

Proposed Structure for First Christian Church – 2003 and Beyond
Approved by the Official Board on October 9, 2003.
Approved by the congregation on November 17, 2003.

BY-LAWS

First Christian Church
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
5802 Roland Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland, 21210
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Article I – Fiscal Year

As of January 1, 2003 the church year shall begin on the first of each calendar year and last until the final day of the calendar year.

Article II – Membership

The voting membership of First Christian Church shall be open to all persons who have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior without regard to their religious background; whether they were baptized by immersion or were sprinkled; race, nationality, sex, or sexual preference; age; educational level; type of employment; or category of income.

Persons interested in joining the congregation generally do so either by confession of faith or by the transfer of their membership. An invitation shall be offered after the sermon and a hymn sung to give the opportunity for a person to come forward for membership.

The form of baptism practiced by the First Christian Church of Baltimore shall be baptism by immersion, which is the historic heritage of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ). Yet, in no way shall baptism by immersion be considered a test of fellowship. Faith in the saving power of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, as Lord and Savior, shall be the only test of membership.

The First Christian Church of Baltimore shall have several categories of membership:

1. *Resident Participating* – Shall be members, who have joined the congregation, and who have participated in the life of the congregation during the year just past, either through their financial gifts or personal participation in the programs and activities of the congregation.
2. *Associate Resident Participating* – Shall be members, who have taken *Associate Membership* as they wish also to remain a member of another congregation, of any denomination, in this or any other city. They shall be full members of First Christian Church.
3. *Non-Resident Participating* – Shall be members who have moved away but continue to support the church in some tangible way. (They shall not be considered voting members of the congregation.)
4. *Non-Participating* – Members shall be considered *Non-Participating* if they have not worshiped at church or made any tangible effort in supporting the church during the last two fiscal years. (They shall not be considered voting members of the congregation.)
5. *Inter-Faith Friends* – Shall be members who desire to become part of our congregation without giving up their ties to other faiths. These members shall not be expected to make a confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ. (They shall not be considered voting members of the congregation.)

The Church Clerk, with the help of the Pastor, Elders, and office staff, shall retain a detailed *Membership Roll*. New members shall be added to the role as they join. A member shall be removed from the *Membership Roll* for any of the following reasons:

1. At the time of death of a member a record of the details shall be recorded.
2. Transfer of membership to another congregation.
3. Following the personal request of the member to be removed.

Article III – Process for Elections of Leaders

There shall be a Nominating Committee selected each year to create a slate of Officers for the next twelve months. They shall also propose a leadership Chair for the Trustees, the Elders, and the Personnel/Pastoral Relations Committee. Additionally they are to nominate members and friends of the congregation to serve as Trustees and Elders.

The Nominating Committee of First Christian Church:

1. Shall be composed of three members of the Official Board and two members of the congregation, at large, who are not members of the Official Board.
2. Shall be selected by the Moderator in consultation with the pastor. These five names shall be approved by a simple majority of the Official Board at the *September* meeting.
3. Shall solicit suggestions from the congregation for nominees, from the Pastor, from members of the Official Board, and from the Nominating Committee as well.
4. Shall discuss the qualification of each person suggested, and then decide upon a slate. The committee shall contact potential candidates to discuss the position and to solicit their consent to be nominated. The prepared slate is then to be given to the Official Board at the *October* meeting.
5. Their names shall be published in the November issue of *First Church Life*. They shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the congregation in *November* and take office on the first day of the New Year.
6. Vacancies during the church year shall be filled. Action is to be taken by the Official Board, voting upon the joint recommendation of the Moderator and the Pastor.

Article IV – Leadership of the Congregation

First Christian Church shall be constantly vigilant in identifying and developing the leadership skills of its members and active friends. Members and friends are encouraged to discover and develop their Spiritual Gifts as their guide for decisions on taking any position of leadership or serving on a Ministry Team.

There shall be several guiding concepts:

1. Active friends of the congregation: shall be eligible to serve in many positions, and to vote. Those wishing to serve as the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, or as Trustees or Elders must be active members of the congregation. It is better to leave a position temporarily vacant than to push persons to take a position in order to complete the roster of leadership roles.

2. Leaders are elected for a period of one calendar year. It is possible for individuals to stand for re-election after completing a term in office. The Moderator generally serves for two terms, and may serve longer. The Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the church Clerk, and the Historian will often serve for many consecutive years.

