



# The Hampden Association

MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE-UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## By-laws

### PREAMBLE

*We, the churches of the Hampden Association, covenant to walk together in the ways of Jesus Christ in order that individually and corporately we might further the mission of Christ among us and through us. Together we seek the will of Christ in ordaining and authorizing ministry. With Christ as our head, we look for ways to support mutually one another in our varied ministries and we seek opportunities for mutual collaboration in our common mission. Affirming our historic ties, and looking to the present and the future, we seek opportunities for mutual accountability: doing together the work of Christian mission that we cannot do separately.*

### ARTICLE I: NAME

This organization shall be called the Hampden Association of the United Church of Christ. For ordinary purposes this title may be abbreviated to the Hampden Association.

### ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of the Hampden Association shall be:

- A. To express and promote the fellowship, cooperation, loyalty, and effectiveness of member churches and ministers;

Minister or Ministers is a term which applies to all who are followers of Jesus Christ, and a part of the legion of those who believe in the priesthood of all believers. This document amplifies the term as it is used in reference to those who are set apart as Ordained, Commissioned or Licensed Ministers.

- B. To consider the common interests and needs of the churches, and to suggest plans by which these can be furthered;
- C. To be concerned with the welfare of all local churches within its boundaries and to seek ways and means to assist local churches when they are undergoing unusual difficulties requiring help beyond their own resources;
- D. To act on all matters which its local churches, its Conference, the General Synod or other bodies defer, refer, or delegate to the Association;
- E. To offer encouragement, guidance, and assistance in the organization of new local churches;

- F. Along with the counsel of the Conference, to receive local churches into the United Church of Christ;
- G. To receive under its care, students for the Ministry and to extend to them fellowship, counsel, spiritual and financial assistance during their academic preparation;
- H. Commission, to grant licensure, ordain qualified applicants, and install these special Ministries;
- I. To establish, record, maintain, and preserve the standing of the Ordained Ministers of our faith and order who serve or reside within the Association boundaries and are members of a local church of the Hampden Association, or who otherwise qualify according to the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ, Article 1, The Ministry, the Section on Ministerial Standing.
- J. To maintain the effective link of fellowship with the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, and with other bodies, that tasks which cannot be done effectively by single churches might be accomplished to the glory of God in cooperation.
- K. To petition or overture the Conference or the General Synod on matters of concern to the Ministers and/or churches of the Hampden Association. Unless the vote is substantially unanimous, a record of the Yes-No vote shall be included with the transmission of the petition or overture.

### **ARTICLE III: RELATIONSHIPS**

- A. The Hampden Association shall exercise no ecclesiastical authority over the churches of which it is composed. It stands ready to act in any advisory capacity consistent with the complete self-government of each church.
- B. The Hampden Association is in direct relationship and fellowship with all other similar associations of the United Church of Christ, the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, and the Instrumentalities and Councils of the United Church of Christ. It is willing to cooperate constructively with all other bodies which promote the cause of Christ, provided that the basis of cooperation is within its competence.

### **ARTICLE IV: DOCTRINAL ORIENTATION**

Affirming loyalty to the right of private judgment and the basic principles of representative democracy, we hereby set forth as a testimony of the United Church of Christ to the faith commonly held among us in the words of our time (and not as a substitute for, or revision of, the ecumenical creeds, confessions, platforms, and covenants of the churches and communions joined in the United Church of Christ) the Statement of Faith adopted by the Second General Synod and revised by President Robert V. Moss.

### **THE STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us  
in Jesus our brother, and to whose deeds we testify:**

**God calls the worlds into being,  
creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us  
the ways of life and death.  
God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and  
sin.  
God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared  
through prophets and apostles.**

**In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen  
Lord,  
God has come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.  
God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ, binding in  
covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.**

**God calls us into the Church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be servants in the service of the whole human family,  
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.**

**God promises to all who trust in the gospel  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.**

**Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.**

## **ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. CHURCHES IN HAMPDEN COUNTY AND ENVIRONS**

1. Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Hampden Association will receive into fellowship those churches whose articles of faith, covenants, or statements of principles, and whose expressions of polity, agree essentially with those commonly held by United Church of Christ churches and the doctrinal orientation of the Hampden Association. In arriving at its recommendation, the Executive Committee is to be guided by the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ (1986 edition) Article IV: Local Churches, or by the same Article in subsequent editions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

2. Membership in the Hampden Association shall consist of United Church of Christ churches, and local churches received into fellowship in accordance with paragraph 1 of this section, located in Hampden County and environs. Said churches are members of the Massachusetts

Conference of the United Church of Christ.

