

**2021 By Laws of Groveland Congregational Church
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ARTICLE I WHO WE ARE

SECTION 1 NAME

A. The Name of this Church is the Groveland Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Groveland, Massachusetts.

B. IRS-501(c)3 info & Certificate Number

The Internal Revenue Service has issued a ruling dated June 10, 1964, which as subsequently amended, grants blanket federal income tax exemption (Non-Profit) to the United Church of Christ and the following:

- All Member Churches
- Conferences and Associations
- General Synod
- Executive Council
- Ministries
- Commissions and Councils
- Institutions related to the Council of Higher Education
- Health and Welfare Institutions related to the United Church of Christ.

C. The Internal Revenue Service Group exemption number of the United Church of Christ is 1665. Membership can be verified in the volume published annually titled “Yearbook United Church of Christ”.

D. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue recognizes Groveland Congregational Church as tax exempt (Non-Profit) by certificate 745531392.

SECTION 2 MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

A. Mission Statement

We follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, with faith, caring and hope for all God’s people.

B. Vision Statement

We strive to be joyful stewards by sharing our God-given talents and resources to enrich the lives of others.

SECTION 3 PREAMBLE AND PURPOSE

A. Preamble

The Groveland Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, and holds as truth the traditional doctrine of the Trinity: God as Father and Creator, Jesus as Son and Savior, and Holy Spirit as Guide and Comforter. It further acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in the confession of faith. It adheres to the Word of God in the Scriptures and in the direction of the Holy Spirit to prosper its redemptive mission in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It accepts the responsibility to make this faith its own in the reality of worship and in the expression of its mission and ministry locally and into the world.

In accordance with the teachings of Jesus, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Its very existence is to serve God by providing all people an opportunity for Christian worship, education, fellowship, pastoral care and mission within the spirit of Christian love. It recognizes the current Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ as a guide to the practice of its faith and ministry.

(See ARTICLE 6 for Referencing Documentation A -pg. 11)

B. Purpose

We are a growing and learning Christian congregation, Open and Affirming, welcoming to all.

We strive to live the life that Jesus calls us to live.

We welcome questions and a searching spirit, and we value the ongoing education of all ages.

We are called to worship God as an enthusiastic community with all people of all ages fully participating in their own way.

We endeavor that all who gather in worship have a meaningful encounter with God.

We believe our gathered worship underpins and informs all other ministries and the ways we take our faith into the world.

Our denomination, The United Church of Christ, is a distinct and diverse community of Christians that come together as one church to join faith and action.

As such, the governing body of this church is the membership assembled in congregational meetings. Our members do the work of the church and make the decisions. We strive to reach consensus; we work hard to make sure that all voices are heard as we determine the direction, mission priorities, and future of our church. (See ARTICLE 6 for Referencing Documentations A & B pg. 11)

SECTION 4 GOVERNANCE

A. Congregationalism

The governance of this church is vested in its members, in the tradition of New England Congregationalism, and operates in accordance with established principles of The United Church of Christ. The polity is determined by the action of the members at the Annual Meeting and when necessary, at specifically called church meetings.

B. Policy and Procedure Document

The Policy and Procedure Document shall be maintained and reviewed as needed by the Council of Ministries. Temporary changes may be applied to the document by the Council of Ministries given that the congregation is notified and the change is approved at the next congregational meeting.

ARTICLE II CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

There are two primary relationships with Groveland Congregational Church: Members and Friends. Membership in this church shall be open to anyone who wishes to join this community of faith. Membership status will be reviewed regularly.

SECTION 1 MEMBERS

A. Members are those who have received a recommendation from the Pastor and an affirming vote of the Council of Ministries, including a public acceptance of the church's covenant by one of the following:

1. presentation of satisfactory letter of transfer.
2. reaffirmation of faith.
3. confession of faith or baptism.
4. act of Confirmation.

