

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

3
4 **PREAMBLE**

5
6 Representatives of the Kennebec Valley Association and the Franklin Association entered
7 into conversation and discernment about possible union in July 2015. Experiencing a sense of God
8 at work, this group called for the two Associations to come together in discernment in February
9 2016. All of the churches of both Associations were asked to send representatives to that meeting.

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

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

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

28 Both Associations voted at their May Annual Meetings to move forward toward union and
29 appointed a Joint Association Bylaw Committee. This Committee drafted Bylaws for the new
30 Association, for approval at the Franklin and Kennebec Valley Association Meetings in the fall of
31 2016.

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

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36 **ARTICLE I – NAME**

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

41 *On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out,*
42 *“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the*

43 *scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'” Now he*
44 *said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no*
45 *Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

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48 **ARTICLE II – FAITH**

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

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58 **ARTICLE III – COVENANT**

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

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

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74 **ARTICLE IV – PRINCIPLES**

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

81 While affirming the liberty of our churches, we hold also to the unity and universality of the
82 Church, which is the body of Christ. We therefore cherish the communion of the churches, united in
83 association, conference, and national bodies, for counsel and cooperation in matters of mutual

84 concern. We will unite with all bodies of the Church in hearty cooperation, and will earnestly seek,
85 so far as in us lies, that Jesus' prayer for His disciples may be answered: that all may be one.

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

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90 **ARTICLE V – OPEN AND AFFIRMING**

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92 *“In Christ there is no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one . . .”*
93 *Galatians 3:28*

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

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

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

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105 **ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP**

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107 **A. Members of the Association**

108 The Association shall be composed of:

- 109 1. All United Church of Christ churches within the geographical limits of Franklin,
110 Kennebec and Somerset Counties.
- 111 Benton Falls Congregational Church, Benton Falls
- 112 Congregational Church of Weld
- 113 First Congregational (Old South) Church, Farmington
- 114 First Congregational Church, Pittsfield
- 115 First Congregational Church, Waterville
- 116 First Congregational Church, Wilton
- 117 Moose River Congregational Church, Jackman
- 118 New Sharon Congregational Church, New Sharon
- 119 Old South Congregational Church, Hallowell
- 120 Phillips Community Church, Phillips
- 121 Rangeley Congregational Church, Rangeley
- 122 Riverside Congregational Church, Vassalboro
- 123 Shorey Chapel, Industry
- 124 South Parish Congregational Church, Augusta
- 125 The Forks/West Forks Congregational Church, The Forks

- 126 United Church of Monmouth, Monmouth
127 Winslow Congregational Church, Winslow
128 Winthrop Congregational Church, Winthrop
129 2. All ministers having standing (ordained, commissioned, and licensed) in the
130 Association.
131 3. All Members in Discernment of the Association.
132 4. All churches that shall hereafter be received as members by a vote of the Association.

133 **B. Responsibilities of Membership**

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

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152 **ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS**
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- 154 **A. Regular Meetings:** Two meetings of the Association shall be held each year, one in the
155 spring and one in the fall, unless otherwise determined by the Executive Committee. The
156 date, hour and place shall be determined by the Executive Committee, which shall also give
157 notice of the meeting to all member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in
158 Discernment at least four weeks prior to the date. The spring association meeting shall be the
159 Annual Meeting of the Association.
- 160 **B. Special Meetings:** The Executive Committee may call special meetings of the Association
161 when necessary for purposes deemed essential, or upon the written request of at least half of
162 the churches of the Association. All member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in
163 Discernment must be notified of any such special meeting at least four weeks prior to the
164 date.
- 165 **C. Delegates:** Delegates to meetings of the Association shall include:
166 1. Up to five delegates from each member church.
167 2. One youth delegate from each member church.

- 168 3. All ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers who hold standing or
169 ecclesiastical authorization in the Association.
170 4. Members in Discernment.
171 5. Officers of the Association.
172 6. Members of the Committee on Ministry.

173 **D. Ecclesiastical Council:**

- 174 1. The Association shall meet as an Ecclesiastical Council for the purpose of ordination
175 and commissioning, and for other purposes of such a council as guided by the Manual
176 on Ministry of the United Church of Christ and the policies and procedures of the
177 Maine Conference.
178 2. Meetings of an Ecclesiastical Council shall be called by the Executive Committee
179 after consultation with or recommendation from the Committee on Ministry.
180 3. The call for an Ecclesiastical Council meeting shall be issued through the Scribe of
181 the Association and the agenda shall be limited to the matter named in the call.
182 4. The minutes of every Ecclesiastical Council shall be filed with the Clerk of the
183 Conference.

184 **E. Quorum:** A quorum at any Regular or Special Meeting or Ecclesiastical Council shall
185 consist of the representation of at least half of the churches and one-third of the authorized
186 ministers who currently serve a church in the Association. If a quorum does not exist, those
187 present at the called meeting may adjourn the meeting to a specified date, time and location
188 provided that all member churches, authorized ministers, and Members in Discernment
189 receive notification at least two weeks prior to the rescheduled meeting.