3. The elected Officers of First Christian church shall be:

- THE MODERATOR: In cooperation with the Minister and the Official Board, shall be responsible for the administration of the church program. The Moderator shall oversee the work of the church; preside at meetings of the Congregation, the Official Board, and of the Executive Committee. The Moderator shall uphold the spirit of the Constitution and the By-Laws, and assure the close connection

of First Christian Church to the Christian church (Disciples of Christ), as well as the Christian Church-Capital Area. The Moderator shall communicate, regularly and periodically, to the congregation concerning all matters of church life, and the actions of the board. The Moderator along with the Minister shall select the Nominating Committee, and the Personnel/Pastoral Relations Committee. The Moderator shall serve as ex-officio with all decision groups within the congregation.

- THE VICE-MODERATOR: Shall serve to support the work of the Moderator, and shall preside at meetings in the absence of the Moderator. The Vice-Moderator shall be responsible for the administration of and the support of the *Ministry Teams*.
- THE SECRETARY: Shall keep minutes of the meetings of the Official Board, of the Annual Meeting in November, and of any special congregational meeting. These shall be added to a permanent record.
- THE TREASURER: Shall receive a record of all receipts from the Financial Secretary; pay all expenses of the congregation as authorized by the budget, or special action of the Official Board. The Treasurer shall keep up to date and accurate records of every financial transaction, and make a written report for each meeting of the Official Board. A written yearly report shall be passed out at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation.
- THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Shall be responsible for receiving all income of the congregation; for enlisting help from weekly counters; for keeping accurate records of the source and amount of income, and for providing a written report for each meeting of the Official Board and the congregation. The Financial Secretary shall provide the Treasurer with reports of all deposits. The Financial Secretary shall provide all contributors with quarterly statements for their tax files.
- THE ASSISTANT TREASURER: Shall serve to support the Treasurer by making reports to the Official Board in the absence of the Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall be familiar with all the duties of the Treasurer and shall normally succeed the Treasurer.
- THE ASSISTANT FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Shall serve to support the Financial Secretary by making reports to the Official Board in the absence of the Financial Secretary. The Assistant Financial Secretary shall be familiar with the duties of the Financial Secretary and shall normally succeed the Financial Secretary.
- THE CHURCH HISTORIAN: Shall be responsible for the gathering and preserving of data pertaining to the history of the congregation. The Church Historian is responsible for making available for publication any historical materials; for seeing that newsletters, bulletins, and other significant documents are regularly given over to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, in Nashville, Tennessee.
- THE CHURCH CLERK: Shall keep an accurate record of the membership of The First Christian Church. These records shall include the full names, birth dates, date of baptism, and date of death. The records shall also include information about marriages, divorce, and birth of children. If the member transfers to another congregation the date of the transfer and the place shall be recorded.

4. Spiritual Leaders and Servants:

A. Elders: The Elders shall be comprised of men and women who have demonstrated spiritual maturity, leadership, and genuine faith. There shall be a minimum of nine (9) elders whose term of office shall be three (3) years each. One third of the number shall be elected each year. Any vacancies occurring during the term of an elder shall be filled election to finish that term. The Chair of the Elders and two other elders shall represent the elders on the Official Board.

The duties of the elders shall be:

- To be aware of the needs of individual members and of the congregation as a whole. To work with the pastor to minister to those needs
- To preside over the Lord's Table at all weekly and special services of the congregation, as is the heritage of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

- To be active in and support the life of the congregation far beyond just being present on their assigned Sunday to serve as an Elder.
- To incarnate the equality of lay and clergy, in performing all the ordinances of our faith. To demonstrate our heritage of laypersons leading public worship.
- To regularly serve communion to shut-in members
- To oversee making changes in our worship services
- To actively cultivate the *Spiritual Life* of the congregation
- To encourage the spiritual growth of our members and friends
- To prepare recommendations for the *November* meeting of the Official Board for inclusion in the budget for the next fiscal year in these areas: *The Educational programs; the Mission Budget of the congregation; Evangelism and Public Relations; Worship expenses; and the Music Ministry.*
- To oversee setting the goals for and the presentation of the six special offerings, i.e. *Reconciliation; Thanksgiving; Christmas; Week of Compassion; Easter; and Pentecost.*