B. Members dedicate themselves to being good stewards to the best of their ability by:

1. attending worship services.
2. observing the sacraments.
3. contributing to the financial support of the church and its approved missions.
4. participating in the life and work of the church.
5. exercising voting privileges.

C. Release from Membership

Membership will cease under the following circumstances:

1. by letter of transfer.
2. by letter of resignation.
3. by death.

SECTION 2 FRIENDS

A. Friends are persons who choose to be involved in the Groveland Congregational Church, but not join as a member.

B. Friends are welcome to:

1. worship with our Church.
2. participate in the life of the church to the best of their ability.
3. consider Groveland Congregational Church as their church.
4. donate monetary funds or offer in-kind support.

ARTICLE III ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1 GOVERNING BODIES

A. The Executive Board

The Executive Board shall be composed of the Officers with the Pastor as an ex-officio member. Their duties and responsibilities are:

1. Personnel:
 - a. developing personnel policies.
 - b. recruiting and hiring or terminating personnel and presenting their recommendations to the Council of Ministries for final approval.
 - c. overseeing the development of job descriptions.
2. Building Use:
 - a. overseeing the leasing of church buildings and properties.
 - b. overseeing care and maintenance of premises.
3. Financial and Legal Matters-have fiduciary oversight and liability for:
 - a. arranging for insurance coverage, safekeeping of legal documents and addressing legal matters.
 - b. assuring that the church shall maintain a minimum of “\$1,000,000 employee dishonesty crime coverage or fidelity bond protection”, such as it covers officers, employees, volunteers, and church members as a whole.
 - c. assisting with development of annual budget.
 - d. not exceeding sums in excess of \$1,000 above budgeted amounts in any approved budget line item without approval at a congregational meeting.
 - e. addressing security concerns.
 - f. coordinating special donations by assigning them to the appropriate fund.
 - g. appointing tellers for counting weekly offerings.
 - h. arranging an independent audit of the church financial records at the end of each Treasurer’s Term, or as needed.
4. Emergency Response
Shall act in lieu of the Council of Ministries between Council meetings, when appropriate or necessary.
5. The Executive Board are members of the Council of Ministries and shall attend Council meetings.

B. The Council of Ministries

The Council of Ministries shall consist of the Executive Board and Ministry Coordinators, as nominated and voted on by the congregation. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member.

1. As the policy making body of the church, acting on behalf of and responsible to the congregation, the Council shall be responsible for:
 - a. conducting the official business of the church between meetings of the congregation.
 - b. filling vacancies in Ministry Coordinators by appointing persons to serve out the term until the next annual meeting.
 - c. approving non-elective task forces or teams for specific purposes.
 - d. notifying the nominating team when an officer vacancy occurs.
 - e. selecting two (2) members of the Pastoral Relations Team.
 - f. appointing, if or when needed, Assistant Treasurer(s) and Assistant Financial Secretaries.
 - g. evaluating the Pastor’s performance and merit at least annually. The Council of Ministry shall establish the evaluation document and both performance and merit shall be included in one document.
2. Each Ministry Coordinator shall attend the monthly Council meetings or designate a proxy from their ministry to attend. (see Article 4 for meeting details pg. 10)

SECTION 2 OFFICERS

All elected Officers shall be members of the church. Officers shall be elected annually and may serve consecutive terms.

A. Moderator

1. shall preside at all business meetings, including Annual and Special Congregational meetings, Executive Board and Council of Ministries meetings.
2. shall base all questions of parliamentary procedure upon "Robert's Rules of Order", except as may be specifically stipulated in these bylaws.
3. shall in the temporary absence of the Clerk appoint a Clerk pro-tem.
4. shall have signing authority for contracts.
5. shall be a secondary signatory on financial accounts.
6. in the temporary absence of the Moderator, an Officer shall open the meeting and immediately proceed to the election of a Moderator pro-tem.

