

**BYLAWS of the LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION  
MAINE CONFERENCE - UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**PREAMBLE**

Representatives of the Kennebec Valley Association and the Franklin Association entered into conversation and discernment about possible union in July 2015. Experiencing a sense of God at work, this group called for the two Associations to come together in discernment in February 2016. All of the churches of both Associations were asked to send representatives to that meeting.

The conversation at the February 2016 meeting was rich, with a variety of reasons expressed to move ahead, including:

- Hearing God's call: "That They May All Be One."
- Recognizing that our union reflects our Easter faith: there comes a time when we must go through death to get to resurrection. God is doing a new thing!
- Enhanced community, expanding our circle of contacts in the wider church.
- Greater awareness of other churches as we share ideas and watch them percolate.
- Enhanced worship and meeting possibilities when we come together.
- Increased opportunities for mission and justice work.
- Greater possibilities for Members in Discernment in terms of mentors and churches they might serve.
- Increased opportunities for part-time ministers to serve two churches.
- Diverse perspectives on the Committee on Ministry, reflecting the emphasis on diversity in our denomination.
- Enhanced opportunities for outdoor ministry.
- MORE FUN!

By the power of the Holy Spirit, consensus was reached to take the possible union back to the Associations' Annual Meetings in May 2016 for a vote to continue this journey.

Both Associations voted at their May Annual Meetings to move forward toward union and appointed a Joint Association Bylaw Committee. This Committee drafted Bylaws for the new Association, for approval at the Franklin and Kennebec Valley Association Meetings in the fall of 2016.

On October 2, 2016, at their fall meetings, the Kennebec Valley Association and the Franklin Association voted to dissolve and create a unified Association.

**ARTICLE I – NAME**

This part of the Body of Christ shall be called the Living Water Association of Churches and Ministers of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ, hereafter in these Bylaws known as Association and Conference, respectively. This name has its origins in John 7:37-39 (NRSV):

*On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

## **ARTICLE II – FAITH**

The faith guiding this Association is that expressed in the Preamble to the United Church of Christ Constitution and in the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ. Our understanding of God, and of Jesus Christ the sole head of our Church, is informed by the words of ancient Scripture, by the later interpretations of the Protestant Reformers, and by the ongoing action of the Holy Spirit; and we seek to live out this faith by speaking God's truth in today's language to address today's issues.

## **ARTICLE III – COVENANT**

Remembering that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us, we seek to respect one another, challenge one another, empower one another, and support one another in our struggle to build a loving community of faithful servants to the glory of God. We are in covenant with each other to:

- A. Build community, encourage cooperation, and provide opportunities for service among our ministers and laity, as well as among Christians and among all peoples.
- B. Determine, confer, and certify the standing of member churches and affiliated clergy.
- C. Advise candidates for authorized ministry (e.g., ordination, commission, or licensure).
- D. Stimulate and encourage the spiritual, educational, community, and justice and peace ministries of our member churches and ministers.
- E. Serve as partners in common ministry with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ and with the wider ministry of the United Church of Christ.

## **ARTICLE IV – PRINCIPLES**

We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and the right to understand the Holy in one's own way. We hold to the autonomy of the local church, and its independence of all ecclesiastical control, and in this way witness to the reality that the Church is known best in this world at that place where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name for worship and ministry.

While affirming the liberty of our churches, we hold also to the unity and universality of the Church, which is the body of Christ. We therefore cherish the communion of the churches, united in association, conference, and national bodies, for counsel and cooperation in matters of mutual concern. We will unite with all bodies of the Church in hearty cooperation, and will earnestly seek, so far as in us lies, that Jesus' prayer for His disciples may be answered: that all may be one.

This Association of churches shall therefore unite in covenant with the Maine Conference and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

## **ARTICLE V – OPEN AND AFFIRMING**

*“In Christ there is no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one . . .”*

*Galatians 3:28*

Walking toward God, we, the members of the Living Water Association, seek through God's Grace to be an association that includes all persons who desire to live God's Love, as shown to us through the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. We respect and embrace differences in gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identification, mental and physical ability, as well as racial, ethnic, or socio-economic background.

We welcome all to share fully in the life and leadership, ministry, communion, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, and blessings of participation in the association. We are an open and affirming association; open to all, and affirming of all God's beloved children.

“No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.”