3. Each church is entitled to be represented by its pastor or pastors and two delegates and additional delegates (one for every 300 members or major fraction thereof in excess of 300 members) at any regular or special or council meetings of the Hampden Association.

4. Churches in good and regular standing shall maintain:
- a. Representation at the Annual Meeting of the Hampden Association and
  - b. Annual remittance of the per capita dues.

## **B. ORDAINED MINISTERS**

1. Ministers desiring membership in the Hampden Association shall make application to the Committee on Church and Ministry. This committee shall evaluate the application according to the standards and recommendations contained in the Manual on the Ministry in the United Church of Christ (Revised, 1986) or subsequent editions of the same Manual.

2. Ordained Ministers, upon recommendation of the Committee on Church and Ministry, shall be received into full membership at any Ecclesiastical Council of the Hampden Association by a majority vote of those delegates present and voting.

3. Ordained ministers received into full membership in accordance with paragraph 2 of this section shall be voting members of all regular, special, or council meetings of the Hampden Association.

## **C. LAY MEMBERS**

Lay members of the Executive Committee of the Association shall be voting members at all meetings of the Hampden Association.

## **D. HONORARY MEMBERS**

The State Conference Minister and all other executive members of the Conference staff, official representatives of the General Synod or of the National Instrumentalities shall be made honorary members of any meeting of the Hampden Association which they attend with the privilege of the floor but without a vote.

## **E. AFFILIATED MEMBERS**

1. Any pastor of a member church with standing in another denomination shall be an affiliated member with the voting privilege at all regular or special meetings of the Hampden Association. When the Association sits as an Ecclesiastical Council, he or she will not have the privilege of the vote unless elected to be a delegate of the church.

2. A person holding ministerial standing in another denomination who desires fellowship with the Hampden Association shall be welcomed as an affiliated member with the courtesy of floor without vote.

## **F TRANSFERS**

1. The transfer of a Church shall be by express vote of the Hampden Association at any regular meeting upon recommendation of the Executive Committee.

2. An ordained ministerial member in good and regular standing may be transferred to another Association or denominational body by approval of the Committee on Church and Ministry and with the consent of the Moderator and Registrar, without a vote of the Association being required. Such transfers are to be reported to the Association at its next regular meeting.

3. Every non-resident minister must report to the Association at least once a year either in person or by letter to the Registrar. On failure to do so for two years, this person may be placed on the State Conference roll and removed from the Association roll by action of the Committee on Church and Ministry, if approved by the Moderator and Registrar. Such action is to be reported to the Association at its next regular meeting. The individual's restoration to full standing will thereafter be at the discretion of the Conference Committee on Church and Ministry.

#### **G. WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP**

1. The Church and Ministry Committee of the Hampden Association, may vote to terminate Ministerial Standing and to withdraw fellowship for any Minister for cause; provided that every such Minister shall have the right of a fair hearing and appeal to the Executive Committee of the Association. No Minister from whom fellowship has been withdrawn shall be considered a clergy person of the United Church of Christ.

2. The Hampden Association, upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee, may vote to withdraw fellowship from a church that refused to cooperate or act in the Christian spirit.

#### **H. DEMITTING THE MINISTRY**

When an ordained Minister enters a secular calling with a view to permanency, he or she shall in all conscience consider the reasonableness of demitting the ministry. In such case, the Association, on recommendation of the Committee on Church and Ministry, may grant honorable discharge from the obligations of the ministry. On recommendation of the Committee on Church and Ministry and for good reasons, such a one may be restored to membership and Ministerial standing by a majority vote of the Association. A Minister whose standing has been restored should maintain active membership in some church in the Association, attend the meetings of the Association at least annually, and serve on Association committees as requested.

#### **I. DESIGNATIONS**

1. The following designations shall be recognized:

In-care of Association (for those who are candidates for Authorized Ministry):

- a) Licensed Ministry
- b) Commissioned Ministry
- c) Ordained Ministry

The approved procedures in the Manual on the Ministry in the United Church of Christ (revised 1986, or subsequent editions of the same) shall be accepted as a general guide in these matters.

2. In accordance with the Manual, the Committee on Church and Ministry of the Hampden Association will work with ministers and churches on all matters related to Ministerial Standing.

#### **J. COMMISSIONED MINISTRY**

1. A Commissioned Minister is a member of the United Church of Christ who has been called of God and commissioned by the Association for a specific compensated church-related service which does not require ordination.

2. A person desiring this status in the Hampden Association shall apply to the Committee on Church and Ministry.

3. Commissioned Ministers, upon the recommendation of the Association Committee on Church Ministry, may be received into full membership in the association with right to the floor and of vote in all regular and special meetings of the Association. They shall be made honorary members of Ecclesiastical Councils except that when they have been elected as a representative of their church to the Council, they shall be full members.