B. Clerk

1. shall write the warrant, as submitted by Council of Ministries and to give legal notice for the Annual Meeting and all Special Church meetings.
2. shall keep accurate records of the above named meetings and post the minutes within thirty (30) days.
3. shall serve as secretary and keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the Council of Ministries and the Executive Board meetings.
4. shall maintain the official register with dates that include status of membership, modes of reception, baptisms' and marriages.
5. shall issue letters of transfer and record letters of dismissal.
6. shall conduct all correspondence related to the duties of the Clerk.
7. shall keep on file all communications and written reports until such time as it seems best to transfer these to the Church Historian.
8. shall provide a yearly summary of these activities to be included in the Annual Report.
9. shall have signing authority for contracts, in absence of other signatories.

C. Treasurer

1. shall work in close cooperation with the Financial Secretary, Council of Ministries, and Executive Board.
2. shall disburse all monies of the church as primary signatory, with the approval of the established policies of the church.
3. shall ensure the maintenance of detailed financial records as required for adequate accounting procedures.
4. shall ensure all monies from pledges, bequests, trusts, investments, reserves and/or other sources of income as received, are transferred to the appropriate account, as directed by the Executive Board.
5. shall hold and be responsible for the safekeeping of all accounts (checking and savings), stock certificates and other assets.
6. shall furnish a written report to each meeting of the Executive Board and Council of Ministries and submit an Annual Report.

D. Financial Secretary

1. shall work in close cooperation with the Treasurer, Executive Board and Council of Ministries.
2. shall receive all monies of the church and promptly deposit said monies in the working account of the church as designated by the Executive Board or Council of Ministries.
3. shall furnish the Treasurer with a detailed transmittal of the deposit within three (3) work days.
4. shall record pledged income to donor's statements.
5. shall furnish each pledging unit with a statement of pledge activity as often as considered necessary by the Executive Board or Council of Ministries but no less than at the end of each calendar year as required by IRS regulations.

6. shall furnish a written report of all income activity to each meeting of the Executive Board or Council of Ministries and submit an Annual Report.

E. Properties Manager

1. shall work closely with both the Executive Board and Council of Ministries.
2. shall have oversight of care of all property, real and personal, belonging to the church.
3. shall connect with appropriate governing agencies to ensure that compliance requirements are met.
4. shall contract with various contractors in-order to provide services.
5. shall have signing authority for all facilities contracts.
6. shall be a secondary signatory for financial accounts.
7. shall supervise the work of the Sexton(s) in coordination with the Pastor.
8. shall be responsible for directing emergency building repairs.
9. shall be a member of the Buildings and Grounds Ministry.
10. shall submit an Annual Report.

SECTION 3 ORDAINED CLERGY/PASTOR

The Pastor/s shall be both preacher and teacher, administering the sacraments and fulfilling the pastoral office according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ. (Reference Policies and Procedures for details)

A. Pastoral Requirements:

1. shall be an ordained minister, whose "Ministerial Standing" has been authorized by the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ.
2. shall have charge of the worship services of the church, and shall coordinate with the Worship and Care Ministry, and Faith Formation and Education Ministry.
3. shall preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, lead worship in person or online, and assist in providing a warm, Christian fellowship by encouraging, developing and initiating appropriate programs for the spiritual benefit of the membership.
4. shall be available to person/s who may need pastoral support.
5. shall seek to know the membership of the church.
6. shall assist the church in fulfilling its Christian responsibility to the wider Church.
7. shall have knowledge of the total program of the church.
8. shall create a Pastoral Relations Team in conjunction with the Council of Ministries.
9. shall support and guide the confirmation program.
10. shall work in close cooperation with the Council of Ministries and Executive Board.

B. Pastoral Vacancy:

1. The Council of Ministries with The Worship and Care Ministry shall act to provide continuation of religious services.
2. The Council of Ministries shall work with the Southern New England Conference to find and covenant with a qualified Interim Pastor until the church is prepared to call a Pastor. This candidate may come from any United Church of Christ Conference so long as the pastor is authorized to circulate a profile. (See policies and procedures)
3. The Council of Ministries shall initiate action to call a special church meeting for the purpose of electing a Search Team.
4. When the Search Team has a candidate, a Special Congregational Meeting shall be called for the sole purpose of electing a Pastor. The candidate shall not be present at this meeting. This meeting shall require a quorum of one-third of the membership and the election to Pastor shall require a two-thirds vote of the members present in addition to the absentee ballots.