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

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197 **ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS**

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

202 A. **Moderator:** The Moderator shall preside over all meetings of the Association and the
203 Executive Committee, developing the meeting agenda and distributing it at least seven
204 days in advance of the meeting. The Moderator shall also be a member of the Committee
205 on Ministry. Ideally, the Moderator shall alternately be a lay member and an authorized
206 minister.

207 B. **Vice Moderator:** In the absence or at the request of the Moderator, the Vice Moderator
208 shall perform the duties of the Moderator. Ideally, the Vice Moderator shall be the
209 successor of the current Moderator.

- 210 C. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall bill and collect Association and Conference fellowship
211 dues, receive all monies from the member churches, keep track of all expenditures
212 approved by the Association and Executive Committee, and report the same to the
213 Association at its regularly called meetings. This written report shall be filed with the
214 Scribe.
- 215 D. **Scribe:** The Scribe shall keep the roll of the churches and ministers of the Association
216 and the recorded minutes of the meetings, and shall call meetings as provided in the
217 Bylaws. The Scribe shall issue letters transferring the standing of ministers upon
218 approval of the Committee on Ministry, and shall file an annual report with the registrar
219 of the Maine Conference.

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222 **ARTICLE IX – COMMITTEES**
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- 224 A. **Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee shall consist of the officers of the
225 Association, the chair of the Committee on Ministry and two at large members elected by the
226 Association for two-year terms. It shall be the governing body of the Association between its
227 meetings. The Executive Committee shall oversee the programs and the finances of the
228 Association, and shall see that the decisions of the Regular and Special meetings of the
229 Association are implemented. The Executive Committee shall prepare an annual budget to
230 be presented to the Association at the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall also
231 fill vacancies as they occur, appoint ad hoc committees as needed, and submit nominations
232 for officers and representatives for the various offices of the Association. The Executive
233 Committee shall hold at least three meetings during the year. A quorum of the Executive
234 Committee shall consist of a majority of its members.
- 235 B. **Committee on Ministry:** The Committee on Ministry shall consist of four authorized
236 ministers and four laypersons, nominated by the Executive Committee and elected at a
237 Regular or Special Meeting of the Association for a three-year term, renewable once. The
238 Moderator shall also be a member of the Committee, with both voice and vote. A member of
239 the staff of the Maine Conference will generally attend Committee meetings, with voice but
240 no vote. An authorized minister or a layperson from among the Committee’s members shall
241 be elected as the Committee chair. The Committee shall deal with all matters of ministerial
242 standing and ecclesiastical authority for ministry within the Association, as defined by the
243 most recent Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ, and other documents and
244 guidelines developed by the Association. The duties of the Committee shall be to:
- 245 1. Examine all candidates for Member in Discernment status, ordination, licensure,
246 commissioning, and installation, and act accordingly on behalf of the Association.
247 The committee shall report its actions at the next Association meeting. Before
248 becoming Members in Discernment in the Living Water Association, candidates shall
249 undergo a psychological evaluation to determine fitness for ministry. The chair of the
250 Committee on Ministry shall contact a psychological assessment service to begin this
251 process, with advance approval by the committee. The cost of the evaluation shall be

- 252 shared: the Association shall pay one-third (1/3); the Member in Discernment's local
253 church shall pay one-third (1/3); and the Member in Discernment shall pay one-third
254 (1/3).
- 255 2. Receive and report to the Association applications from churches and ministers for
256 admission to or removal from the Association.
 - 257 3. Grant transfer of standing for authorized ministers, and review such standing
258 regularly.
 - 259 4. Conduct or arrange for Boundary Awareness Training. All authorized ministers
260 serving churches in the Association are required to complete Boundary Awareness
261 Training at least every three years. Retired ministers who are not currently, and do not
262 reasonably expect to be, actively engaged in authorized ministry may request a
263 waiver of this requirement from the Committee on Ministry.
 - 264 5. Conduct Periodic Support Consultations, Situation Support Consultations, and
265 Informational Reviews of persons authorized for ministry in keeping with policies
266 and procedures outlined in the Manual on Ministry and the Association.
 - 267 6. Conduct Fitness Reviews of authorized ministers holding standing in the Association
268 in accordance with the current Manual on Ministry. A Fitness Review shall conclude
269 with the Committee on Ministry taking one of the following actions: Reaffirmation,
270 Referral to Situational Support Consultation, Conditional Affirmation with a
271 prescribed program of growth, Censure, Suspension, or Termination. The Committee
272 on Ministry may also accept a voluntary resignation at any time, thereby ending the
273 Fitness Review. Following a fitness review the affected person may, within 30 days
274 of the issuing of the decision of the Committee on Ministry, appeal in writing to the
275 Executive Committee. Appeals may only concern the procedures followed by the
276 Committee on Ministry. The affected person may not appeal the facts of the review,
277 but only the manner in which the review was conducted. In reviewing appeals the
278 Executive Committee shall either affirm the procedures as being in compliance with
279 the Manual on Ministry and any pertinent policies of the association, and thereby
280 endorse the outcome; or, if procedural irregularity is found to have occurred, the
281 Executive Committee shall instruct the Committee on Ministry to re-conduct such
282 portions of the Fitness Review as necessary to be in procedural compliance and to
283 issue a new consideration thereof. The outcome of an appeal is final.

284 285 286 **ARTICLE X – ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DUES**

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

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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.