B. Trustees: There shall be six (6) trustees whose term of office shall be limited to three (3) years each. One third of the number shall be elected each year. The Trustees of the congregation carry out the fiduciary and legal actions of the church. They shall be responsible for: *Recommending Policies for the Bequest Funds; overseeing the investments of the congregation, in accordance with those policies; Signing legal contracts, as approved by the Official Board; Providing adequate insurance for the property; developing a proposed budget for the Building and Grounds to present to the Official Board at the November meeting.*

5. Emeritus Positions: Members of the congregation, whose service and devotion to the church merit special recognition, may be honored with the position of *Emeritus*. These persons may be given the appropriate title of: *Trustee Emeritus; Elder Emeritus; Minister Emeritus; or other titles as shall seem proper and necessary.*

Article V – The Minister

The Minister of the First Christian Church of Baltimore shall have standing in The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), be a graduate of an accredited seminary, and be ordained. Neither race nor gender shall be a consideration in the selection of the Minister.

1. The responsibilities of the Minister shall be:

- To help individuals know and claim for themselves the love of God in Jesus Christ, and to take Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
- To encourage individuals to be in relationship with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, and with the body of Christ known as the First Christian Church of Baltimore.
- To serve as a theologian in residence for the congregation.
- To do the priestly, prophetic, preaching, and pastoral roles traditionally associated with the duties of the professional spiritual leader of the congregation.
- To work closely with the Moderator in a cooperative effort overseeing the administration, the programs, the polity, the ministries, and the life of the congregation.
- To assist members in deepening their faith-life; in discerning and using their spiritual gifts; and to minister to their personal needs through visitations and encouragement.
- To work with the Elders in calling on shut-ins, and in assisting the elderly as needed.
- To work with the elected leaders of the congregation in assuring that the administrative work of the congregation is fulfilled.
- To work with the Vice-Moderator in overseeing the annual process of developing Team Ministries for carrying out the internal and external ministries of the congregation.

- To help the congregation to know the heritage of The Christian church (Disciples of Christ). To be engaged in each of the three levels of the church, i.e. *The General, The Regional, and The Local* manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- To play a part in the Ecumenical and Inter-Faith activities of our city and state. To encourage members to participate in the life of the church beyond our congregation.
- The Moderator shall be the supervisor of the Minister.
- The Minister shall be the supervisor of the church staff.
- The Minister shall be a voting member of the Official Board and, with the Moderator, an ex-officio member of all committees and boards.

2. Terms of Employment:

- A contract shall be negotiated with the candidate and signed by the Moderator, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, and the new Minister. It shall include: *Starting date; duties; salary and benefits (including housing, auto, pension, and medical coverage for the pastor and the family of the pastor); moving expenses; annual leave; educational leave; sabbatical leave; sick leave; opportunities for continuing education; expenses for all these, plus the Regional Assembly and General Assembly.*
- The contract shall be open-ended and may be terminated after a notification period of ninety days by either the congregation or the minister.

3. The Process for Selecting a Minister:

- A *Search Committee (Pulpit Committee)* composed of the Moderator, a Trustee, an Elder, the President of the CWF, the CYF, and one member at large from the congregation. The Moderator shall nominate these persons to be appointed by the Official Board.
- The committee shall contact the Regional Minister of the Christian Church, Capital Area, to request help in understanding the current policies and procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The *Search Committee* shall follow the guidelines of the denomination in *Securing an Interim-Minister; in surveying the congregation; in establishing a search process; in making a selection; and in presenting the candidate to the Official Board and the Congregation.*
- The candidate will need to receive a two-thirds vote from each of the following groups: *The Search Committee; the Official Board; and the Congregation*, of those present and voting.
- The Moderator will promptly notify the candidate, secure any necessary signatures on the contract, and assist the new Minister in all the issues of moving.

Article VI – The Management of the Congregation

1. Congregational Meetings

The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held in November for the purpose of electing individuals to serve as the elected officers, as Trustees, as Elders, and other positions as deemed necessary by the Official Board.

Special meetings of the congregation may be conducted as necessary at any time during the church year. The Moderator shall call special meetings, by action of the Official Board, or upon petition by at least twenty-five (25) participating members of the congregation.

Notice of all stated or special meetings shall be announced at the regular Sunday morning worship service(s) at least one week in advance of the meeting; by means of the church newsletter; or by written notice to the membership at least ten days before the meeting.

