made by a committee appointed each year by Council. Public notice of such nominations shall be given to members at least two (2) weeks before the election. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the meeting at which the election is held.

5. On the second Sunday following the annual congregational meeting, during the service, the Pastor shall install the newly elected and/or re-elected Church Council member(s).

6. Vacancies on the Church Council shall be filled by the Council until the next annual meeting, and then such vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term, as set forth in sections 3, 4 and 5 of Article VII.

7. The Church Council shall be the policy-making body and shall transact

the business of the Church, make provision for the determining and raising of the current expense budget as well as for Our Christian Wider Mission and Benevolences, and provide for the auditing of financial accounts and for the adequate support of the staff. It shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all Church records, and report to the Church at its regular and special meetings. All acts and deliberations of the Church Council are subject to the will of and revision by the governing body.

8. The Church Council shall instruct officers on all fiscal matters, including the payment of bills and monthly review of bills paid and expenses incurred by the Church Council.

9. The duties of the Church Council shall be to maintain and operate the church property, insure that adequate repairs are made to keep the facilities in good condition, and provide insurance within the scope of the church. Church Council may authorize for maintenance or capital improvements (not included in the Annual Budget) up to \$5,000.00 (yearly aggregate). Any expenditure in excess of said amount, as well as any borrowing, requires the approval of the Congregation at a special meeting or the Annual Congregational Meeting.

10. The Church Council shall meet at least once every month (with the exception of either July or August) for the transaction of such business as may properly come before it. Special meetings are subject to the Pastor's or President's call.

11. Church Council members shall not serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

## ARTICLE VIII

### *Pastor*

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Search Committee, appointed by the Church Council, to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of Pastor.

2. As soon as a pastoral vacancy occurs, it shall be reported to the Association Executive.

3. In filling a vacancy or in securing supply ministers for the period of vacancy, the Search Committee may seek the counsel of the Association Executive.

4. The Search Committee may request the Association Executive to

secure relevant information about any Pastor whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy.

5. Any Pastor may confer with the ~~Association Conference~~ Executive concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the Pastor's request, ~~his/her~~their name shall be submitted by the Association Executive for the consideration by the local Search Committee.

6. The Search Committee shall present to the church the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. A two-thirds vote of the members present and voting constitutes a Call.

7. In the Call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the agreement of the church to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Ministers' Health Insurance Program, and other terms agreed upon by the candidate and the Search Committee. The Pastor, the church, and the Association Executive shall each receive a copy of the Call.

8. When a Pastor accepts a Call to this church, the church at the Pastor shall join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation. A report of this service shall be signed by the proper officer of the Association and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ and to the Council for Church and Ministry.

9. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, three months' notice shall be given by either party. The procedure shall be in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

10. When either party decides to terminate the relationship, the termination shall be by the action of the Church, and notice of such termination shall be sent by the President of the Church Council to the Association Executive for appropriate action.

11. Caring discipline of the Pastor shall be in conformity with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

12. The Church may at its discretion, choose an Associate or Assistant Pastor.

13. In case of the death of the pastor, if he or she leaves a surviving spouse or children, they shall be entitled to his or her regular salary for at least three months after his or her death. The parsonage or other dwelling place shall be provided for them for at least three months after the death of

the pastor.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### *Cabinet*

~~The cabinet shall consist of one duly elected representative from each of the Church organizations. The purpose of the cabinet is to coordinate and promote the social programs of the church. It shall meet at least quarterly and be subject to the call of the Church Council.~~

#### ARTICLE IX

##### *Property*

1. The Church Council may, in the church's name, sue or be sued, acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest or otherwise, and own, hold, invest, reinvest or dispose of property both real and personal for such works as the church may undertake and may purchase. The Church Council may, in the church's name, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent/lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purposes of the church. The Church Council may, in the church's name, receive and hold in trust both real and personal property, and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objects and purposes of the church. The President and two other designated Council Members shall act as legal representatives of the church.

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

#### ARTICLE X

##### *Church meetings*

1. The Annual Meeting of the church shall be scheduled in the month of November. Every congregational meeting must be announced in church two Sundays prior to the meeting. At the Annual meeting the proposed annual budget, along with written reports from the Church Council, the pastor, officers of the church and all church organizations, are to be submitted.

2. Special church meetings may be called by the Church Council or by a petition to the Council signed by not less than 25% of the members. The Church Council shall call such meetings within three weeks from receipt of the petition, and adequate notice of such meetings shall be sent to the

membership by the Secretary.

ARTICLE XI  
*Rules of Order*

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

***Revised June 2020***