C. Involuntary Termination of the Pastor

1. The Council of Ministries (excluding the Pastor) with a two-thirds (2/3) vote will recommend termination to the congregation.
2. A Special Congregational Meeting shall be called to vote on the recommendation. Such a meeting shall require a quorum of one-third (1/3) of the membership, and a decision to end the

term of the Pastor shall require a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present in addition to the absentee ballots.

SECTION 4 MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH: COORDINATORS and TEAMS

Each Ministry Team shall have a Ministry Coordinator who shall be a member of the church. Anyone may be part of a Ministry Team.

A. Ministry Coordinators

1. shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of two (2) years and be eligible for re-election after a hiatus of one (1) year.
2. shall attend the monthly Council meetings or designate a proxy from their Team to attend.
3. shall guide their Team to provide services for the responsibilities listed under their Team.
4. shall guide their Team to work within the church's budget.
5. shall appoint a recorder to keep the minutes of their Team's meeting. Minutes are forwarded to the Administrative Assistant for dispersal.
6. shall file an Annual Report.

B. Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team shall be responsible for:

1. caring for of all property, real and personal, belonging to the church, taking all necessary measures for its protection, management, and upkeep.
2. overseeing building maintenance, supplies and alterations.
3. supervising landscaping needs.
4. coordinating Perry Park Preschool needs.
5. planning for long-range capital improvements.
6. keeping inventory of properties.
7. coordinating with The Safe Church Team.
8. contacting the Properties Manager for emergency building repairs.

C. Faith Formation and Education Ministry Team shall be responsible for:

1. developing and overseeing educational opportunities, activities, and programs which support the faith formation of children and youth.
2. providing staffing for Sunday School and nursery care.
3. evaluating, selecting, and developing exemplary curricula for children and youth education.
4. supporting student ministry programs.
5. supporting opportunities for adult faith formation.
6. coordinating with The Safe Church Team.

D. Hospitality Ministry Team shall be responsible for:

1. sponsoring fellowship events.
2. coordinating weekly activities.
3. promoting the church.
4. welcoming visitors, developing membership, and helping new members assimilate into the faith community.
5. coordinating with Faith Circle for maintaining kitchen as a well-stocked and well-organized facility.
6. assisting the Faith Circle in organizing and serving memorial luncheons or emergency support meals.

E. Mission and Outreach Ministry Team shall be responsible for:

1. distributing mission funds and reporting such to the Council.
2. initiating mission and community outreach projects and special appeals.
3. encouraging the congregation to support the missions of the church.
4. coordinating with The Thrift Shop.

- F. Worship and Care Ministry Team** shall be responsible for:
1. assisting the Pastor in caring for the spiritual needs of the membership.
 2. assisting the Pastor in worship services.
 3. preparing the sacraments.
 4. recruiting liturgists, ushers, greeters, and acolytes for worship services.
 5. coordinating with a Music Team.
 6. overseeing the decoration of the sanctuary for special and seasonal services.
 7. leading a 'Share the Care' and a prayer chain.
 8. reviewing membership with Clerk and Financial Secretary.

SECTION 5 OTHER ELECTED POSITIONS

All elected positions shall be members of the church. The following shall be elected annually.

- A. Historian** shall collect arrange and preserve all church materials of historic value, establish an ongoing program of education, highlighting the church's historical significance, and report in writing to the Annual Meeting, and may serve consecutive terms.
- B. Auditor** shall examine the accounts of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary during the year and report in writing to the Council of Ministries annually and may serve consecutive terms.
- C. Scouting Coordinator** as a Chartered Organization Representative shall serve as the liaison between the church and the programs of the Scouts BSA and may serve consecutive terms.
- D. Delegate(s)**
1. **Delegates (1-2) to the Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ**, in accordance with the bylaws of the Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ, shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to represent this church. May serve Consecutive terms.
 2. **Delegates (1-2) to the Northeast Association**, in accordance with the bylaws of the Northeast Association, delegates shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to represent this church. May serve consecutive terms.

