

**Bylaws  
of  
Unity Presbyterian Church  
Fort Mill, SC**

**Approved by Session – August 24, 2020**

**Approved by Congregation – November 8, 2020**

These bylaws address the ecclesiastical functions of the church. Corporate functions are addressed in the *Corporate Bylaws of Unity Presbyterian Church of Fort Mill, SC*. These bylaws supersede and replace any and all previous sets of bylaws for Unity Presbyterian Church of Fort Mill, SC. References to paragraphs in the *Book of Order* are based on the 2019-2021 edition of the *Book of Order, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*.

## **I. Statement of Purpose and Mission**

Unity Presbyterian Church has been called by God and organized for the purposes set forth in the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* including the Great Ends of the Church (*Book of Order F-1.0304*):

“The great ends of the church are:

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- the maintenance of divine worship;
- the preservation of the truth;
- the promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.”

In response to this calling, Unity Presbyterian Church has adopted the following Mission Statement: **United in Christ’s love, we glorify God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.**

## **II. Relation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Unity Presbyterian Church is a member church of the Presbytery of Providence in the Synod of South Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **III. Governance of the Church**

This church shall be governed in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Consistent with that Constitution, these bylaws shall provide specific guidance for this church. *Roberts Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

## **IV. Meetings of the Church**

There shall be an annual meeting of the Congregation during the first quarter of the fiscal year, at which at least the following business shall be presented: annual reports from organizations and the session (information only), financial report for the preceding year, budget for the coming year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s), and electing members to serve on the nominating committee. (*Book of Order, G-1.0501, G-1.0503*).

Special meetings may be called by the session. Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of such special meetings, and business shall be restricted to that which is specified in the call. (*Book of Order G-1.0501, G-1.0503*).

## **V. Notice of Congregational Meetings**

Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given, including notice given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting. (*Book of Order G-1.0502*). Notice of the meeting shall be given on two consecutive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday.

## **VI. Moderator of Congregational Meetings**

The installed pastor shall ordinarily moderate meetings of the congregation. In his or her absence, the pastor may invite an associate pastor or another minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or the installed pastor is unable to moderate and/or to name another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator. (*Book of Order G-1.0504*).

## **VII. Secretary of Congregational Meetings**

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary of congregational meetings. If the clerk is not present, the congregation shall elect a secretary. (*Book of Order, G-1.0505*).

## **VIII. Minutes of Congregational Meetings**

The minutes of the meeting recorded by the secretary shall be attested by the moderator and the secretary and recorded in the minute book of session. (*Book of Order G-1.0505*).

## **IX. Quorum and Voting for a Congregational Meeting**

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and no less than one tenth of the active members. The congregation, by its own vote, may fix a higher quorum. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present.

All active members of the congregation present at either the annual or special meetings are entitled to vote. (*Book of Order G-1.0501*). Voting by proxy is not allowed. In emergency situations, such as a public health crisis, when it is not possible to physically meet together, the session may authorize electronic methods, such as teleconferencing or video teleconferencing, to meet. If feasible, voting may be done electronically. Otherwise, a voting window of time shall be established for physically delivering a ballot to a designated location. Only those members who participated in the electronic meeting shall be allowed to vote.

## **X. Incorporation**

In accordance with the *South Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1994*, Unity Presbyterian Church of Fort Mill, SC, has been incorporated since July 6, 1949, as a nonprofit religious corporation. (*Book of Order G-4.0101*). The corporate functions of Unity Presbyterian Church are governed by the *Corporate Bylaws of Unity Presbyterian Church* adopted by the congregation which constitutes the membership of the Corporation.

## **XI. Nominating Committee**

Ruling elders and deacons are men and women elected by the congregation from among its members. The nomination and election of ruling elders and deacons shall express the rich diversity of the congregation's membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness. Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee and elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. (*Book of Order G-2.0401*)

Annually, the congregation shall form the nominating committee consisting of nine active church members designated in the following manner:

1. At least two members of this committee shall be ruling elders nominated by the session, one of whom shall be currently on the session and serve as moderator of the committee.
2. At least two members of this committee shall be deacons nominated by the board of deacons.
3. One member of this committee shall be nominated by the Women of Unity and will not be an active church officer.