4. A Commissioned Minister's term is for 1 year and may be renewed.

5. A Commissioned Minister is listed separately from Ordained and Licensed Ministers and is eligible for any service of Lay Ministry within the Association.

#### **K. LICENSED MINISTRY**

1. Licensed Ministry is an order of Ministry in The United Church of Christ with the following designations:

a) Pulpit Supply or Supply Preaching within an Association.

b) Serving over an extended period of time for one church having little prospect of securing an Ordained Minister.

c) A person In-Care serving a local church as a Minister.

d) Authorization to administer the Rites and Sacraments is optional, and if granted, will be so noted.

e) A Licensed Minister's term is for one year and may be renewed.

2. A Licensed Minister is listed separately from Ordained and Commissioned Ministers and is eligible for any service of Lay Ministry within the Association.

### **ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS**

## **A. ANNUAL MEETING**

1. The Annual Meeting of the Hampden Association shall be on the first Sunday in May, unless otherwise set by the Executive Committee.
2. Notice of this meeting shall be sent to the pastors, official delegates and churches at least one month before the date of the meeting.
3. The agenda for this meeting shall be developed by the Scribe and the Moderator in consultation with the Executive Committee.

## **B. SPECIAL MEETINGS**

1. Special meetings may be called on order of the Executive Committee.
2. The Scribe must call a special meeting on the written request of seven churches or nine ministers.
3. When calling a special meeting, the Scribe must specify the purpose of the meeting, and only business germane to the purpose of the meeting shall be in order for presentation, discussion, or action. Notice of this meeting shall be sent to the ministers and churches at least 14 days prior to the date of the meeting.
4. The agenda for special meetings shall be developed by the Scribe and the Moderator in consultation with the group requesting the meeting.

## **C. COUNCIL MEETINGS**

1. When the Hampden Association meets as an Ecclesiastical Council, it shall be at the request of the church desiring the Council, acting in consultation with the Association Committee on Church and Ministry.
2. The agenda shall be determined by the Registrar and the Moderator in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Manual on the Ministry in the United Church of Christ (1986 Edition, or subsequent revisions) as prepared and published by the Office for Church Life and Leadership of the United Church of Christ.

## **D. QUORUM**

Twenty voting members representing one-fourth of the churches shall constitute a quorum for all meetings of the Hampden Association.

## **E. PROCEDURE**

1. At the place and time specified, the meeting shall be called together by the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Scribe, or Registrar (in that order). A quorum shall be established. The meeting shall then be constituted by prayer.
2. At regular and special meetings, the Scribe shall record the minutes and these minutes

shall be approved at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

3. When the Hampden Association sits as an Ecclesiastical Council, the Registrar shall record the minutes.

## **ARTICLE VII: OFFICERS**

### **A. MODERATOR AND VICE-MODERATOR**

The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be elected to two year terms. The Vice-Moderator shall succeed to the office of Moderator at the conclusion of the two year term as Vice-Moderator. Should the Vice-Moderator for any reason be unwilling or unable to succeed to the office of Moderator, then the Committee on Church and Leadership may nominate any eligible individual to the office of Moderator. Should the Moderator for any reason be unable to complete the term, the Vice-Moderator shall succeed to the office of Moderator for the remainder of that term, and shall be eligible to retain the office of Moderator upon regular succession under the terms of this paragraph. Any individual who has held the office of Moderator or Vice-Moderator shall be ineligible for election to either office until the expiration of four (4) years from his or her last holding the office of Moderator or Vice-Moderator. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall perform the duties usual to these offices. They shall begin serving at the close of the meeting at which they were elected. They shall have voting privilege at all meetings of the Association. They shall be Ex-Officio members of all standing committees of the Association, with voice, but no vote.

2. When the Moderator is an Ordained Minister, the Vice-Moderator shall be a lay-person. When the Moderator is a layperson, the Vice-Moderator shall be an Ordained Minister.

### **B. SCRIBE**

The Scribe shall be elected for one year and may be re-elected an indeterminate number of times. The Scribe shall record the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Association and also of all Executive Committee meetings. This person shall issue all calls for meetings, dispatch all letters missive, conduct correspondence, and in general act as executive secretary of the Association. The Scribe shall begin service at the close of the meeting at which elected.

### **C. REGISTRAR**

The Registrar shall be elected for one year and may be re-elected an indeterminate number of times. The Registrar shall keep and revise annually the lists of the Association membership, church and ministerial, and make an annual report thereof to the Association and to the Massachusetts Conference; shall issue letters of dismissal and receive letters of transfer dealing with the standing and credentials of ministers and churches; shall act as the secretary of the Committee on Church and Ministry, and shall be a member *ex-officio* of this committee; and shall begin service at the close of the meeting at which elected.