## **ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. Members of the Association**

The Association shall be composed of:

1. All United Church of Christ churches within the geographical limits of Franklin, Kennebec and Somerset Counties.

Benton Falls Congregational Church, Benton Falls  
Congregational Church of Weld  
First Congregational (Old South) Church, Farmington  
First Congregational Church, Pittsfield  
First Congregational Church, Waterville  
First Congregational Church, Wilton  
Moose River Congregational Church, Jackman  
New Sharon Congregational Church, New Sharon  
Old South Congregational Church, Hallowell  
Phillips Community Church, Phillips  
Rangeley Congregational Church, Rangeley  
Riverside Congregational Church, Vassalboro  
Shorey Chapel, Industry  
South Parish Congregational Church, Augusta  
The Forks/West Forks Congregational Church, The Forks  
United Church of Monmouth, Monmouth  
Winslow Congregational Church, Winslow  
Winthrop Congregational Church, Winthrop

2. All ministers having standing (ordained, commissioned, and licensed) in the Association.
3. All Members in Discernment of the Association.
4. All churches that shall hereafter be received as members by a vote of the Association.

## **B. Responsibilities of Membership**

1. **Church Member Responsibilities:** Churches that are members of the Living Water Association agree to participate in Association activities to the extent possible, but especially Regular and Special Meetings and Ecclesiastical Councils, and also to pay assessed Association Membership Dues. If a church regularly chooses not to participate in Association activities and/or not to pay Association Membership Dues, the Executive Committee shall communicate with the church in an attempt to restore our covenantal relationship. If these efforts are not successful, the issue shall be referred to the Committee on Ministry for further consideration.
2. **Authorized Minister Member Responsibilities:** Authorized ministers who are members of the Living Water Association agree to participate in Association activities to the extent possible, but especially Regular and Special Meetings and Ecclesiastical Councils. If an authorized minister regularly chooses not to participate in Association activities, the Executive Committee shall communicate with the minister in an attempt to restore

covenantal relationship. If these efforts are not successful, the issue shall be referred to the Committee on Ministry for further consideration.

## ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS

- A. Regular Meetings:** Two meetings of the Association shall be held each year, one in the spring and one in the fall, unless otherwise determined by the Executive Committee. The date, hour and place shall be determined by the Executive Committee, which shall also give notice of the meeting to all member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in Discernment at least four weeks prior to the date. The spring association meeting shall be the Annual Meeting of the Association.
- B. Special Meetings:** The Executive Committee may call special meetings of the Association when necessary for purposes deemed essential, or upon the written request of at least half of the churches of the Association. All member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in Discernment must be notified of any such special meeting at least four weeks prior to the date.
- C. Delegates:** Delegates to meetings of the Association shall include:
1. Up to five delegates from each member church.
  2. One youth delegate from each member church.
  3. All ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers who hold standing or ecclesiastical authorization in the Association.
  4. Members in Discernment.
  5. Officers of the Association.
  6. Members of the Committee on Ministry.
- D. Quorum:** A quorum at any Regular or Special Meeting shall consist of the representation of at least half of the churches and one-third of the authorized ministers who currently serve a church in the Association. If a quorum does not exist, those present at the called meeting may adjourn the meeting to a specified date, time and location provided that all member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in Discernment receive notification at least two weeks prior to the rescheduled meeting.
- E. Ecclesiastical Council:**
1. The Association shall meet as an Ecclesiastical Council for the purpose of ordination and commissioning, and for other purposes of such a council as guided by the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ and the policies and procedures of the Maine Conference.
  2. Meetings of an Ecclesiastical Council shall be called by the Executive Committee after consultation with or recommendation from the Committee on Ministry.
  3. The call for an Ecclesiastical Council meeting shall be issued through the Scribe of the Association and the agenda shall be limited to the matter named in the call.

4. The minutes of every Ecclesiastical Council shall be filed with the Clerk of the Conference.

**F. Association Outdoor Worship Service:** The Association shall conduct an outdoor worship service each fall at a date, time and location determined by the Executive Committee. All of the churches in the Association are encouraged to participate in this special service, a celebration of God's Creation, and are further encouraged to display examples of their program and mission activities.

## **ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS**

The Moderator and Vice Moderator of the Association shall be elected at a Regular or Special Meeting for a one-year term of office, renewable twice. The Scribe and Treasurer shall be elected at a Regular or Special Meeting for a two-year term of office, renewable twice.

- A. **Moderator:** The Moderator shall preside over all meetings of the Association and the Executive Committee, developing the meeting agenda and distributing it at least seven days in advance of the meeting. The Moderator shall also be a member of the Committee on Ministry. Ideally, the Moderator shall alternately be a lay member and an authorized minister.
- B. **Vice Moderator:** In the absence or at the request of the Moderator, the Vice Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator. Ideally, the Vice Moderator shall be the successor of the current Moderator.
- C. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall bill and collect Association and Conference fellowship dues, receive all monies from the member churches, keep track of all expenditures approved by the Association and Executive Committee, and report the same to the Association at its regularly called meetings. This written report shall be filed with the Scribe.
- D. **Scribe:** The Scribe shall keep the roll of the churches and ministers of the Association and the recorded minutes of the meetings, and shall call meetings as provided in the Bylaws. The Scribe shall issue letters transferring the standing of ministers upon approval of the Committee on Ministry, and shall file an annual report with the registrar of the Maine Conference.