4. One member of this committee shall be nominated by the Unity Men's Ministry and will not be an active church officer.
5. One member of this committee shall be a youth nominated by youth ministry leadership.
6. Two members of this committee shall be members at large and will not be active church officers. They shall be nominated by the outgoing Nominating Committee.
7. A majority of those persons on the committee who are eligible to vote shall consist of persons not currently serving on Session. (*Book of Order*, G-2.0401).
8. Members of the nominating committee and their immediate family members are not eligible to be nominated for elder or deacon.
9. The pastor shall be an ex officio member of the nominating committee serving without vote. Associate pastors shall be invited to attend nominating committee meetings with the privilege of the floor but without vote.

The Chair of the outgoing Nominating Committee shall place these nominations before the congregation in a duly called congregational meeting. Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nominations from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation, provided, that the person nominated must be an active member of the congregation, the person nominated must have been contacted prior to the congregational meeting, have consented to be nominated and agreed to serve if elected. A majority of all active members present and voting shall be required to elect the nominating committee.

The nominating committee shall annually place nominations for ruling elders and deacons before the congregation in a duly called congregational meeting. This meeting shall normally be held at a time that provides adequate time for training of newly elected officers before the beginning of the calendar year. Additional congregational meetings may be called as necessary to fill vacated seats of ruling elders and deacons with candidates recommended by the Nominating Committee. Typically, vacancies occurring within the first six months following the regular election of elders and deacons shall be filled at a special meeting of the congregation; vacancies occurring more than six months following the regular election shall be filled, if required, at the next regular election. Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nominations from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation, provided, that the person nominated must be an active member of the congregation, the person nominated must have been contacted prior to the congregational meeting, have consented to be nominated and agreed to serve if elected. A majority of all active members present and voting shall be required to elect ruling elders and deacons.

## **XII. Ruling Elders**

The congregation shall elect eighteen (18) ruling elders divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year for a three-year term. A ruling elder having normally served a three-year term shall be ineligible for reelection to the session or board of deacons for a period of at least one year. Exceptions may be made in the situation of filling a vacated seat. However, a ruling elder may not serve on session for more than five consecutive years. A vacated seat shall be filled by nomination and election by the congregation.

The session shall annually elect a ruling elder to serve as clerk of session and shall form such committees or teams as necessary to carry out its work. The session shall also annually elect a church treasurer. The term of office for the clerk of session, the church treasurer, and committee/team chairs shall be one year with unrestricted eligibility for reelection. Exceptions may be made in the situation of filling a vacated seat.

The quorum for standard business meetings of session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer designated as moderator and no less than one half of the ruling elders in current service on the session. The session by its own vote may fix a higher quorum. The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly.

### **XIII. Deacons**

The congregation shall elect twenty-seven (27) deacons divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year for a three-year term. A deacon having normally served a three-year term shall be ineligible for reelection to the session or board of deacons for a period of at least one year. Exceptions may be made in the situation of filling a vacated seat. However, a deacon may not serve for more than five consecutive years. A vacated seat shall be filled by nomination and election by the congregation.

The deacons serve under the authority of the session (*Book of Order G-2.0202*) and shall be organized as a board, of which the pastor and associate pastors shall be advisory members. The board of deacons shall annually elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members and shall form such committees or teams as necessary to carry out its work. The secretary shall keep a record of the board's proceedings.

The quorum for the board of deacons shall be no less than half of the deacons in current service, including the moderator. The board, by its own vote, may fix a higher quorum. The board shall meet regularly, or upon call of its moderator, or when directed to meet by the session, but it shall meet at least quarterly.

### **XIV. Joint Meetings**

A joint meeting of the session and board of deacons shall be held at least annually to confer on matters of common interest, with the moderator of the session presiding. No binding decision may be reached in such joint meeting, but the session and the board of deacons may act separately on matters committed to their care.

### **XV. Officer Vacancies**

Vacancies on the session or the board of deacons may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting, as session may determine.

## **XVI. Amendments**

These bylaws may be amended or added to, or new bylaws may be adopted, by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the congregation present and voting at a duly called meeting of the congregation; provided, that the bylaws must at all times and in all respects remain in conformity with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. (*Book of Order G-4.0101*).

## **XVII. Manual of Operations**

The session shall maintain a *Manual of Operations for Unity Presbyterian Church* which describes and defines the organization of the church for ministry and sets out general policies and guidelines for carrying out its ministry. This manual of operations may be amended, or added to, or rewritten by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the session present and voting at a duly called meeting of the session; provided, that the manual of operations must at all times and in all respects remain in conformity with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. (*Book of Order G-4.0101*).