### **D. TREASURER**

The Treasurer shall be elected for one year and may be re-elected an indeterminate

number of times. This officer shall keep all accounts, receive and disburse all monies, and present an audited account at the Annual Meeting; shall conduct correspondence and render such other service as pertains to the duties of the office; and shall begin service at the close of the meeting at which elected.

#### **E. AUDITOR**

The Auditor shall audit the accounts of the Treasurer of the Association and present an audit report to the Executive Committee prior to the Annual Meeting.

### **ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES**

#### **A. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

1. The Executive Committee shall be made up of the officers of the Association (except for the Auditor), the chair persons of all Standing Committees, and the immediate Past Moderator. There shall be three members at large, one to be elected annually for a three year term. Any members of the Massachusetts Conference Board of Directors who are members of the Western Area Council who are not already members of the Executive Committee, shall be honorary members with voice, but no vote.

2. It shall review and coordinate the work of the Association, counsel its various committees, and endeavor in every way to promote the effective Christian witness and program of the churches. It shall present a yearly budget for approval together with methods for raising it, and have general oversight over expenditures. It shall request from the Committee on Church and Leadership nominations to fill all offices and committees wherein vacancies arise during the year and shall act for the Association on these nominations. It shall have charge of the affairs of the Association between meetings.

3. It shall work in close cooperation with the Massachusetts Conference and its Board of Directors and its officers and also with the Western Area and its Council and the Western Area Minister. The Minister and President of the Massachusetts Conference and the Western Area Minister are considered honorary Members of the Executive Committee and are welcome to attend any of its meetings.

4. The Executive Committee shall be convened as a Board of Appeal when a decision of the Church and Ministry Committee is challenged. The procedures outlined in the Manual on the Ministry (1986 edition or subsequently revised) shall be adopted.

The Committee as a Board of Appeal will have access to the notes, records, and actions of all investigations (and investigators) and the Church and Ministry Committee. The Committee can then vote to uphold, modify, or overrule decisions of the Church and Ministry Committee. The Executive Committee's decision in such matters is final.

5. It may create any Ad Hoc Committees it deems useful. The chairman of any ad hoc committee shall become an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee with the privilege of vote on all matters related to the work of his or her committee.

6. The Executive Committee will meet monthly (except July and August) or on call of the Moderator.

## **B. STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. The Standing Committees of the Association shall be:

Committee on Church and Ministry  
Committee on Church and Mission  
Committee on Church and Leadership

Immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Association, the members of each standing committee shall elect from those who will continue to serve on that committee a chairperson for the ensuing year. The new committee shall meet within one month after the Annual Meeting to begin its service.

### **2. Committee on Church and Ministry**

a. This committee shall consist of nine voting members, three to be elected annually for three-year terms, unless otherwise specified. Each class of three is to include two Ordained Ministers and one layperson. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be ex-officio members with voice, but no vote.

b. In performing the functions laid upon it by these By-laws, this committee shall advise with the Registrar in the performance of his or her duties; examine all applicants for In-Care status, Licensed Ministry, Commissioned Ministry, Ordination, and Installation or Recognition, and make reports to the Executive Committee and to the Association; invite churches seeking pastors to counsel and advise with this committee, especially in regard to standard procedures; encourage high professional standards in all minister-church and church-minister relationships; consider questions of withdrawal of ministerial fellowship and report any actions to the Executive Committee or the Association for action.

c. The Committee shall be guided by The Manual on Ministry (1986 or subsequent revisions) in all matters relating to ministers within the jurisdiction of the Hampden Association. In addition, the Hampden Association Committee on Church and Ministry in their meeting of December 15, 1992 adopted The Office of Church Life and Leadership (OCLL) guidelines of 1988 and any subsequent updates. The most current document is entitled OCLL Five and is dated April 1994.

d. The Committee will review all disciplinary matters regarding clergy of the Hampden Association and take appropriate action and inform the Executive Committee of such action.

e. In conjunction with the Area Minister, this committee shall offer counsel and support to churches and ministers having at heart the welfare of both the pastor and the church.

f. The Scholarship Fund of the Association shall be administered by this committee. The committee shall receive applications from students for the ministry, and from ministers for continuing education, make grants, and report annually to the Association. This report shall

include recommendations about the in-flow of money from the churches so that the fund can be used effectively in support of students for the ministry.