## **ARTICLE IX – COMMITTEES**

- A. **Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee shall consist of the officers of the Association, the chair of the Committee on Ministry and two at large members elected by the Association for two-year terms. It shall be the governing body of the Association between its meetings. The Executive Committee shall oversee the

programs and the finances of the Association, and shall see that the decisions of the Regular and Special meetings of the Association are implemented. The Executive Committee shall prepare an annual budget to be presented to the Association at the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall also fill vacancies as they occur, appoint ad hoc committees as needed, and submit nominations for officers and representatives for the various offices of the Association. The Executive Committee shall hold at least three meetings during the year. A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of a majority of its members.

**B. Committee on Ministry:** The Committee on Ministry shall consist of four authorized ministers and four laypersons, nominated by the Executive Committee and elected at a Regular or Special Meeting of the Association for a three-year term, renewable once. The Moderator shall also be a member of the Committee, with both voice and vote. A member of the staff of the Maine Conference will generally attend Committee meetings, with voice but no vote. An authorized minister or a layperson from among the Committee's members shall be elected as the Committee chair. The Committee shall deal with all matters of ministerial standing and ecclesiastical authority for ministry within the Association, as defined by the most recent Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ, and other documents and guidelines developed by the Association. The duties of the Committee shall be to:

1. Examine all candidates for member in discernment status, ordination, licensure, commissioning, and installation, and act accordingly on behalf of the Association. The committee shall report its actions at the next Association meeting.
2. Receive and report to the Association applications from churches and ministers for admission to or removal from the Association.
3. Grant transfer of standing for authorized ministers, and review such standing regularly.
4. Conduct or arrange for Boundary Awareness Training. All authorized ministers serving churches in the Association are required to complete Boundary Awareness Training at least every three years. Retired ministers who are not currently, and do not reasonably expect to be, actively engaged in authorized ministry may request a waiver of this requirement from the Committee on Ministry.
5. Conduct Periodic Support Consultations, Situation Support Consultations, and Informational Reviews of persons authorized for ministry in keeping with policies and procedures outlined in the Manual on Ministry and the Association.
6. Conduct Fitness Reviews of authorized ministers holding standing in the Association in accordance with the current Manual on Ministry. A Fitness Review shall conclude with the Committee on Ministry taking one of the following actions: Reaffirmation, Referral to Situational Support Consultation, Conditional Affirmation with a prescribed program of growth, Censure, Suspension, or Termination. The Committee on Ministry

may also accept a voluntary resignation at any time, thereby ending the Fitness Review. Following a fitness review the affected person may, within 30 days of the issuing of the decision of the Committee on Ministry, appeal in writing to the Executive Committee. Appeals may only concern the procedures followed by the Committee on Ministry. The affected person may not appeal the facts of the review, but only the manner in which the review was conducted. In reviewing appeals the Executive Committee shall either affirm the procedures as being in compliance with the Manual on Ministry and any pertinent policies of the association, and thereby endorse the outcome; or, if procedural irregularity is found to have occurred, the Executive Committee shall instruct the Committee on Ministry to re-conduct such portions of the Fitness Review as necessary to be in procedural compliance and to issue a new consideration thereof. The outcome of an appeal is final.

#### **ARTICLE X – ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DUES**

All churches of the Association shall be assessed Association Membership Dues based on the number of church members annually reported to the Maine Conference. The per member amount shall be determined by the Association at the Annual Meeting or at a Special Meeting called specifically for that purpose.

#### **ARTICLE XI – FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year of the Association shall be from July 1 to June 30.

#### **ARTICLE XII – DISSOLUTION CLAUSE**

In the event of the dissolution of the Association and after all bills have been paid, the remaining assets of the Association shall be liquidated and allotted to the Maine Conference, or its successor, in accordance with current government regulations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

#### **ARTICLE XIII – PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES**

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not covered by these Bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE XIV – AMENDMENTS**

Proposed amendments to these Bylaws may be submitted in writing at any Association meeting, and shall be adopted by a vote at a subsequent business meeting, provided that notice of proposed amendments is given in the call to said meeting, if a quorum is achieved, and if approved by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting.

#### **ARTICLE XV – BYLAW REVIEW**

The Executive Committee shall initiate a review of the Bylaws at least every five years and as changes are needed.