SECTION 6 STANDING MINISTRY TEAMS

Standing Teams exist for the ongoing operation of the church. Each team will have a leader presented at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year and may serve consecutive years.

While the Standing Ministry Teams do not sit on the church council, they work with the Council of Ministries. All Standing Ministry Teams shall work within the church's budget to provide services for the responsibilities listed under their Team and file an Annual Report.

- A. The Safe Church Team** shall be responsible for:
1. coordinating safety provisions to protect the church, congregation, volunteers, employees, teams Sunday School, and all others involved with the functioning of the church.
 2. providing two CORI officers.
 3. providing a resource for the congregation, volunteers, employees, teams, Sunday School, Perry Park Preschool, and all others involved with the functioning and use of the church with regard to issues pertaining to the safety of the church and the people who utilize it.
 4. following the guidelines as set out in the Policies/Procedures
- B. The Stewardship Team** shall be responsible for:
1. encouraging the congregation in the area of Christian Stewardship, including the presentation of the opportunities and rewards for sharing time, talent, and money with the church community.
 2. conducting annual stewardship drives for support of the budget and, when needed, special capital fundraising campaigns.
 3. developing an annual budget, in conjunction with the Executive Board and the Pastor.
 4. directing a team to preview applicants and recommend scholarship awards.

C. The Communication and Technology Team shall be responsible for:

1. coordinating with Executive Board, Pastor and Administrative Assistant.
2. providing support for our Ministries to share approved Groveland Congregational Church media content.
3. livestreaming the church services, church meetings and other church programmed activities.
4. recording events editing solely for reinforcing our message, and providing media support to the requesting church group.
5. storing recordings on the Groveland Congregational Church's secure cloud storage site, organized to support future use and access.
6. assisting our Ministries in creating, editing and posting media content on approved social media.
7. ensuring all copyrights are respected, and properly identified in postings and recordings.

SECTION 7 INDEPENDENT TEAMS

A. The Nominating Team

There shall be at least three (3) Members on the Nominating Team.

Leader of Nominating Team shall serve for a two (2) year term and may serve for consecutive years.

The Team shall be responsible for:

1. communicating with the Executive Board & Council of Ministries to find appropriate nominees.
2. being accountable to the congregation at annual meeting.
3. presenting a slate of church Officers, Ministry Coordinators, Other Elected Positions, to be voted on at the annual meeting.
4. presenting the Standing Teams Leaders at the Annual Meeting.
5. submitting a nominee to complete the term for any Officer vacancy to the membership at a special church meeting for vote.

B. The Pastoral Relations Team

This Team shall be approved by the Council of Ministries and meet at least quarterly with the Pastor.

There shall be four (4) appointed Members, two (2) proposed by the Pastor and two (2) by the Council.

The Team members' length of service shall be at the discretion of the Council and the Pastor.

The Team shall be responsible for:

1. acting as liaison between the Pastor and the congregation.
2. supporting a healthy relationship between the Pastor and the congregation.
3. enhancing the effectiveness of the church's mission.

SECTION 8 EMPLOYEES

The Church charges the Executive Board to hire, supervise, and terminate employees that assist the church in its Ministry and Mission.

A. The Executive Board will provide the employee with a clear job description that makes it clear who that employee reports too. (See the Policy and Procedure Document for a current listing of employee position descriptions.)

B. There will be a Yearly Employment review.

C. The employee will be given fair and appropriate compensation.

SECTION 9 MISSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The church regards as an integral part of itself, any and all organizations, formed for the purpose of its ministry, which use the facilities of the church or its name. Each organization shall present a written report of its activities and finances to be included in the Annual Report. (Scouting organizations are exempt from financial reports). No new organization(s) may be formed without the approval of the church.