### **3. The Committee on Church and Mission**

a. This committee shall consist of six persons, two to be elected annually for three-year terms, unless otherwise specified. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be ex-officio members with voice, but no vote.

b. This committee shall encourage among the churches the understanding and support of the mission outreach of the United Church of Christ through OCWM and other denominational programs, the special ministries of the Massachusetts Conference, and ecumenical missions. It shall also be concerned with the witness of the churches on public issues.

c. This committee shall be free to establish sub-committees or task forces for special assignments, and to co-opt other persons with special interests or skills as required.

### **4. Committee on Church Leadership**

a. This committee shall consist of six persons, two to be elected annually for three-year terms, unless otherwise specified. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be ex-officio members with voice, but no vote.

b. This committee shall be concerned with leadership discovery and utilization through the various activities and committees of the Association.

c. It shall respond to the wishes of the Conference on Church and Leadership and annually prepare and submit to the Conference Committee a list of names of people who are members of Association churches who have qualifications to serve on the various committees and boards and councils of the Conference.

d. This committee shall act as the Nominating Committee of the Association and shall make nominations for each office and committee to be elected at the Annual Meeting. At the request of the Executive Committee, this committee shall make nominations to the Executive Committee for vacancies which occur between the Annual Meetings of the Association.

### **5. Ex-Officio Committee Members**

Any member of a Conference Committee residing in the Association shall be invited to be an honorary member of the corresponding committee of the Association with voice, but no vote.

**6. All committees** are free to organize their work, advised and aided by the Executive Committee, to establish sub-committees for special assignments, and to co-opt other persons with special interests and skills as required.

## **ARTICLE IX: FINANCES**

**A. THE FISCAL YEAR** of the Association will close December 31.

## **B. SALARIES**

1. The Scribe shall be paid a sum determined by the Executive Committee annually.
2. The Registrar shall be paid a sum determined by the Executive Committee annually.
3. The Treasurer shall be paid a sum determined by the Executive Committee annually.

## **C. PROCEDURES**

1. The Association shall be supported financially by Per Capita Fellowship Dues from the churches.

2. Fellowship Dues shall be paid on a per capita basis of the reported active membership appearing in the last Year Book of the State Conference and the General Synod before the current year's Dues assignment is levied.

3. The Association, at its Annual Meeting, shall determine the amount which each church shall be requested to pay per member.

4. Monies so received shall be used to defray the anticipated and budgeted expenses of the Association.

5. The Association may include in its budget an item to help defray the travel expense for its delegates to the General Synod or it may make a special and separate assessment on the churches for support of this item of expense as it deems wise.

6. The Treasurer shall send to each church each year a statement of the Per Capita Fellowship dues, indicating that the payable date is October 1, and that the date for final payment is December 31 in any given Association fiscal year. Churches are encouraged to remit quarterly.

7. The Massachusetts Conference also has Per Capita Fellowship Dues, voted annually at the Annual Meeting of the Conference. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to notify the churches of the Conference Dues at the same time as notification of the Association Fellowship Dues. The Treasurer is to collect the same and remit the amount of it to the Treasurer of the Massachusetts Conference. The payable date shall be December 31 of each year.

**D. ALL EXPENSES** outside the approved budget borne by the Officers of the Association on its behalf shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for its authorization before payment by the Treasurer.

**E. COMMITTEES** of the Association shall be supported in their work by a working sum which shall be indicated in the annual budget. At the close of the fiscal year, the unused allocations shall return to the general funds of the Association and will not be cumulative. Committees may incur obligations beyond their budgeted allocation only on vote of the Executive Committee. The Treasurer shall write checks on their behalf only in accordance with the votes of the Executive Committee.

**F. ANY EXPENSES** not covered herein or unusual in any way are subject to approval by the Executive Committee, which body alone shall authorize the Treasurer to pay the same.

## **ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended at any meeting of the Association by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided that a copy of the proposed amendment has been sent to the ministers and clerks of the churches at least one month in advance of the meeting at which such amendment is to be voted upon.

**(Notes from Susan Kennedy, Moderator, June 2009:**

**The last revision of these by-laws took place after April, 1994.**

**No changes were approved by Annual Meeting in 1998, 1999, or 2000.**

**If anyone has an Annual Report for 2002, please review the minutes for the 2001 Annual Meeting to see if there were any changes.**

**In 2002 the size of the Church and Mission Committee was reduced by by-law change. That change is incorporated into these by-laws.**

**No changes were approved from 2003 through 2009.**

**It has been a long standing policy that persons may serve on the Church and Ministry Committee no longer than an unexpired term and two full terms, after which they must leave C&M for at least one year. We might consider incorporating this into the by-laws and looking at term limits for other committees as well.)**