The Moderator or a representative shall preside at all congregational meetings, which shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

2. Official Board

The size of the Official Board shall be no greater than sixteen (16) members. The board shall be responsible to and act on behalf of the congregation when it is not in session. A quorum shall be considered to be a simple majority of the board. The regular meetings of the Official Board shall be the second Sunday, after morning worship, during the months of January, March, May, September, and November. The Official Board shall be composed of:

- (1) The Moderator
- (2) The Minister
- (3) The Vice-Moderator
- (4) The Secretary
- (5) The Treasurer
- (6) The Assistant-Treasurer
- (7) The Financial Secretary
- (8) The Assistant-Financial Secretary
- (9) The Chair of the Board of Trustees
- (10-12) Three Elders: The Chair plus two other Elders, who may be serving in other capacities on the board.
- (13) The Chair of the Personnel/Pastoral Relations Committee
- (14) The President of the Christian Women's Fellowship
- (15) The president of the Christian Men's Fellowship
- (16) The President of the Christian Youth Fellowship

3. Responsibilities of the Official Board:

- To represent the congregation in conducting the business matters of the church
- To direct the fiduciary responsibilities of the First Christian Church
- To oversee the annual election procedures so that an Official Board is in place for each new year
- To oversee the Annual Stewardship Drive of the congregation before the creation of a proposed budget. The emphasis of the Stewardship Drive shall be upon the need of the giver to give to God, not upon the need of the church for a budget.
- To oversee the development of a budget process (as outlined elsewhere in these by-laws), and present a proposed budget to the congregation at its annual meeting.
- To make any necessary adjustments to the church budget during the fiscal year as the financial circumstances of the church may require.
- To appoint special committees and task forces as seem appropriate and needed.
- To elect delegates to regional and general assemblies of the Christian Church
- To keep minutes of the meetings, preserve them and make them public.
- To receive regular reports from the Minister(s); other staff members; the Financial Secretary; and the Treasurer. These reports shall be preserved and made available to any interested members of the congregation.

4. The Executive Committee

There shall be an *Executive Committee* comprised of the Moderator; the Minister, the Vice-Moderator, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Elders, and the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The *Executive Committee* will be responsible for the coordination of the administrative issues required for the life of the church. They shall oversee all administrative contracts held by the church, i.e., the office equipment; the publication of materials and publicity; and all issues involving the administration of the church business and the life of the congregation.

The *Executive Committee* shall develop a proposed budget to be submitted to the Official Board at its *November* meeting. It shall initiate recommendations on the following items to be included in that budget: *Congregational events and dinners; Camp and Conference programs; youth programs; contracts on office machines; expenses for the telephone system, website, and other items needed for the operation of the office; for office supplies; and for postage and materials for the church newsletter.*

The shall also oversee combining the recommendations submitted by the Trustees, Elders, Personnel Committee, and any other groups that may create items for the proposed budget, meeting as is necessary to present a proposed budget to the Official Board at its meeting in *November*.

The regular meetings of the *Executive Committee* shall be the second Sunday, during the months of February, April, June, October, and December.

5. Team Ministries

In the fall of each year the congregation will provide opportunities for the member/friends of the community to develop priorities of internal and external ministries. (The addendum to these By-Laws contains suggested ideas by which the congregation may develop its priorities, and create Team Ministries for the new year.) A team leader must volunteer before the *Team Ministry* is formed and charged with a particular mission to perform. Team leaders and members will be provided leadership training opportunities. Each *Team Ministry* shall be encouraged to:

- Nurture the personal growth of its members through bible study and prayer
- Provide opportunities for its members to serve Jesus and our faith community

6. Memorials Committee

The Moderator and the Pastor shall appoint the members of the Memorial committee and they shall have the following duties:

- Be responsible for properly recording the gift and recognizing those persons making contributions to the church by will, bequest or other financial means which are over and above their regular contributions.
- Be responsible for making decisions on how the memorial gifts are to be used for the benefit of the congregation.
- To keep a permanent record of the givers, the gifts and the projects funded by the Memorial Fund.

