

# **Constitution and Bylaws of Covina Community Church**

*Approved by congregational vote on Nov. 13, 2022*

## **ARTICLE I**

### **1.1 Name**

The name of this corporation is COVINA COMMUNITY CHURCH, A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, herein referred to by name or referred to as “the Church.”

## **ARTICLE II**

### **2.1 California State Religious Corporation Law**

If at any time the provisions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Covina Community Church, A United Church of Christ, Covina, California shall conflict with any laws of the State of California affecting religious corporations, the provisions of the State of California shall apply and prevail, but only to the extent of the conflict and without affecting the remainder of the paragraph or section of the Constitution and By-Laws in which the conflict may arise.

### **2.2 Corporate and Congregational Roles**

Corporate officers have dual recognition as legal representatives of the nonprofit corporation and are also recognized by the titles common in the polity of the United Church of Christ. For purposes of the State of California and the nonprofit corporation of Covina Community Church, membership shall be defined by participation as described and defined by this document.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **3.1 Purpose**

Our purpose, drawn from the life and teachings of Jesus, is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength – and to love our neighbor as ourselves. United in Spirit and inspired by God’s grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **4.1 Statement of Faith**

We believe that all people are created in the image of God. None of the ways humans have devised to divide ourselves can change that.

We believe that God is the creator of all things and that our planet is a gift from God. We are partners, with God, in caring for the Earth and all its inhabitants.

We believe that God's Spirit has been at work among us and through us, since the creation of humanity, from generation to generation, and is still transforming us today.

We believe that Jesus embodied the unconditional love of God, and Jesus continually challenges us all to live with one another in communities of grace.

We believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus call us beyond oppressive systems, self-destructive and other-destructive behaviors, and selfishness, inviting and compelling us to serve others with profound acts of love and mercy.

We believe that loving God, ourselves, and our neighbors is harder than it sounds and is the foundational practice for every person and Church.

We believe that Scripture and the wisdom of our spiritual ancestors offer an echo of God's voice for us to follow, and we believe that God is not done speaking.

#### **4.2 Growing in Faith**

To deepen the faith of each participant and equip ourselves to face the challenges all around us, we encourage everyone to engage in practices of prayer and study. Knowing that those closest to Jesus called him “Rabbi” or “Teacher,” we value the relationship between faith and reason. We trust that when our heads and hearts work together, we can hear God more clearly.

We recognize the importance of spiritual growth and maturity for all participants and expect those called to lead the congregation to exemplify these values. To equip all participants, and those called to lead, we provide regular opportunities for study of scripture, theology, ethics, and their intersectionality in the world today. Those who have participated in such study may be asked to serve on Church Council.

## **ARTICLE V Relationships and Authority**

### **5.1 Congregation**

We are a voluntary community based on the profound hospitality, love and grace described in the Bible and lived out by Jesus. We claim those who actively participate in the shared ministry of Covina Community Church as part of our congregation and celebrate them to be part of Christ’s Church. Participation includes but is not limited to volunteering, participating in worship or study, providing financial support, and supporting each other as a congregation.

All participants have a voice in Congregational Meetings, are invited to attend Council Meetings, and may serve as part of the congregation as they feel called. Some special events may be organized to meet the needs of specific participants, such as support groups, but no such group will be formed in the congregation with an intent to exclude anyone or limit their agency in the congregation.

Participants who are not able to attend Church events based on physical or mental challenges, or who experience other life restrictions, shall be considered part of the congregation as long as relationship is maintained through visitation, written correspondence, or other tangible expression.

## **5.2 Affiliation**

We are part of the United Church of Christ (UCC), and in direct fellowship with the Eastern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference (SCNC) United Church of Christ. This is a covenantal relationship, entered into freely by the Congregation. As a congregation, we maintain our independence to govern ourselves and to speak and act for ourselves on all matters.