(The current list of approved missional organizations is listed in the Policy and Procedure Document.)

ARTICLE 4 MEETINGS and SERVICES

SECTION 1 MINISTRY MEETINGS

Except for the Executive Board and the Pastoral Relations Team, the regular meetings of all Ministries Teams shall be open with exception of an executive session.

- A.** Each Ministry Coordinator shall attend the monthly Council meetings or designate a proxy from their ministry.
- B.** Special meetings of the Council of Ministries may be called by the Moderator, the Pastor, or four Council members, with at least 24 hours' notice to all Council members.
- C.** A simple majority of the membership of the Council of Ministries shall constitute a quorum.
(A simple majority is 1 more than half of membership of council.)
- D.** Ministries shall meet regularly at a time that is as inclusive as possible for most of the team.
- E.** The Standing Ministry Teams meet as often as needed, but at a minimum quarterly, and provide a report to the Council of Ministries prior to the next Council meeting.

SECTION 2 CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Services:

- 1. Worship services shall be held regularly at stated times, as arranged by the Pastor and the Worship and Care ministry.
- 2. The Sacraments of Holy Communion, Baptism and other special services shall be administered as determined by the Pastor and the Worship and Care Ministry.

B. Meetings

All meetings of the congregation shall be conducted under Robert's Rules of Order. Meetings may be conducted via an online platform if necessary.

- 1. The Annual Meeting shall normally be held within six (6) weeks after the end of our fiscal year. The nominee slate of the church shall be elected at that time and covenanted during the following weeks' Worship Service.
- 2. Special church meetings may be requested in writing by the Pastor, the Council of Ministries, or any ten (10) members. Special meeting requests will be submitted to the Clerk, and the warrant of such meeting shall specify the business to be considered.
- 3. All church meetings shall be called by the Clerk through written notice. At least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting, the notice shall be read during regular worship and be sent to all members either by mail or by electronic transmission such that the anticipated receipt is no less than fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.
- 4. In order to conduct official church business at any regular or special meeting a quorum must be present. A quorum shall consist of twenty five percent (25%) of the current membership.
- 5. A majority vote shall be decisive unless otherwise specified in the bylaws.
- 6. A Member may cast an absentee ballot on the warrant as it exists in its original form.
 - a. A ballot may be requested by contacting the church office.
 - b. The ballot must be submitted in writing with the member's signature to the Clerk, prior to the meeting.
 - c. Absentee ballots will be included after a quorum exists.

ARTICLE 5 AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended, modified or rescinded, or new bylaws may be adopted at any meeting of the church, provided that:

- A.** Due notice is given that such action is to be introduced. For the purpose of this article, due notice may consist of any of the following:

1. Written notice sent to the membership either by mail or by electronic transmission approximately thirty (30) days prior to the date of such meeting.
 2. Announcement from the pulpit at each regular worship service not less than three (3) successive worship services immediately prior to the date of said meeting.
- B.** Action on these matters shall require the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of those present and voting where a quorum is present.
- C.** These bylaws, as voted at this meeting, shall supersede any and all bylaws previously adopted by the church. The bylaws shall be reviewed in increments of three (3) years, or at any time deemed necessary by the church.

ARTICLE 6 REFERENCING DOCUMENTATION

Section 1 United Church of Christ Statement of Faith (1976/1981)

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 to 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 honor be unto God.

Amen

Section 2 Groveland Congregational Church Open and Affirming Covenant (2018)

We the people of Groveland Congregational Church pledge to be a community that starts from a place of love, that joyfully welcomes all peoples onto the full life and ministry of this church. We affirm that each individual is a beloved child of God and recognize that we are called to be like one body with many members. We promise to embrace you in your joys and sorrows as we walk together in action and faith. Let us journey in the path of Christ's footsteps with others of every race, ethnicity, creed, class, culture, age, gender, family structure, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.