7. Personnel/Pastoral Relations Committee

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be responsible for acting on behalf of the congregation and the Official Board in all matters regarding paid personnel who shall be known as the “church staff.” The Personnel/Pastoral Relations Committee:

- Shall be comprised of a minimum of four persons from the following positions: the Chairperson, the Moderator, an Elder, a member of the Executive Committee, a Trustee, and a member at large
- Shall counsel with the Minister in making and maintaining an effective ministry
- Shall keep the Minister informed of the attitude and feelings of the members
- Shall resolve early on any conflicts while they are yet manageable
- Shall involve the Regional Minister of the Christian Church-Capital Area at the first sign of any serious conflict
- Shall work with the congregation to provide the resources needed for the Minister to attend the Regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). To provide time away and the financial resources required for the Minister to have two weeks of educational leave annually. To work with the congregation to provide the Minister with three months of Sabbatical Leave every four years in accordance with the recommendations of the denomination and the regional church

- Shall evaluate, annually, the work of the minister and the other staff members
- Shall annually, propose staff salary and benefits to the Official Board for consideration in the new budget
- Shall be the advocate of the staff in proposing ideas and in supporting the needs of the church staff.

Article VII – Special Committees

The Moderator may at any time appoint such special or temporary task force or committee as the Moderator deems necessary. These Special Committees shall be discharged as soon as their objectives are accomplished.

Article VIII – Amendments

These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members of the Official Board in regular or special meetings, provided a copy of the proposed amendment has been made available to all members of the congregation at least fifteen (15) days prior to the vote thereon.

Addendum on how to establish priorities and create Team Ministries for 2003 and beyond:

***“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit:
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord:
and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same
God who activates all of them in everyone.”***

-Paul in First Corinthians 12:4-6

From Memorial Day until Thanksgiving the emphasis shall be upon opportunities to identify spiritual gifts, discover how spiritual gifts relate to specific ministries, and exploring what each person feels God wants them to use and to offer internally to the faith community and externally to ministries beyond the congregation. From Thanksgiving until Christmas the emphasis shall be upon opportunities for team leaders to step forward and for a few persons to select the *Team Ministries* they want to be a part of during the next calendar year. Persons may choose to serve on as many *Team Ministries*, and for as many years, as they feel called to do so by God.

In the fall of each year the congregation will provide opportunities for the members/friends of the community to develop priorities of internal and external ministries that the congregation will offer for groups of individuals to choose and perform in a *Team Ministry*. These *Team Ministries* are made up of a very few persons. A team leader must volunteer before the *Team Ministry* is formed and given a particular mission to perform. Each *Team Ministry* is both a process of personal growth, and of serving Jesus, and the faith community.

The gateway for our *Team Ministries* will be a mixture of bible study, prayer, planning, preparation, and enjoyable fellowship as the task or ministry is completed. Satisfaction comes from enjoying using your gifts while knowing you have helped others and served God in Jesus Christ. Each fall First Christian Church will provide its members and friends a variety of opportunities:

- *To identify their Spiritual Gifts* from among the eighteen given in Romans 12:3-8; First Corinthians 12:4-11 and 27-31; and Ephesians 4:7-16.
- *To complete an inventory of spiritual gifts* like ***Opening Your Spiritual Gifts***, or another that the Minister and Elders choose to use that fall. The goal shall be to help individuals identify each of their spiritual gifts from those given in the New Testament, and to relate those spiritual gifts to internal and external ministries of the congregation. The eighteen spiritual gifts from which these ministries shall be developed are: *Prophecy, Pastoring, Teaching, Encouragement, Giving, Compassion, Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Discernment, Tongues, Interpretation, Apostleship, Assisting, Leadership, and Evangelism.*
- *To explore what each individual feels God wants them to give to the church*, as an expression of their faith. These shall include the stewardship of time, and talents, through participating in one or more *Team Ministries*, and of financial gifts to God, through the process of *Consecration Sunday*.

The emphasis of these *Team Ministries* shall be upon the truth that every ***“faith community will ultimately find its place by clearly shaping its spirit, not its structure or its programs.”***

In this way ***“Spiritual Gifts”*** shall be the means of motivating our members/friends to manage the spiritual life/tasks/deeds of this community of faith. It shall be the intention of First Christian Church to nurture our members and friends to define and experience their own *inward spiritual journey* and to balance that with involvement in some ministry or ministries that reflects an *outward spiritual journey*. Each fall the congregation will seek to discern what God has in mind for First Christian Church, as a community of faith. Each fall the goal shall be to offer the community the challenge to define and develop what it will mean in the next calendar year for our church to be a ***“Gift-Evoking, Gift-Bearing Community.”***