## **5.3 Covenants and Commitments**

We have covenanted to be an Open and Affirming congregation in the United Church of Christ, meaning that we will welcome, celebrate, and affirm all people across the spectrums of human identity, including but not limited to sex, gender, gender expression, ethnicity, age, ability, relationship status or citizenship status.

We have covenanted to be a W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) Congregation in the United Church of Christ. We commit ourselves to providing a safe space for those who face mental health and substance abuse challenges and for their loved ones. We seek to be W.I.S.E. when relating to people living with all forms of neurodiversity, mental illness, and addiction. We welcome all who are seeking a community where they can heal and grow in God's love.

We have committed to be a justice-oriented congregation, working to relieve the trauma and suffering of those who have been impacted by harms committed against them or by them. In our work with those who are currently or recently incarcerated, or living in cycles of hurt and harm, we promote restorative justice as a path to emotional, social, relational, and spiritual healing.

## **5.4 Polity**

We believe that as a congregation, we are under the authority of Jesus Christ, guided by Christ's teachings, led by the Holy Spirit, and inspired by God who created us all and is still speaking to us all and through us all today.

No ecclesiastical authority stands over the Congregation. We are in a voluntarily chosen relationship with the United Church of Christ, in a covenantal communion of congregations that seeks to do more together than we could on our own. In this union, we express the love of Christ that binds us all as one Body.

## **5.5 Legacy**

Should Covina Community Church reach an end to its ministry, we commit our property and any remaining resources to the ongoing work of our covenantal partners in the United Church of Christ, specifically to the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Should Covina Community Church choose, for whatever reason, to leave this covenantal relationship with the United Church of Christ, we commit to honoring that relationship by turning over all real estate and invested funds to our covenantal partners in the United Church of Christ, specifically to the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Should the United Church of Christ restructure, this covenant would follow the new judicatory expression of the Church that provides support for our geographic area.

## **VI. Rituals and Rites of Passage**

We practice the Lord's Supper, commonly referred to as Communion, and Baptism as traditional sacraments of the Church. Sacraments are rites or rituals that remind us of God's love and grace, providing a tangible expression of God's unconditional love.

### **6.1 Baptism**

We offer the sacrament of Baptism to any who wish to receive it, recognizing and celebrating Baptisms performed in any other Christian tradition. Baptism is an external symbol of the internal work done by God's Holy Spirit. In the tradition of the United Church of Christ, we practice baptism of children when they are born, covenanting to nurture the faith of each child, till they confirm their faith at an age of reason and accountability. Those of any age who wish to be baptized for the first time are always welcome to celebrate God's work in their life by receiving the sacrament of Baptism. Those of any age who wish to be baptized for the first time are always welcome to celebrate God's work in their life by receiving the sacrament of Baptism.

We also recognize the diversity of practices within the Christian tradition and do not ever ask someone to be rebaptized, recognizing God's grace as the primary factor in this sacrament, and trusting that it is sufficient, no matter how it is shared. Should someone wish to be Baptized in our Church, having previously been Baptized in another, it is up to the Pastor, trusting they will discern the spiritual needs of each individual.

### **6.2 Communion**

We celebrate the Lord's Supper at least once a month, in accordance with the tradition of the United Church of Christ, and welcome all who feel called to participate. The invitation to Christ's Table is from Jesus, as we pass on what we received from the Lord. In this spirit, we do not limit who may participate and recognize that the inclusion of the table stands as a challenge and critique to the division of our society. Thus, we have no authority to limit the invitation offered freely by God.

We affirm the understanding of the United Church of Christ, that the symbols used in this sacrament are blessed by God and stand as an outward sign of inward grace. Thus, anyone may preside over this sacrament, so long as they are issuing the invitation instituted by Jesus and shared by those who have followed. While clergy often preside over the "eucharist," or "Lord's Supper," they are not required.

## **ARTICLE VII Congregational Meetings**

### **7.1 For Worship**

Worship shall be held each Sunday and on other special occasions.

### **7.2 Bi-Annual Congregational Meeting**

A Bi-Annual Meeting will be held in November for the purposes of electing corporate officers and Church leaders who will serve a two-year term beginning on January 1, of the coming year. Other outstanding business may also be dealt with at this meeting if approved by the Church Council.

### **7.2.2 Annual Congregational Meeting**

A general congregational meeting will be held once a year on the third (3rd) Sunday of January at such time and place as determined by the Church Council for presentation of annual reports by the church officers, the pastor, and committee chairs; adoption of the budget; and for transaction of other business that may-concern the congregation.

### **7.2.3 Special Congregational Meetings**

Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, the President/Moderator of the Church Council. Upon written request, by five (5) church participants, the Secretary/Clerk may call a Special Congregational meeting. Their names and the purpose and nature of the meeting must be explicitly stated in their request and in the published notice of the meeting.

### **7.3 Notice of Meetings**

Notice of all regular or special meetings shall be posted physically and electronically and announced in worship at least two (2) Sundays prior to the date of the meeting. Due and timely notice of any special meeting shall be given to the Secretary/Clerk who will be responsible for the posting and publishing of all notices for all meetings.

### **7.4 Voting**

Congregational participants who have been active during the last six months may vote on matters pertaining to leadership and general financial decisions in the life of the Congregation. This includes but is not limited to, election of officers, approval of budgets, change of policy, and capital expenditures presented to the congregation.

Congregational participants who have been active for at least one year and during the current year may vote on matters that have a legally binding outcome such as but not limited to the sale of property or incurring debt.

Participants who have not yet participated enough to vote still have a voice in the congregation, including being asked to serve on committees or Ministry Teams tasked with service, research and advisement to the church community.

### **7.5 Quorum**

A quorum shall consist of forty percent (40%) of congregation participants who are eligible to vote, based on the previous year's reported average worship attendance.

### **7.6 Standing Rules for Meetings**

Meetings will be guided by our Standing Rules for Meetings which are part of the congregation's Policies and Best Practices. Should a conflict arise, the Church Council or Pastor may call for a Circle of Discernment using the process provided in the congregation's Policies and Best Practices.

### **7.7 Church year**

The official church shall run January 1 through December 31, with any new elected officers beginning their service on January 1.

## **ARTICLE VIII The Church Council**

### **8.1 Function and Qualifications**

It shall be the function of the Church Council to act as Governing Board of the church and the Board of Directors of the Corporation as stipulated by the laws of the State of California and any directives by the Secretary of the State of California.

To serve on Church Council participants will have attended Church events for at least six months and completed at least two (2) of the four (4) Identity Workshops provided by Covina Community Church. These include LGBTQIA2-S Support, Anti-Racism, Mental Health Welcome and Support, and UCC Polity and Theology. Each workshop will include personal reflection and sharing.

Those serving on Church Council who have not completed all four (4) will complete one each year until they have completed them all.

### **8.2 Members and Meetings**

The President/Moderator or Vice President/Assistant Moderator shall be the officiating member at all meetings. The voting members of the Church Council shall be all Church Officers and Chairpersons of all Ministry Teams. The Pastor is an ex officio member of the Church Council. Meetings will be quarterly. The moderator may call additional meetings as needed. Meetings are open to all participants in the congregation, unless a closed meeting is deemed necessary at the discretion of the President/Moderator.

A quorum of the Church Council shall consist of fifty percent (50%) of its membership and a majority vote is needed to make a decision. The officiating member shall not vote except in the event of a tie vote and only if a Discernment Circle has been completed on the issue. Any issue may be referred to a Discernment Circle at any time during a meeting.

### **8.3 Responsibilities**

- 1) Create, coordinate, and disseminate a church calendar and establish Ministry Teams or Committees to accomplish the work.
- 2) Review the annual budget as submitted by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer and present to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting.
- 3) Serve in an advisory capacity to the Pastor.
- 4) Fill all Church officer vacancies of less than six months by appointment, or vacancies of more than six months by nomination of a new candidate and the calling of a congregational meeting to confirm. Vacancies of Ministry Team chairs shall be done by appointment of the Council.
- 5) To nominate church officers, representing the diversity and values of the congregation. This includes a process for volunteers and nominations to be received, beginning one month before the bi-annual congregational meeting.

6) Serve as the legal trustee to which all the properties of the church are committed and therefore shall administer them in accordance with the church's stated purposes and missions. They shall be charged with the care and custody of all church property and financial interest (sale, leasing and transferring of properties) of the church, but shall not be empowered to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any real property without specific authority voted at a called congregational meeting by sixty-six per cent (66%) of the vote. Those who have participated for over one year may vote on such issues.

7) Assure that adequate insurance is in place to protect the Church property, corporation, leadership, and participants and that all policies related to such insurance are followed or enforced at all times.

8) To maintain historical records of all church activities, records of participation, as well as documents and photographs of interest.

9) Designate delegates to attend Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ or Eastern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ events as needed.

10) Periodically review Church policies and procedures. This includes a review of the Constitution and By-Laws. Amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws will be submitted to the Congregation for ratification with a 66% vote. Those who have participated for at least one year are eligible to vote in this congregational meeting.

11) Maintain policies such as, but not limited to Property Rental, Safe-Church, Major Gifts, and other financial fiduciary policies.

12) Provide for the upkeep and beautification of Church property and grounds.

13) Regular review of staff, including the Pastor.

14) Should conflict arise within the congregation, or in relation to the Pastor, a Discernment Circle will be initiated to address the issue.

## **ARTICLE IX Officers of the Church Corporation**

### **9.1 The Pastor**

#### **9.1.1 Qualifications**

They shall be ordained or seeking ordination in the United Church of Christ or be ordained in a Christian tradition that holds a mutual recognition of ordination and sacrament with the United Church of Christ.

They shall affirm the Open and Affirming and WISE covenants of the congregation and be equipped to help live out those covenants in public leadership and pastoral care.

### **9.1.2 Responsibilities**

The Pastor shall provide spiritual support and guidance to individuals and the congregation, offer administrative support when needed, and represent the Church's values in the broader community.

The Pastor shall be an advisory member of all bodies or committees whether or not they are a designated member.

The Pastor shall conduct weddings, funerals, baptisms and serve in other sacramental roles as needed.

When the Pastor is away on a Sunday and will not be leading worship, they shall arrange for pulpit supply and establish communication between that person and the Council.

The Pastor shall participate and support a regular review of staff in partnership with the Church Council and be available to the Council for the Council's review of the Pastor.

### **9.1.3 The Call of a Pastor**

A "search committee" shall be nominated by the Church Council and elected by the congregation. This committee shall coordinate with the Southern California Nevada Conference United Church of Christ to obtain applications of candidates, then interview candidates, and select a finalist.

At a meeting specially designed for the call of the Pastor, the candidate shall be called by at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present who are qualified to vote. All participants of the congregation who have been active for at least one year may vote on matters pertaining to the call of the clergy to serve the Congregation. Participants who have not yet participated for a year may still have a voice in the process, including being asked to serve on a search committee.

### **9.1.4 Installation and Participation**

When the Pastor has been called, the association to which the church belongs shall be invited to install them. After being called, they shall seek membership with the appropriate association of the Southern California Nevada Conference. Once installed the Pastor shall be considered an active participant in the congregation and considered eligible to vote in any congregational meeting, including those pertaining to property, finance, staffing, and legal decisions. The pastor should recuse themselves from any vote specifically about their employment.

### **9.1.5 Term of Office**

The term is indefinite; however, it may be terminated at any time after a year by the congregation by a majority vote at a special meeting. The Pastor's request for resignation will terminate in ninety (90) days or as agreed to in a "letter of call." If there is a question of immorality it will be dealt with in partnership with the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC through the appropriate Association committee. If necessary, the Pastor will terminate their position in ten (10) days.



## **9.2 President/Moderator**

Preside over the meetings of the Church Council as well as all general meetings of the congregation. They are an ex-officio member of all Church Committees. They are President of the church corporation and elected for a term of two (2) years and shall be eligible for re-election.

## **9.3 Vice President/Assistant Moderator**

Assist President/Moderator at the direction of the President/Moderator and will assume the responsibilities of the President/Moderator in the latter's absence or incapacity. They shall be elected for a term of two (2) years and shall be eligible for re-election.

## **9.4 Secretary/Clerk**

Responsible for recording the minutes of the meetings of the Church Council, of keeping accurate records of minutes of meetings and giving notice of meetings of the Church Council to its membership. They shall also function as the Secretary/Clerk of the annual and special church meetings. The Secretary/Clerk will work with the Church Council and Church staff for keeping other church records such as lists of participants, baptisms, marriages, deaths and their corresponding dates and shall serve as the custodian of all records and documents of the church. They shall make a written report of these matters to the congregation at the annual meeting. In the case the Secretary / Clerk cannot attend a meeting, the Moderator or Assistant Moderator may appoint someone else to fulfill those responsibilities. They shall be elected for a term of two (2) years and shall be eligible for re-election.

## **9.5 Treasurer**

Follow and enforce policies and procedures as determined by the Church Council. The Treasurer shall be custodian of all funds of the church and shall keep accurate records in distinct and separate categories. The Treasurer shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and may be bonded, if so determined by the Church Council, at the expense of the church. The Treasurer's books shall be open to any participant of the church upon request at any reasonable time and shall be subject to annual audit as determined by the Church Council. The Treasurer shall pay the bills, obligations and expenses of the church from the allocated funds and only as designated in the budget or have been specifically authorized by the Church Council. They shall file necessary IRS and EDD employment tax forms. They shall be responsible for keeping records on individual giving and provide statements of contributions as appropriate and in a timely fashion for tax filing. The Treasurer shall make an annual report to the congregation at the annual meeting, make a quarterly report to apprise the Church Council of the standing of the corporation. They shall maintain confidentiality in all matters. They shall be elected to a term of two (2) years and shall be eligible for re-election.

The Treasurer shall oversee the acceptance of gifts, endowments and memorials offered to the church. This includes evaluating the gift based on the Church's policies, and making a recommendation based on such policies to the Council. They shall administer the endowment or memorial funds according to the wishes of the survivors or major donors based upon the acceptance of such gift by the Council.

## **9.6 Assistant Treasurer**

Assist the Treasurer as directed by the Treasurer. Follow policies and procedures as determined by the Church Council and shall assume the duties of the Treasurer in their absence or incapacity. They shall maintain confidentiality in all matters. They shall be elected for a term of two (2) years and be eligible for re-election.

## **ARTICLE X Ministry Teams and Committees**

### **10.1 Ministry Teams and Committees**

Ministry Teams and Committees can be formed by the Council to meet the needs of the congregation. Such working groups can be created for short term or long-term service. The Council also holds the authority to bring an end to the work of any Ministry Team or Committee as the needs of the Church change and grow.

Ministry Teams and Committees shall be given a clear mandate and responsibilities based on the needs of the Church. This can be updated as needs evolve, with approval of the Church Council.

#### **10.1.2 Team and Committee Leadership**

The Council can call someone to lead a team or invite a team to call a leader from among the group. Those who chair a committee or Ministry team will serve on Church Council with all the responsibilities and expectations that apply, as long as they serve in that capacity.

Should a Chair of a team or committee resign, the Church Council shall ask someone to take their place or ask the group to call new leadership from among those already involved.